

Bedfordshire Schools Athletic Association

Chairman's Annual Report

November 2023

New Website Addresses:

Beds & Luton Schools Athletics: beactivebeds.co.uk/athletics-association1

English Schools Athletics: esaa.org.uk

Back to business as usual

It was back to business as usual with all our events in XC and Track & Field taking place, although sadly not our County Pentathlon as we could find no-one to organise it. I very much hope that someone will step forward as this was a very enjoyable event for athletes and led some of them to represent the county at Regional Finals. Biggleswade AC are hoping to stage a pentathlon event and I hope that many of you will encourage athletes to participate.

The shadow of covid still hung over our sport with the result that the number of athletes taking part has still not recovered to its previous levels and there were a disappointing number of schools entering the ESAA Schools Cup XC or T & F Events which are team events and great fun for the individual involved.

Finances

Our finances remain in a healthy state although our expenditure exceeded income by over £2000. There were a number of reasons for this – not least the planned subsidy of £833 for the ESAA T&F Championships in order to reduce the contributions required from athletes and schools. Whilst we have a healthy reserve, we cannot sustain such losses year on year. Full details are in the Report on Accounts which will be available at the AGM.

Succession Planning

We are grateful to all those who organise our events and manage our teams, there are still too few of us and when a current post holder is no longer able to continue, it has been increasingly difficult to find a replacement.

All posts are open to election each year, but we do have several known vacancies and that is assuming that others will continue their roles.

Definite Vacancies:

- **Girls Team Manager Cross Country plus an assistant on the day (must be female)**
- **Boys Team Manager Cross Country plus an assistant on the day (must be male)**
- **Safeguarding and Welfare Officer.**

WITHOUT THESE VACANCIES BEING FILLED WE SHALL NOT BE ABLE TO SEND TEAMS TO NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

All posts are open for election each year, but each year fewer and fewer people want to take on roles, and when current post holders are no longer able to serve, it has become more and more difficult to replace them.

Please contact me if you are interested in serving or assisting on any capacity.

County Events

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Chairman*

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Amphill Park once again provided a challenging venue for our cross-country championship in February. There were good sized fields with some close races except in the seniors where there were only a handful of runners especially in the girl's race. Thanks to Richard Edwards for his efficient organisation and to Amphill and Flitwick Flyers for setting out and marshalling the course.

Our Track and Field Championships in June were an enjoyable event and again very well organised by Vicki Dockerill. Although the standard of performances was not as high as in the past (no new records set), it was pleasing to see several athletes, some new to the sport, use it as a springboard to excel at the English School's Championships a few weeks later. The Best Performance Trophies were awarded to Thaila – Jade Mason (Van Dyke IG 200m); Benedict Mercado II (Sam Whitbread JB Shot); and Harley Henry (Harlington JB Triple Jump)

Full results of both Championships are on our website.

ESAA Cross Country Championships

Following the County Championships, full teams were selected for the Junior and Inter Age groups but not the seniors, where there were not enough athletes. With over 300 runners in each race six of our athletes finished in the top 100 with Sophie Jacobs (Cedars), 4th, Noah Campion (Kimberley) 7th and Lyla Danobrega (Wootton) excelling. Sophie gained an England Vest for the Schools International where she did well to finish 8th.

The team managers (Rob Heaney, Tanya Fearon, Jodi Henderson and Andrea Campion) reported that "Aside from the running, the boys and girls were an absolute pleasure to be around all day. Behaviour and attitude were excellent." (Full report below)

ESAA Track & Field

The small team of only 17 athletes again reflected the lack of quality in depth in the county, but nevertheless they, as usual, punched above their weight. Three silver medals (Etienne Maughan (Bedford Girls) SG 100m hurdles) Lyla Danobrega (Wootton) IG 1500m Steeplechase and Thaila-Jade Mason (Van Dyke) IG Long Jump, were back up by seven other top eight performances. To top it all, the seniors won the inaugural 4x100 mixed relay and the inter girls the team trophy for the top team amongst the medium sized counties. The team managers (Hannah Douglas, Allen Adamson, Luci Preston and Gavin Fordham) commented that the team "were fully focussed and an absolute pleasure to take."

Lyla and Thaila were selected to represent England Schools in the international match in Scotland where they each finished second. Thaila's leap of exactly six metres placed her third on the UK Under 17 rankings.

Full report below; results on our website.

Combined Events:

With no county Pentathlons to guide us, individual athletes were selected to compete at the Regional CE Finals in Norwich. These were selected on the basis of nominations from clubs (no school nominated anyone) and the likelihood of them achieving a minimum score. Only two Inter Girls competed with Thaila – Jade Mason (Van Dyke) finishing 4th to qualify for the final, where illness prevented her from completing the event. (see full report below)

Schools Cup XC and T & F

It was very disappointing to see only five schools entered in the ESAA Track and Field Cup, as it is a great team competition which athletes love to compete in and is a good introduction to the athletics season. Eight teams from four schools qualified for the Eastern Region B final with Bedford Girls winning their match. None made it into the National Finals.

