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Alan Newman's reports appear in the KM every Friday

KENT CROSS COUNTRY LEAGUE

Beech Grove Academy, Nonington provided a testing course for the Kent Cross Country League held in incessant rain and wind on Saturday afternoon, writes Alan Newman.

Medway and Maidstone made good progress in the women's league as the men wait until later this month for their next clash at Sparrows Den, Hayes.

Tonbridge continue to dominate the young athletes' league with Blackheath and Bromley Harriers and Invicta East Kent prominent in the girls' races.

Senior Women

Medway and Maidstone AC won both team categories to edge ahead in the Kent Women's League team tables with one match remaining at Parkwood School, Swanley on February 8.

The league is delicately poised as M&M are one point clear of trophy holders Blackheath and Bromley Harriers at three-to-score and tied on match points with the same opponents at six-to-score.

Alex Clay (Invicta East Kent) stormed away from 88 finishers to win by the thick end of a minute in 18min49sec. The 18-year-old World and European Cross Country representative looked completely at home as she became the third different winner of the league this winter.

Another junior athlete, Nicole Taylor (Tonbridge), was second from leading master athletes Alice Heather-Hayes (W35, Tunbridge Wells Harriers) and Maria Heslop (W45, Paddock Wood) who had won the inaugural Tonbridge parkrun just a few hours earlier.

Rona Loubser (Folkestone Running Club) and Emily McKane (U20, Invicta) completed the top six ahead of M&M's winning team of Hannah Miller, Jenny Fowler (W35) and Louise Knight (W40).

Invicta finished second to M&M at Nonington with Blackheath third at three-to-score. At six-to-score it was Blackheath and Tunbridge Wells Harriers who were chasing the hardest.

The individual table shows Heather-Hayes (TWH) moving well clear in both the open and masters categories. Emily McKane (Invicta) provides the challenge in the open class and Jenny Fowler (M&M) is the best of the veteran opposition.

The over-70 men compete with the women over an appropriate distance and the winner on this occasion was Eric Schofield from his TWH team mate and league leader Bryon Taylor.

Young Athletes

More than 250 runners competed in the Kent Young Athletes cross country league races at Nonington as the enthusiasm is being maintained towards the finish line at Sparrows Den, Hayes on November 30.

Michael Eagling (Blackheath) consolidated his individual lead in the under-13 boys table by taking victory by four seconds from team-mate Peter Guy and Dan Schofield (Tonbridge). With Henri-James Cowie (5th) completing the scoring Blackheath won from Invicta and Tonbridge to hold their overall lead.

Alasdair Kinloch and Jamie Goodge made the perfect start for league leaders Tonbridge in the under-15s race, although there was an anxious wait for Scott Rowatt (7th) to complete the winning team. Blackheath Harriers were second and M&M third, with Jake Berry (3rd) in a podium position. The individual trophy will go to the holder Kinloch unless there is an upset in the final race.

George Duggan (Tonbridge) found an extra gear to inflict the first defeat of the league season by five seconds on Will Fuller (Blackheath) in the under-17s. Duggan led his team to success with support from Chris Cohen and Stuart Brown. League leaders Tonbridge finished ahead of Blackheath and Invicta but Will Fuller is the hot favourite to take the individual title on home soil.

Robbie Farnham-Rose (Tonbridge), Adam Wright (Cambridge Harriers) and Corey De'ath (Tonbridge) comprised another top quality under-20 podium as Calvin Fuss (Blackheath, 5th) edged nearer to the overall trophy. With James West (4th) completing the team Tonbridge were home if not exactly dry as Beech Grove Academy retains the initiative in the team tables.

Millie Smith (Blackheath) took her second successive win in the under-13 girls' league to virtually secure the individual title. Elizabeth Miller, Katie Burgess and Ellen Crombie claimed the necessary points for Tonbridge to defeat trophy holders Blackheath and Invicta on the day and overall.

Sabrina Sinha (Cambridge Harriers) enjoyed a 38 seconds margin of victory over four Blackheath athletes in the under-15s race. Yasmin Austridge, Naomi Kingston and Kelsey Fuss ensured team success for Blackheath from Invicta and Tonbridge to mirror the current league standings. It seems certain there will be a win for a Blackheath athlete in the final standings as three members of that club are separated by two points with Naomi Kingston in pole position.

The under-17s race resulted in a win for Bobby Clay (Invicta) by 39 seconds. The 2013 World Cross Country junior team bronze medallist has been added to UK Athletics' Futures funding programme along with coach, Peter Mullervy, following a tremendous year that included 1500m gold at the World Schools. League leader Amy Old (Invicta) was runner-up and Niamh Bridson-Hubbard (Blackheath) third but with Lilly Coward (6th) it was Invicta that prevailed in the team race from Blackheath and Tonbridge. In the jointly held under-20 race league leader Cassie Benson (Dartford Harriers) won from Blackheath's Bethany Frost and Lorna Clowes.

Alan Newman