

HERNE HILL HARRIERS YOUNG ATHLETES REPORT FOR 2007 TO 2008

The past year has been a mixed one for the young athletes section with some outstanding individual results tempered by relegation for the National Young Athletes League team.

Success included the boys winning the Ebbisham League title for the fourth successive year, the girls reaching the Lily B Plate final, our U13s winning the East Surrey League and some superb individual performances both in major championships, which included four English Schools winners, and in achieving club records and high national rankings.

Our improvement in our young athletes' performances over road running and cross country continued last winter with more athletes competing and better results as we continued to make a mark at regional and national level. James McDonald's group has continued to average over twenty most evenings irrespective of the weather and we now regularly close teams in major championships. Last winter we had another long trip where we took a coach full to Alton Towers for the National cross country championships, closing five teams in the younger age groups after which we incorporated a day out at the theme park.

Highlights of last winter included the U13 boys team winning Surrey Cross Country League title for the third successive year and the U15 girls coming second in both the Surrey County champs and cross country relays as well as fourth in the Southern road relays. We won the U13 age group and had three individual age group winners in the East Surrey League. We also had our best ever results in the London mini marathon with top ten finishes from Phillipa de La Rosee, Hannah Edwards, Lewis Lloyd, Katie Snowden and Samuel Woods.

Katie Snowden became the first girl from the club to ever win a gold medal at the Inter Counties cross country championships when part of the winning Surrey U15 girls' team in March - all the members of which are still eligible for the same title this winter. Hannah Edwards, Maysie Hilliare and Lewis Lloyd were London Schools cross country champions and eight athletes were chosen to represent London in the English Schools championships. We continued to promote distance running locally by holding two schools cross country meetings in Brockwell Park as well as the local borough mini marathon trials.

Already this autumn we have closed five teams in the Southern road relays and our U15 girls have won bronze medals in the Surrey Cross Country relays. Already this winter season over 40 youngsters have competed for the club and our teams are all in contention for league honours after match one of the Surrey Cross Country leagues.

Last winter's Sportshall series was again immensely popular and successful. We took over 40 athletes to each of the Surrey U13 / 15 matches, ten athletes were chosen to represent Surrey in the inter counties match at Guildford and eight travelled to Birmingham in April for the National finals which unfortunately were abandoned due to a slippery floor. Once again Sportshall proved to be invaluable, giving enjoyable competition to everyone. During last spring we organised primary and secondary school Sportshall competitions and are also involved in local schools talent ID schemes and training days. Significantly, we have linked closer with

Wandsworth Sports Development for Sportshall activities, with several athletes from the club helping Wandsworth win the London mini games.

The indoor season was again busy with a growing calendar of fixtures now that Picketts Lock has opened which has raised the quality of local indoor competition. Our star performers in this age group during the winter were Michael Wheeler, who set a new indoor club record with 19.09m, won the National title in February and closed the winter season with another win in the Surrey indoor championships in March with a championship best, Katie Snowden and Hannah Edwards who showed great promise for the summer by winning 800m titles at the Southern championships and Blade Ashby who won the South of England indoor pentathlon title.

Our main target of the track and field season was to perform well in the premier division of the National Young Athletes League. Having won promotion the year before, we found the gap between the two divisions too steep and were unable to retain our premier division status, losing out on match points difference. The standard was extremely high but we contributed to our downfall by finishing last in two matches and, although we rallied in the final two matches, we were never able to challenge or take points off the top teams. In the end, our poor performance in match three at Havering when we finished last cost us our premier division status.

Our problem areas were principally the U17 women where apart from a few notable exceptions most of the athletes believed the season started in June and finished in July and unusually in the U13 boys and girls where we struggled all season for quality and depth. At this level we were exposed in our weak events such as the hammer, 3000m and steeplechase and not having a full complement of pole vaulters regularly cost us points.

Match one at Eton was always going to be pivotal featuring Windsor Slough Eton & Hounslow, who were to go onto be National champions, Enfield & Haringey, who were to win the auxiliary final and Team Southampton who had also been promoted, but covered all events and consequently, despite a good team effort, we finished last by 40 points. Despite putting up a good effort, we were punished for not covering all the events even though we covered 90%, but the overall quality of the match was too strong for us.