Eight teams were entered by 5 schools in the 2022 XC Cup, with none progressing to the regional final; whilst only five teams from two schools entered the 2023 event with Henlow Academy placing third in the Junior Girls County Round and achieving a very creditable 9th place in the Regional Final.

Staging ESAA Events

We again staged the ESAA Combined Events Finals (for the seventh time in fifteen years). There were some major problems leading up to the event, but in the end, it went well. Again, it is disappointing to note that there was little support in terms of volunteer help from schools especially as we receive a donation of £1000 from ESAA each time we stage it.

It is not known whether we shall stage this event in 2024 as the track needs resurfacing and if this work is carried out in 2024 (which is by no means certain) it could not be guaranteed to be completed in time for our event in September.

ESAA Transgender statement

Section 195 of the Equalities Act 2010, makes it lawful to restrict participation of transgender participants in competitions where physical strength, stamina or physique are major factors in determining success or failure, if this is necessary to uphold fair competition, but not otherwise.

This is effectively saying that if the physical strength, stamina or physique of the average pupil of one sex would put him or her at a significant advantage compared to the average pupil of the other sex as a competitor in a sport, game or other competitive activity, event organisers can legally restrict participation in the activity to pupils of one sex. Sports which come under this heading are referred to in the Act as a 'Gendered Activity'. Athletics is a Gendered activity.

For this reason, it is necessary to have in place a fair and considered policy to allow participation for all in Schools' events and ensure fair competition and the safety of all those participating.

In Formal ESAA competitions, the girls' category is for those who were recorded female at birth. This includes ESAA Track and Field Championships, ESAA Combined Events & Race-walking, ESAA Cross-Country, and ESAA Cup Competitions

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to our activities

My thanks go to Gav Fordham (secretary) and everyone who organised our events both, county and district, as well as those who acted as county and district team managers.

I should also like to acknowledge all the work done in clubs both in terms of coaching and competition which prepares our athletes to compete at District, County and ESAA National Championships

Dennis Johnson
Chairman

See below for full reports of ESAA Events

Report of ENGLISH SCHOOLS CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Wollaton Park Nottingham

Saturday 18 the March 2023

Sophie, Noah and Lyla Stars of the Show for Bedfordshire Schools

On a testing course with intermittent showers at Nottingham's Wollaton Park all members of the Bedfordshire team gave of their best, but the undoubted stars of the show for Bedfordshire were Sophie Jacobs (Cedars), Noah Champion (Kimberly) and Lyla Danobrega (Wootton)

In the Inter Girls race over 3900 metres, Sophie Jacobs started off as she meant to continue and was in the leading pack of 20 from the off. As the pace and terrain took its toll, a leading group of four broke away. Sophie stuck to her guns and stayed in contention with the second group of six runners in about 5th place overall. As they approached the finish, she forced herself into a magnificent 4th place in a time of 12 minutes 15 seconds – only 5 seconds behind the bronze medal winner. Despite not winning a medal, Sophie was delighted to gain selection to represent England Schools in the Home Countries Cross Country to be held in Liverpool on Saturday 25th March. Meanwhile in the same race, Lyla Danobrega was also running the race of her life. With half the race gone, she had worked her way up into the top twenty, steadily picking off other runners to be in 15th approaching the finish, where she gained another place to complete the course in 14th place in a time of 12 minutes 42 Seconds. Disappointed at not making the top ten and getting an international vest, but nevertheless happy with an exceptional run in such a prestigious race.

Experiencing a heavy shower and a much churned up course previously pounded by over 1600 runners, Noah Campion matched his seventh-place finish at the Inter-Counties Championships with another magnificent run in the Senior Boys race. Always in the large bunch at the front of the field, he moved through into the top ten after about a quarter of the race. With a group of four making a break with almost half the distance still to run. Noah maintained his position in the top ten. A strong finish saw him prevail over a group nine runners who were within 7 seconds of his time of 19 minutes 41 seconds. Although there is no international for seniors, he was delighted to have rounded off his best ever season in such superb style.

Other top 100 performances came from Lily Farr (Redborne) 53rd in Inter Girls; Nick Hammett (Cedars) 55th in Inter Boys; and Imogen Chesterton (Redborne) 88th in Senior Girls.

The team managers reported that “Aside from the running, the boys and girls were an absolute pleasure to be around all day. Behaviour and attitude were excellent.”

Team managers: Rob Heaney, Tanya Fearon, Jodi Henderson and Andrea Campion
Bedfordshire team results can be found on our website.

Full results can be found on the internet: look up English Schools XC 2023 results A video of the races can be found on you tube: look up English Schools XC 2023 Bedfordshire Schools Athletic Association

English Schools Track & Field Championships

Press report

Senior Relay Team the Golden Cherry on top of a Silver Speckled Cake

The Bedfordshire Schools Senior Relay Team put a golden cherry on top of a silver speckled cake at the English Schools Athletics Championships held at Birmingham’s Commonwealth Stadium last weekend.

