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**Alan Newman's reports appear in the KM every Friday**

**KENT CROSS COUNTRY LEAGUE, NEW BARN PARK, SWANLEY**

Senior Men

Defending champion Dean Lacy (Cambridge Harriers) opened his account in the 2012/13 Kent Men's cross country league season with a narrow victory in perfect racing conditions at New Barn Park, Swanley on Saturday.

A good quality field of 200 runners saw three juniors in the top seven places as Medway and Maidstone AC took an early lead in the Kent Messenger Cup competition.

Lacy was undefeated throughout last winter's league campaign but he would not have had a harder race than this battle with Andy Rayner (Blackheath and Bromley Harriers) who was only three seconds in arrears at the finish line.

Ryan Driscoll made a good start for defending champions Tonbridge AC, who had another under-20 prospect Charlie Joslin-Allen in fifth place behind Sam Coombes (Dartford Harriers).

The winning Medway team then filed through in close order. Jack Tyler (6th) was followed by Adam Gilbert, Tom Collins and Mark Wilkins to secure the top spot from trophy holders Tonbridge AC and Blackheath and Bromley.

Top masters performances were achieved by M40 Paul Hasler (Paddock Wood, 13th), M50 Kevin Williams (Ashford, 52nd) and M60 Julian Spencer-Wood (Greenwich Tritons, 103rd). The M70 men run a shorter course along with the senior women and the winner was the defending champion, Eric Schofield (Tonbridge Wells Harriers).

Medway and Maidstone also took the advantage in the Duodec Cup event for twelve-to-score teams from Tonbridge and Blackheath and Bromley Harriers.

The remaining men's league races are at Somerhill School, Tonbridge on October 27; Danson Park, Bexleyheath on December 1 and Parkwood School, Swanley on February 9.

Senior Women

Clare Elms (Beckenham Runners) won an exciting first Kent Women's cross country league encounter of the season at Swanley with just one second to spare over the double under-17 champion, Nicole Taylor (Tonbridge). Elaine Murty (Blackheath and Bromley) was seven seconds behind in third place. There were 110 finishers.

Elms is arguably the most prolific and versatile master athlete in Britain at present and her 2012 UK W45 top ranking events range from 1500m to 20 miles. Taylor has only just stepped up to senior competition after winning the Sussex Schools 1500m and Sussex junior 3000m track titles earlier this year.

Murty was the Kent 800m and 1500m champion last year but even her impressive finishing speed was no match for the two fine athletes who took top honours in this opening contest.

W40 Maria Heslop and W45 Tina Oldershaw of Paddock Wood were next to finish, proving once again that age is no barrier to success in endurance events.

Francesca Green (Blackheath and Bromley) and W35 Alice Heather-Hayes (Tonbridge Wells Harriers) followed in close order ahead of M&M trio Lucy Hale (8th), Mary Edmonds (9th) and W35 Jenny Fowler (11th).

There were seven master athletes in the top dozen and the W55 leader was former British Masters 60m record holder Helen Godsell (Blackheath, 58th).

Blackheath defeated Medway and Maidstone and trophy holders Tonbridge at both three and six-to-score team events in this first of four races in the league.

The other matches are at Somerhill School, Tonbridge on October 27; Beech Grove Academy, Nonington on November 10 and Parkwood School, Swanley on February 9.

### Young Athletes

The power base remained with Tonbridge AC after the first round of races in the Kent Young Athletes cross country league at Swanley Park on Saturday. Tonbridge were triumphant in all three male team events and also enjoyed a clean sweep of podium positions at under-15 level. There were 230 athletes competing in the eight race programme.

Charlie Crick set Tonbridge on their way with a win in the under-13s from Noah Armitage-Hookes of Cambridge Harriers and Jake Potter (Blackheath). James Puxty (4th) and Oliver Plunkett (6th) secured the victory for the West Kent team. Blackheath and Bromley and Cambridge Harriers were the closest challengers in the team race.

The 2012 under-13 league champion Alasdair Kinloch, recruited from Thanet Road Runners, swept the opposition aside along with Chris Cohen and Stuart Brown to win the under-15 race for Tonbridge. Ashford AC was second team led by Declan Burton (5th) and Blackheath and Bromley Harriers were third.

George Duggan, the under-15 title holder, took another individual win for Tonbridge in the under-17 race from Jack Goss (Invicta East Kent) and Tonbridge team mates Corey De'ath and James West. Invicta and Bexley were hanging on in the team event.

Neil Daughters won a poorly supported under-20 race from Ashford team mate Andrew Robertson and Seth Zimmerman of Beech Grove Academy. Six junior men had finished in the top 20 positions in the senior men's race.

The under-13 girls' race saw a close finish between Holly Page (Dartford) and defending champion, Naomi Kingston (Blackheath), with two seconds being the margin at the line. Kathleen Faes led Tonbridge to victory with third place from Blackheath and Invicta. Eleanor Cohen (4th) and Genevieve Allan (6th) sealed the win for Tonbridge.

Sabrina Sinha secured the sole success for Cambridge Harriers in the under-15s from Anna Weston (Invicta) and Jessica Keene of the winning Blackheath team. Invicta and Tonbridge battled for the minor places.

Invicta were dominant in the under-17s where the 2010 and 2011 under-15 champion Bobby and her sister Alex Clay continued their sibling rivalry. Amy Old (4th) secured top billing for the Invicta squad. Sophie Foreman was third to help Tonbridge to finish ahead of Blackheath in the team race.

Casey Porritt (Dartford Harriers) won the under-20 event from Cambridge Harriers' Cassia Soards and Megan Williams. No teams finished intact as a dozen junior women supported their clubs in the senior race.

The young athletes' league will be decided after matches at Somerhill School, Tonbridge on October 27; Beech Grove Academy, Nonington on November 10 and Danson Park, Bexleyheath on December 1.

**Alan Newman**