In a very tight match two at home we battled to a second place including beating Harrow – an excellent scalp - but again lost out to Reading who had been promoted and won by virtue of covering all events. In a weaker match three we were badly affected by exams in the U17s events and really struggled, having our worst match of the season, and critically were beaten by Havering who were also to be relegated.

We put in much better performances in the final two matches at Croydon and Norwich but the overall depth of the top clubs in this division meant we could manage no more than two third places. We needed to come second in our final match at Norwich and took a large team but again crucial gaps cost us vital points and we could only finish third meaning we were level on points with Woodford Green but went down due to our lower aggregate points score. Our match points scores during the season of 345, 406, 340, 388 and 350 highlighted our season: consistent and quite respectable, but not good enough at this level and unable to be competitive with the very top, elite clubs.

Many thanks to James McDonald, Hugh Allwood, Les Johnson and Horace Williams who were key members of the management team and put a lot of effort into cajoling the team in sometimes difficult circumstances and to our regular band of helpers who

earned points for the club by officiating, especially Jak Stegner who came to every match and helped co-ordinate the helpers, often not having a break in the field all afternoon. To their credit, the team members were never overawed by the challenge of the premier division and we had our fair share of individual winners. To address the situation, we are increasing our number of coaches on club evenings, ensuring we have specialist throwing and hurdle coaches.

At local level, we retained our Ebbisham League title for U13, U15 and U17 boys, winning our final two matches and beating Kingston and Poly by one point. After two matches, Kingston and HHH had both won one match each, but in the final, deciding match at Kingsmeadow we had an excellent turn out and won by 50 points. It is the fourth successive time we have won the Ebbisham League which means Steve Bosley remains the league secretary.

In our second season in the Lily B league for U13, U15 and U17 girls we won the opening match at Tooting Bec and qualified for the final after finishing third in the final league table. However, the final was right at the end of September and we struggled to get a full team out, finishing last. It is hoped that the Lily B league will get a better response from girls next summer as it provides excellent competition for all standards, especially newcomers.

Our young athletes performed with great distinction at the various championships during the summer.

At the Surrey County indoor championships in March, gold medallists were:

U15 boys	Blade Ashby	60m and 60m hurdles
	Khalil Njoya	shot
U17 men	Michael Wheeler	shot (CBP)
	Matthew Walcott	60m and 60m hurdles

At the Surrey County championships in May and September, gold medallists were:

U13 girls	Lakesha Abrams-Quamina	shot and discus
U15 boys	Blade Ashby	pentathlon
	Khalil Njoya	shot and discus
	Sylvester Akpalara	400m
U17 men	Simeon Ramsey Graham	100m and 200m
	Johnny Fairclough	javelin

Significantly, medals were down in the U13 age groups, showing the weakness in that age group this summer.

At the Southern championships at Ashford Katie Snowden was the first female distance runner from the club to ever win such a high profile championship when winning the U15 girls' 800m and Hannah Edwards also set a new club record when second in the U17 women's 800m, both having been second in the Surreys.

Khalil Njoya completed a marvellous double by winning the U15 boys' shot and discus titles.

24 athletes were selected for the English Schools championships in Gateshead in July, one of the highest from any club nationally.

Gold medallists:

Khalil Njoya	Junior Boys discus
Funto Fabunmi-Alade	Junior Girls 200m
Paul Oluyemi	Senior Boys long jump

Bronze medallists:

Julien Allwood	Intermediate Boys triple jump
Michael Wheeler	Intermediate Boys shot
Simeon Ramsey-Graham	Intermediate Boys 200m

Finalists:

Jade Phillips
Katie Snowden (4th)
Asha Forde Scille
Hannah Edwards
Charlotte Kanini-Parsons
Matthew Walcott
Gabrielle Rosjee (4th)

At the National championships at Sheffield in August Khalil Njoya won a silver medal in the discus and Rosa Williams a bronze in the U17 women's pole vault whilst of the eight athletes that competed all but one reached the top eight or final in their events. We had a large number of young athletes selected for Surrey in inter counties matches during the summer, gaining important experience.

At the UK Schools Games for U17s, which is increasing in status, in August Michael Wheeler returned to top form setting a new outdoor club record of 18.86m when winning the shot and Rosa Williams was third in the pole vault and Julien Allwood third in the triple jump.

