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Alan Newman's athletics reports appear in the Kent Messenger each Friday

KENT MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY LEAGUE

Andy Combs was a surprise winner of the first Kent Men's cross country league race of the winter at West Wickham on Saturday, writes Alan Newman.

The 18-year-old Tonbridge runner, coached by Mark Hookway, is the Kent junior champion but new found reserves of stamina took him 33 seconds clear of Alex Bruce-Littlewood of the host club, Blackheath and Bromley Harriers on this switchback Sparrows Den course.

League champion, Huw Jones was third for Tonbridge followed by Tom Collins of Medway and Maidstone, Dan Bradley of Tonbridge and Joe Durrant of Cambridge Harriers. There were 144 finishers in the opening race of the season.

With Ben Cole ninth for Tonbridge, the title holders easily took the team win from former winners Medway and Maidstone, who had Adrian Lowther (7th), Ben Tyler (14th) and James Hogg (17th) to thank for a positive start.

Invicta East Kent AC were third, led by James Cotton (8th), ahead of Blackheath and Bromley Harriers, Paddock Wood AC and Cambridge Harriers. At twelve to score, Tonbridge took a healthy lead from Blackheath and Bromley Harriers and Tunbridge Wells Harriers.

Ominously for the opposition, the next race is at The Schools at Somerhill in Tonbridge on Saturday, October 23.

KENT WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY LEAGUE

Deirdre McDermott of Tonbridge AC made the perfect start to her defence of the individual title with a narrow win in the first Kent Women's cross country league race of the 2010-11 campaign, writes Alan Newman.

Tina Oldershaw of Paddock Wood made the Irish woman work hard for her victory and the W40 England masters international still led as the athletes emerged from the hilly woodland section for the last time.

McDermott struck with 400m to run and stretched away to victory by nine seconds, with Helcha Penfold third for Medway and Maidstone. Master athletes Jennie Butler (Blackheath and Bromley) and Helen Wheeler (Folkestone) were next, followed by under 20 junior Catherine Symons (Tonbridge).

Blackheath and Bromley Harriers head the table after the opening encounter from Invicta East Kent AC and defending league champions, Tonbridge AC. The next race is at The Schools at Somerhill in Tonbridge on Saturday, October 23.

KENT YOUNG ATHLETES CROSS COUNTRY LEAGUE

Tonbridge AC took five team and three individual wins in the Kent Young Athletes cross country league match at West Wickham on Saturday, writes Alan Newman. Clean sweeps were achieved in the under 13s, under 15s and under 17 men's races in an astonishing display of dominance.

In the under 13s race Stuart Brown, Toby Ralph and Euan Nicholls were split by four seconds, with Thomas Kendrick fourth for added security. Tonbridge were chased by Blackheath and Bromley and Medway and Maidstone in the team race.

In the under 15s it was the turn of Max Nicholls, George Duggan and Hanro Rossouw to freeze out the opposition. Ashford AC and Bexley AC were the best of the rest of the teams.

At under 17s level, there were five Tonbridge athletes in the first six places. Robbie Farnham-Rose, Luca Russo and Charlie Joslin-Allen claimed the podium with Ryan Driscoll and Henry Pearce close behind. Kieran Reilly did well to put the red vest of Invicta in the frame in sixth. Invicta and Blackheath and Bromley were the next two clubs to finish.

Rob MacDonald of Cambridge Harriers won the under 20s race from John Dickinson (Tonbridge) and Jamie Bailey (Invicta) with no team interest.

The girl's races were more open with winners representing three different clubs. Georgina Taylor of Blackheath and Bromley took the under 13s from her club mate Niahm Bryson-Hubbard and Ellen Whitehead of Invicta East Kent. Blackheath and Bromley, Invicta and Cambridge Harriers were the top three teams.

Tonbridge were back to their winning ways in the under 15s, although Bobby Clay of Invicta took a narrow individual victory by four seconds from Alice Wood (Tonbridge) and Grace Derome (Cambridge Harriers). Blackheath and Bromley and Invicta were the chasing clubs.

Tonbridge also won the under 17s from Blackheath and Bromley but the top three individuals were Beth Armstrong (Bexley), Ellie Hume (Invicta) and Nicole Taylor of Tonbridge.

Only three athletes contested the under 20s race and Michelle Fewster of the home club won from her colleague Danielle Critchley and Samantha Beckett

of Ashford. However, five juniors chose to compete for their clubs in the senior women's race.

The next races are at The Schools at Somerhill in Tonbridge on Saturday, October 23.

Alan Newman