In the inaugural running of the mixed 4 x 100m relay event, the well drilled quartet of Etienne Maughan (Bedford Girls), Jasmine Wilkins Bedford (Sixth Form), Daniel Harding-Forbes (Bedford Sixth Form) and Ben Moseray (Mark Rutherford) stormed away to win the “A” final in a time of 45.05 seconds, beating the time of the winners of the B final by over a second. With this being the first running of this particular event, their time will mean that Bedfordshire currently hold five Championships Best Performances from over the 98 years of these national championships.

The silver speckles come in the form of three silver medals over the two days of the championships.

On the first day of the championships, Thaila-Jade Mason (Van Dyke) contested the Inter Girls Long jump in the face of strong but varying winds. Nevertheless, her second jump went out to a new personal best of 5m 44cms placing her in 4th with the top eight athletes to have three further jumps. Waiting for the wind to drop, she was perfect on the board on her fifth jump cutting the sand at 5.59 metres some 20 centimetres further than she had ever before. This moved her into what she thought was third place, however she was wrong! When the final result was announced, she discovered that she had displaced the athlete in second by a single centimetre. Thaila’s delight at winning the silver was further heightened by the knowledge that she would be selected to represent England in the Schools International in Scotland on July 15th.

Joining her on the international team will be Wootton’s Lyla Danobrega whose silver medal in the Inter Girls 1500m Steeplechase was the product of a year’s planning a towards this goal. Having run the 1500m last year she switched her target to the steeplechase. Refusing to go with what, for her, would have been a suicidal fast pace set by the eventual winner, Lyla bided her time and slowly made her way through the field until on the final back straight she was in contention for the silver medal. With 200m to go she moved into 2nd, but the girl on her shoulder looked ominously strong. However, Lyla’ superior technique and concentration proved decisive as her rival fell in the water and Lyla powered down to home straight to an emphatic second place, recording a five second personal best time of 5 minutes 06.16 seconds.

Meanwhile Etienne Maughan (Bedford Girls) climaxed her English Schools career by adding a silver medal in the Senior Girls 100m Hurdles to the bronze she won at 80m Hurdles in 2021. She set a fourth personal

best of the season, clocking 14.00 sec to win her heat and then shaved another one-hundredth off recording 13.98 in the final. Whilst there is no school's international for seniors, Etienne is stepping onto a bigger stage having been invited to compete at the Great Britain Senior Championships to be held in Manchester next weekend.

As well as the gold and silvers there were a further seven top eight finishers and a total of five personal best set over a cold and blustery weekend. Gracie Wall (Samuel Whitbread) proud holder of a full set English Schools medals and current England U20 Champion finished a frustrated 4th in the Senior Girls High Jump (1.75m), having had her competition and concentration disrupted by the Grand Parade marching within a metre behind the start of her run up. She too has been invited to the GB Championships next weekend.

Noah Campion (Kimberly College) had a great run for 4th place in his first Championship in the Senior Boys 3000m (8m 44.75 sec) as did Nick Hammett (Cedars) also in his first Championship for 5th place in the 1500m Steeple chase. (4m 34.14 sec). Sophie Jacobs also of Cedars, ran within half a second of her best in her heat (4minutes 31.6) to claim a spot in the Inter Girls 1500m final, and followed up with another excellent run in the final for 6th place.

Old hand Zack Grinsted (Bedford Sixth Form) finished 7th in the Senior Boys discus with 42.22m - his second-best throw ever, whilst debutant Benedict Mercado II (Samuel Whitbread) set a huge personal best of 12.94m also for 7th place in the Junior Boys Shot. Euan Supple (Kimberly) College completed the top eight places with 8th place in the Senior Boys 2000m Steeplechase in 6 minutes 23.24 sec.

Special mention should also be given to Lily Farr (Redborne) who smashed her personal best by three seconds in the Inter Girls 1500m recording 4 m 41.82. Strong negative winds of up to minus 3.7 metre s per second destroyed the hopes of the sprinters for fast times and negatively affected other events as well. Four medals a further seven top eight places and five personal best represent an excellent return from a small Bedfordshire team of only 17 athletes

Anglian Schools Combined Events Finals

Website Report

Personal bests for both Orlagh and Thaila

Bedfordshire's Inter Girl's duo of Thaila Mason (Van Dyke) and Orlagh Brunning (St Thomas More) competed in their first ever Heptathlons at the Anglian Regional final of the English Schools Pentathlon Championships held in Boston on Sunday 25th June each of them posting a number of personal best performances.

Of the seven events, Orlagh set four personal bests (Hurdles, High Jump, Shot and 200m) to finish 9th with 3188 points; whilst Thaila set three personal bests (Hurdles, Shot and 200m) to score 4305 points finishing 4th and qualifying for the National finals.