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

KENT MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY LEAGUE

Medway and Maidstone AC and Tonbridge AC are locked together at the head of the Kent Men's cross country league table in the race to secure the Kent Messenger Cup this winter, writes Alan Newman.

The third league race was held on Saturday on a slippery, switchback course at Sparrows Den, West Wickham with a healthy field of 162 athletes finishing.

Medway and Maidstone seized the initiative from Tonbridge with team victories at both four and twelve-to-score. Mike Coleman (M&M) set off in determined fashion and led the race after the first full lap. However, Dean Lacy of Cambridge Harriers produced a burst of speed on the second lap to notch up his third successive victory this year.

The winning margin was 33 seconds from the consistent Coleman, who was joined by Tom Collins (5th), Adam Gilbert (7th) and Jack Tyler (8th) in the winning M&M team.

Ben Cole was third overall and led Julian Rendall (6th), Daniel Bradley (9th) and Jamie Bryant (12th) to second team position to keep Tonbridge in the hunt for honours.

Sam Coombes (4th) ran very well for Dartford Harriers and the top ten was completed by Colin Norris of host club Blackheath and Bromley Harriers, who were third on the day and hold fourth in the league behind Invicta East Kent.

The season's showdown is at Parkwood School, Swanley on February 11 next year, together with the Kent Women's league deciding race. It will be one not to miss, with the top teams being so evenly matched this winter.

KENT YOUNG ATHLETES LEAGUE

The fourth and final Kent Young Athletes cross country league races were held at West Wickham on Saturday and the team and individual awards were presented on the day, writes Alan Newman.

Over 200 athletes competed in eight categories in the fourth and final races to decide the destination of the league trophies. The host club, Blackheath and Bromley Harriers, claimed two female team awards but it was one-way traffic for Tonbridge AC in the male categories.

Alasdair Kinloch of Thanet Road Runners, Scott Rowatt of Medway and Maidstone and Jamie Goodge of Tonbridge repeated their podium positions from the previous clash in the under-13 boy's race at Danson Park last month.

Those were also the final individual positions after four league races this year. Tonbridge won the team race on the day and the Cove Memorial Cup overall from Medway and Maidstone and Blackheath and Bromley. Defending champion, George Duggan of Tonbridge, took his fourth under-15 race of the winter from Jack Goss and Tim Forsyth of Ashford. Duggan wins the league with his 100% record from Goss and Joe O'Hara of Bexley AC. Ashford inflicted a rare defeat on Tonbridge but the white vests prevailed overall for the Medway Cup from Ashford and Bexley.

Sean Molloy and Corey De'ath set up victory for Tonbridge in the under-17 men's race. James West of Medway and Maidstone had battled hard for the bronze position ahead of a trio of Bexley athletes. De'ath was rewarded for his consistency with the league title, from Molloy and Thomas Wright of Bexley. Tonbridge claimed the Youth Cup from Bexley and Medway and Maidstone.

Warren Uden of Ashford won the final under-20 men's race and the overall trophy from William Hayward of Thanet Road Runners and Sam Hudson of Invicta East Kent. There were no complete teams in this category.

Naomi Kineston and Jessica Keene of Blackheath and Bromley Harriers reprised their one-two from their previous outing in the under-13 girls' race. Eleanor Cohen of Tonbridge was third to ensure the final race reflected the individual positions overall. Blackheath and Bromley are the winners of the Kent Women's League trophy from Tonbridge and Medway and Maidstone.

Defending under-15 league champion, Bobby Clay of Invicta, completed her perfect season with a 40 seconds victory in the final race over Leah Melvin of Tonbridge and Anna Weston of the winning Invicta team. Clay is the winner overall from Weston and Melvin, who tied for second place. Tonbridge and Blackheath and Bromley provided the team challenge.

Alex Clay of Invicta surprised league champion, Nicole Taylor of Tonbridge, to win the under-17 race. Alice Wood of Tonbridge completed the rostrum on the day. Taylor retained her individual trophy from Amber Reed of Blackheath and Bromley and there was a tie for third between Amelia Jones of Ashford and Ellen Newark of Bexley. Tonbridge took the Kent Women's League trophy from Blackheath and Bromley and Bexley.

Claire Parkin completed a successful day for Blackheath and Bromley by winning the under-20 women's race from Bethany Burnett of Invicta and Louise Blair of Medway and Maidstone. There was a clean sweep of the individual awards for Blackheath and Bromley athletes Michelle Fewster, Chelsea Crouser and Parkin. The host club also celebrated an overall win in the league after no other clubs could mount any meaningful opposition.

Alan Newman