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Alan Newman's reports appear in the KM every Friday

KENT CROSS COUNTRY LEAGUE
Somerhill School, Tonbridge. Saturday 24th October 2015.

Senior Men

Tonbridge AC put four men into the top eight and an unstoppable twelve in 23 to destroy the opposing team's hopes as the halfway point was reached in the four race series.

On a slick surface after a heavy shower, the correct choice of footwear and good cornering skills were essential on this revised circuit that now includes one of the longest hills in Kent cross-country running.

Kings College student, Max Nicholls (Tonbridge), was ninth in the World and fifth in the European Junior Mountain Running Championships this year and has been an international since winning the British Championships in 2013, so his victory by 10 seconds over league leader Ben Cole was not a big surprise.

Abel Tsegay (Invicta East Kent) was a further six seconds in arrears to claim second under-20 junior behind the victor. Alex Bruce-Littlewood (Blackheath & Bromley Harriers), Tom Cox (Tonbridge) and Rob Jackaman (Cambridge Harriers) completed the top six with the gaps somewhat larger than usual due to the tough course.

Dan Bradley (8th) completed the winning Tonbridge team as he squeezed home between the former Kent champion Mike Coleman (South Kent) and defending league champion, Tom Collins (Medway & Maidstone).

Tonbridge had further cause to celebrate as M40 Andrew Mercer (15th) and M50 Graeme Saker (34th) led the masters' categories. M60 James Graham (Sevenoaks) headed the higher age-group category and Richard Seabrook (Beckenham) took the separate M70 race held within the women's event.

Medway & Maidstone were team runners-up, boosted by the progress made by Adrian Lowther (11th). Blackheath were a close third in the chase for the Kent Messenger cup. At 12-to-score, Tonbridge were an extraordinary 459 points clear of Blackheath with M&M third and there is now clear daylight between Tonbridge and the chasing pack in both competitions.

The remaining men's races are at Sparrows Den, Hayes on November 7 and Foots Cray Meadow on February 13.

Senior Women

The absence of first race winner, Ashley Gibson (Tonbridge), allowed junior Niamh Bridson-Hubbard (Blackheath and Bromley Harriers) a clear run to victory through the torrential rain in the women's race at Somerhill School. Bridson-Hubbard was twenty yards clear after the short opening loop and built a cushion of 44 seconds over team-mate Elaine Rayner after two full circuits amounting to 5k, with Caroline Ford (Cambridge Harriers) in third place.

Paddock Wood's international class W45 masters, Maria Heslop and Tina Oldershaw were next, ahead of Emily Gelder (Cambridge Harriers). The other age-group leaders were W35 Claire Day (Paddock Wood, 13th) and W55 Vicky Talbot-Rosner (Invicta, 49th).

With host club Tonbridge surprisingly quiet, it was Paddock Wood home first as Sarah Shephard (7th) completed their team. Blackheath and Bromley and Cambridge Harriers were the next to finish three scorers, followed by Medway and Maidstone, with Steph Hearn (8th) and Louise Knight (10th) prominent.

At six-to-score Blackheath were clear winners from Medway & Maidstone and Cambridge Harriers with holders Tonbridge failing to score. Blackheath now leads both team categories with two races remaining.

The league concludes with races at Danson Park, Bexleyheath on November 28 and Foots Cray Meadow on February 13.

Young Athletes - Male

Tonbridge AC took all four male young athletes' teams at Somerhill plus three individual victories. Only Blackheath's first match under-13 winner, Rowan Fuss, could stem the tide as the hosts dominated proceedings. Fuss was almost a minute clear of Bashiri Ryan (M&M) as James Crawley and Fin Croll finished next to set up the team win for Tonbridge from Blackheath and M&M.

James Stoney (Tonbridge) improved from second last time to win the under-15 race by four seconds from Cambridge Harriers' Matthew Francis and Tom Simpson, Joseph Georgiadis (Blackheath) and Quinn Austin (M&M). It was the superior packing of Invicta East Kent's team that secured runners-up spot after a tie with Blackheath, with M&M a point away in third.

Alasdair Kinloch led his Tonbridge team to success at under-17 level but only had two seconds to spare as Jake Berry (M&M) staged a storming finish. The leaders went a minute clear of Tonbridge's Sam Crick and Daniel Blades who ensured further team success ahead of M&M and Blackheath.

Some of the gloss was lost from the under-20 race as half the juniors chose to support their senior men's teams. However, steeplechaser Stuart Brown was a worthy winner for Tonbridge from his club colleague Euan Nicholls, Jamie Atkins (Dartford Harriers) and Cameron Payas (M&M). With just fourteen starters only Tonbridge and M&M finished with complete teams.

Young Athletes - Female

For the second successive match this winter four different clubs provided the individual winners in the female young athletes' races at Somerhill Schools. Blackheath and Bromley forged ahead in the under-13 table as Ellie Dolby won her second league race from Katie Goodge (Tonbridge) and Brooke O'Hare (Thanet). The holders were clear team winners from Tonbridge and Invicta East Kent.

Thanet Road Runners enjoyed their best moment when Beth Williams went 18 seconds clear to win the under-15 race from Millie Smith (Blackheath). Clara Tyler and Elizabeth Miller finished fast to lead Tonbridge to team success by one point from Blackheath with Thanet third.

Sabrina Sinha (Cambridge Harriers) had 25 seconds spare as she dominated the under-17 race. Holly Page (Dartford Harriers) was the closest opponent as Jessica Keene led three more Blackheath athletes to an unopposed team win.

Lilly Coward (Invicta) and Bonnie Maughey (Dartford Harriers) were the only under-20s running in the combined race with the under-17s.

The young athletes' league has two races to run at Hayes on November 7 and Bexleyheath on November 29.

Full results at www.kcaa.org.uk

Alan Newman