

South West Inter County Cross Country Championships

Sunday 8th January 2012 Bicton College

Cornwall County Athletic Association took a strong contingent to the South West Inter Counties Cross Country Championships at Bicton College, Near Budleigh Salterton and came away with some of the best results since the event moved to this idyllic setting and in ideal running conditions.

The Senior teams, in particular, were well supported and produced individual and team wins for the Women and three in the top four for the Men, including the winner of the Under 20 title, Dan Nash. In addition, Charlotte Cayton-Smith took Gold in the Under 15 race with a powerful finish.

It is unusual for Cornwall to have a South West Champion in the Senior Women's race but this race went one better with both Miranda Heathcote and Emma Stepto dominating the race from the half-way point, running shoulder to shoulder. It was only a matter of who would be the stronger on the final hill to the finish as to which Cornwall athlete would receive the Gold medal. The result was a win for Miranda on her first outing for the Duchy, also taking the W35 age group medal, silver for Emma in both categories and a team Gold for both. Behind these two, Lucy Hodgson also had a strong run to finish 5th in the County event, Caroline Steven was 10th, Jenny Nash 11th, Heidi Gray 13th, Steph Martin 14th & Sue Ogilvie 17th. Jenny picked up the Gold medal for the first W45 athlete and Sue the winner of the W55 category.

The Senior Men's race was another run-away win for Devon's Kevin Heyward but behind him, the next three places were filled by Cornish athletes. Rob Bugden responded to the call to compete in a positive men's team and turned in his usual quality performance to take the silver medal. Next in was Dan Nash, who has only just moved into the Under 20 age group but has been looking strong in all local events this winter, taking the Gold medal against some top South West athletes. Kevin Toher complained about the lack of mud but still managed a solid fourth overall. Dan Alsop was 11th, John Scott, 14th with Conor Robinson splitting these two for 4th place in the Under 20 age group. John took Gold for the M40 category. Colin Snook was 23rd, Justin Thomas 27th, Dave Buzza at 33rd completed the scoring team which finished second behind Devon.

It was cat and mouse at the front of the Under 15 Girls race with Charlotte Cayton-Smith making use of the hilly sections of the course to put pressure on Devon's Holly Brown and it was on the final approach which involved a steep climb to the finish straight that Charlotte got the better of her rival to put clear daylight between them and claim the South West title. Annie Trotter, Yvonne Chart and Tess Masselink all had superb runs to pack in at 10th, 11th and 12th but lost out on team Gold to a Wiltshire squad with four in the top nine!

Callum Jones was the other medal winner for the County, taking Silver in a tight race to the line ahead of Avon's Cameron Coetzee and Somerset's Rowan Preece. This age group was hit by County injuries and if back on form should do well at the National Inter Counties in March.

Other top ten finishers were: Lily England (7th) & Katie Hughes (8th) in the Under 13 Girls, Frankie Aldred (7th) & Sam Parham (8th) for the Under 13 Boys, Danny Old (5th) and Sam Lane De Courtin (10th) Under 15 Boys and Isabel Steele 4th in the Under 17 Women.

This was a combined Counties and Club event with several of the athletes representing both. Newquay and Par won team Gold in the Under 15 Girls and Senior Women plus Bronze for the Under 13 Girls, Cornwall AC won Silver in the Senior Men and Under 13 Girls.

Miranda Heathcote, Rob Bugden, Kevin Toher, Annabel Gummow, Dan Nash & Conor Robinson will all be representing the South West at The Cardiff Cross Challenge on Sunday, incorporating an inter Regional competition.