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Alan Newman's reports appear in the KM every Friday

KENT CROSS COUNTRY LEAGUE FINAL
Footscray Meadows, Saturday 13th February 2016

Senior Women

Tina Oldershaw, of Paddock Wood, became the oldest ever winner of the Kent Women's Cross Country League since her own previous victory in the 2012/13 season, writes Alan Newman.

Oldershaw was 45-years-old when she made history by becoming the first veteran athlete to claim the prestigious Cliff Temple Memorial Trophy and now aged 48 she repeated that remarkable feat as she crossed the muddy finish line at Foots Cray Meadows on Saturday.

Oldershaw did not need to win the race to take the title and that honour fell to under-20 junior, Niamh Bridson-Hubbard, who led Blackheath and Bromley Harriers to team success on the day and overall in the league.

W40 master Carole Penlington (B&B) also slipped across the finish line ahead of the new champion who fought hard to resist the strong finish of Paddock Wood club-mate and fellow over-45 competitor Maria Heslop.

When Sarah Shephard finished fifth for Paddock Wood it seemed an unlikely upset was on the cards but Sarah Belaon (7th) secured a narrow team victory for Blackheath and that was just enough for the trophy by a single point.

Shephard, with a less consistent season than her older club-mate, finished second overall for her best individual result to date and Anoushka Johnson (W40, Dartford Harriers) was third overall in the league table.

Age-group leaders included W35 Claire Day (Paddock Wood, 7th), W55 league champion Vicky Talbot-Rosner (Invicta, 30th) and new W65 entrant, Sue James (Paddock Wood, 56th).

Medway and Maidstone were the third team overall, despite finishing fourth behind host club Cambridge Harriers in the final race. Stephanie Hearn (10th) led the M&M challenge at Foots Cray and was fourth in the league table.

There were 162 competitors in the women's division this winter, slightly down on recent seasons. Blackheath and Bromley were also strongest at 6-to-score and took this category from the emerging Greenwich Tritons Triathlon Club.

Senior Men

Tom Cox (Tonbridge) took his first Kent League senior men's title in style with an impressive victory by 16 seconds over league runner-up Michael Coleman (South Kent Harriers).

The final race was crucial as the winning margin was a single point, so either athlete could have secured the individual trophy at this fourth and final race. There were 320 finishers in the league this winter, one less than last year. Tonbridge retained the Kent Messenger Cup and Duodec 12-to-score trophy with a dominant performance that matched their form all winter.

Daniel Bradley (3rd), Tim Corby (4th) and Julian Rendall (6th) produced an insurmountable team score to defeat Blackheath and Bromley Harriers on the day and overall.

Rob Jackaman (Cambridge Harriers) was below his best in tenth but just held on to third overall in the league. Age-group leaders at Footh Cray were league category winners Richard Newsome (M40 South Kent Harriers, 11th) and Graeme Saker (M50 Tonbridge, 27th).

Jerry Carnell (Cambridge Harriers, 54th) led the over-60s but that age-group champion was James Graham (Sevenoaks). In the separate M70 race the winner was Vernon Thomas (Greenwich Tritons) but as the only man to contest all four races, Bryon Taylor (Tonbridge Wells Harriers) gained the overall award.

Dartford Harriers were third team on the day but it was fifth-placed Medway and Maidstone, led by Adrian Lowther with his best of the season (5th), who finished third overall in the league.

With Tonbridge well clear in the 12-to-score race it was Cambridge Harriers and Tunbridge Wells Harriers who finished strongest to claim the runners-up places. Full results at www.kcaa.org.uk

Alan Newman