The summer closed with one of the best performances of the summer when Blade Ashby won the English schools pentathlon title setting a new club record of 2977 points. Blade had improved all summer also setting a new high jump club record of 1.88m at an inter counties match in August

A number of club records fell, several improving by large margins during the season:

U13 girls	Lakesha Abrams Quamina	discus
U15 girls	Funto Fabunmi-Alade	200m
U15 girls	Katie Snowden	400m and 800m (also U17 record)
U17 women	Hannah Edwards	800m, 1500m & 3000m
U17 women	Rosa Williams	pole vault (also U20 and senior record)
U15 boys	Khalil Njoya	discus
U15 boys	Blade Ashby	equalled 80m hurdles, high jump and pentathlon
U17 men	Michael Wheeler	shot

In the National rankings the following athletes featured highly (top 30):

U17 men			
Simeon Ramsey Graham	13 th	200m	22.16

Jonny Fairclough	21st javelin	52.19m
Julien Allwood	5th triple jump	14.12m
Matthew Walcott	7 th 100m hurdles	13.38
Michael Wheeler	1 st shot	18.86m (indoors 19.09m)

U15 boys

Sylvester Akpalara	3 rd 200m	51.31
Blade Ashby	1 st pentathlon	2977 pts
	3 rd high jump	1.88m
	11 th 80m hurdles	11.54
Khalil Njoya	2 nd shot	14.51m
	3 rd discus	44.80m
Lewis Lloyd	14 th 800m	2:02.0

U17 women

Hannah Edwards	7 th 800m	2:10.40
Rosa Williams	7 th pole vault	3.32m
Charlotte Kanini Parsons	12 th javelin	37.82m
Gabrielle Roseje	21 st shot	10.52m

U15 girls

Funto Fabunmi-Alade	3 rd 200m	25.0
Katie Snowden	2 nd 800m	2:11.10
	19 th 200m	25.8
	22 nd 100m	12.6
	1 st 400m	56.4
	(also 2 nd in U17 and 17 th in U20)	

U13 girls

Lakesha Abrams-Quamina	2 nd discus	30.86m
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On reflection it was a mixed season for the young athletes section but it should be remembered the increasing number of young athletes who contributed greatly to the successes of the senior track teams this season, Paul Oluyemi, Thomas Ashby, Julien Allwood and Shola Ojo all competed regularly in the senior men's British League team as well as many being part of the Southern Men's League and Rosenheim teams and the influence was even more pronounced in the senior women's team where in the UK Women's League qualifying match seven of the team (nearly half) had started with the club as U15s. Hannah Edwards, too young for the qualifying match, also won the 800m to help us win the Plate final.

We currently average over fifty young athletes training every evening in all weathers which is a tribute to our coaches who work so hard with the young athletes. We also noticed a greater involvement and support from parents this year. Already this autumn there are several young athletes in their first few months in the sport who look likely to progress through to national / county level. Many have been identified at schools through our coaching programme which we have continued due to securing

additional funding. During the year we have supplied coaching in local schools and have been able to increase our numbers having received funding from Lambeth and Wandsworth Education departments. We also obtained funding for several junior athletes to obtain level one coaching status to help in local schools to supplement our coaching programme.

All these performances could not be achieved without a lot of help and support from coaches, team managers and club officials and I would like to thank them all for their continued enthusiasm and dedication. Congratulations should go to not only to the athletes but also to everyone who helps with the young athletes. We have continued our development work to ensure we keep producing high quality young athletes. Whilst talented athletes move out of the section we continue to identify and develop athletes to ensure the future of the club is in good hands. It is gratifying to everyone to see so many athletes who started when they were 12 or 13 breaking into and playing a prominent role in our senior men's and women's teams.

Whilst suffering the disappointment of relegation there was lots to look back on with pride and we can look forward fully expecting to bounce straight back even stronger and more organised and continue to develop our reputation for producing outstanding young athletes and teams and with another talented number of boys and girls who have not been mentioned tonight we should be able to celebrate an improved team showing and more individual honours in the coming year.

Steve Bosley
Young Athletes Secretary
27 October 2008