

Young distance runners on form

Tonbridge Athletic Club had young distance runners competing in three events over the weekend, at the Kent Schools Cross Country Championship and Sevenoaks School Knole Runs, plus Luca Russo making his international cross country debut for England, in Cardiff.

Russo placed 16th in the under 20 men's race, at the McCains Cross Challenge event at Bute Park, Cardiff and although he is not back to his very best form, it was a solid performance, having missed some training to illness before Christmas. He will now be back in full training, in preparation for the remaining championship events of the cross country season.

Kent College Canterbury hosted this year's Kent Schools Cross Country Championships, on Saturday, welcoming athletes with a flat course and bright sunshine. There were eight races making up the schedule and Tonbridge Athletic Club athletes captured all four of the boys' individual titles on offer.

Charlie Joslin-Allen, having won the Kent under 17 title the week before, took on athletes a year older at Canterbury and successfully defeated Kieran Reilly, of Invicta AC, the Kent under 20 men's champion. A mid race surge took Joslin-Allen clear, as he hung on for an eleven second victory in this senior boys' event.

The Inter Boys contest developed into a tussle between three Tonbridge athletes with Max Nicholls and George Duggan looking to be heading for a one two, with less than a mile to run. However, they had not quite shaken off the attentions of Sean Molloy, who relished the conditions and attacked the lead two towards the end. He entered the finish area with a small lead over Duggan and used his finishing sprint to pull clear. Corey De'Ath (4th) completed the clean sweep of the top four positions by Tonbridge AC runners, in a field of 71 finishers.

Stuart Brown (junior boys) and Tom Kendrick (year 7) took the other two wins, with both leading from the early stages of their races. Brown had Toby Ralph (3rd) his training partner for company on the medal podium, whilst Kendrick led another club sweep as James Puxty and Leo Rossouw followed him home.

The closest a Tonbridge female came to winning was in the year 7 race as the club had Ellie Cohen (3rd), Genny Allen (4th) and Georgie Maddison-Brown (5th) only a few seconds behind the leader. Alice Ralph (7th) put herself into the Kent selectors' minds in the Junior Girls' race, whilst Alice Wood placed 4th in the Inter Girls' age group and Jayne Mallyon 7th in the Senior Girls' event did likewise.

Meanwhile, at Knole Park later in the day, Henry Pearce and Ruth Bourne, both captured the individual titles, at the Sevenoaks School Knole Runs. For Pearce it was a return to his best form, after a disappointing county championships the weekend before. On this occasion, despite winning by forty six seconds, over the five and a half mile course, he just missed the course record, by six seconds.