

Athletics special



John Montgomery on the local scene

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Sprinter Sean races to best yet to claim title

SEAN TAYLOR produced the race of his life to lift the English Schools Inter Boys 200m title and clinch his first international vest in the Track & Field Championships at Birmingham.

However the Montsaye student almost went out in the semi-finals after registering a new career best of 22.23 when easily winning his heat.

In the semis he got off to a cracking start but as he entered the home straight he was hit by cramp. He slipped back before hauling himself up into third place. He ran 22.48 as James Alaka (Kent) won in 21.97 from Warwickshire's Sean Duffill (22.44) with Rushden & Diamonds apprentice Lawrence Lambley (Lincs) running 22.59 to make the final in fourth place.

Taylor's task in the following day's final was made even more difficult when he was given the unfavourable lane one. However he made a brilliant start and was slightly ahead of Alaka – last year's 100m Junior champion – coming off the bend before maintaining his form down the home straight to win his first national title in 21.82. Lambley was seventh in 22.41.

Taylor, who is now representing England in the Home Schools International, said: "My aim was a place in the top two to get my first international vest but to win in such a fast time was beyond my wildest dreams."

The discus pair of Rachel Backhouse and Elycia Metaxas-Belt capped an excellent championship for Northants when they both secured bronze medals.

Competing in the Inter age group, Backhouse who also attends Rothwell's Montsaye Community College, was third at the cut-off point with 36.42m. Ahead of her Shaunagh Brown of London and Rebecca Birch (South Yorks) had throws of 42.35m and 39.47m. In the fourth round Backhouse edged closer to the leading pair when she added nearly half a metre to her personal best, throwing 38.49m.

Also competing in the event was Katy-Louise Payne whose best effort of 32.88m was a personal best.

Metaxas-Belt led the Junior event thanks to an opening throw of 34.84m which showed more than 10m improvement on last year. But the Magdalen College student's glory was short-lived

as first Kate Wickman (Somerset) threw 38.19m to take the title and then West Yorks' Hannah Evenden followed with 36.42m when securing the silver.

Northants had three athletes who just missed out on the medals when finishing fourth while two other members of the squad made the podium which holds six.

Charlotte Allee smashed her best when clocking a fine 39.72 to qualify for the final of the Inter Girls 300m. In the final, she smashed her best again but her time of 39.41 was only a stride away from the bronze medal.

James Cannon's putt of 14.04m slotted him into fourth position in the Inter Boys' shot competition, and occupying the same position for the county was Senior discus thrower Ruth Hay who threw 40.62m.

In the same age group, girls' captain Rebecca Hall knocked a second from her lifetime best when finishing a fine sixth over 800m, running 2.11.89. The other podium success came from Senior James Hyland who, despite only just recovering from a broken hand, came a brave sixth with 41.40m in the discus.

Two other Senior Boys just missed out on a podium place when skipper Jamie Clark and David Foster both finished seventh in their respective events. The former reduced his best by six seconds when running 6.12.75 in the 2000m steeplechase, while Foster's best throw of 47.64m was achieved in the hammer contest where fellow team colleague Luke Hyland came 11th in 41.24m.

Jack McShane went beyond the three-metre mark for the first time when his 3.10m gave him eighth place in the Junior Boys' pole vault.

Another personal best in the same age group was the 23.75 by Seb Tully-Middleton in reaching the semi finals of the 200m. Hammer throwers Matthew Ford, 11th with 37.74m and Matthew Knibb, 13th with 37.52m, also competed in the same age group.

Sarah Hardwick cleared 2.70m for eighth in the Inter Girls' pole vault while others representing the county in the same age group were Natalie Hills (2.19.41) and Nikki Pell (2.21.04) who ran in the heats of the 800m plus Hannah Jones, who clocked 5.11.01 in the 1500m heats.



■ SPRINT GLORY – Sean Taylor racing to victory at Birmingham last weekend

Sharman smashes his best twice

WILLIAM SHARMAN gave himself the ideal boost for the European Under-23 Championships when he smashed his personal best twice at the Norwich Union AAA Championships.

In the Manchester meeting, which also incorporated the trials for the Worlds and Commonwealth Games, the

Corby 20-year-old reduced his best with an excellent effort in the heats of the 110m hurdles, clocking 13.90 into a headwind when finishing runner-up to Shaftesbury Barnet's Allen Scott.

In the final, Sharman went faster still to finish fourth in 13.88. Ahead of him David Hughes (Trafford) was origi-

nally disqualified for running outside his lane, which meant Sharman was upgraded to the bronze medal position he occupied last year until Hughes' appeal was upheld.

Running in the heats was fellow Corby-based athlete Kevin Sempers who returned a useful time of 14.72.

County athletes Matt Bell,

Karen Harewood and Emma Bailey were all in action. Bell clinched his highest AAA position when he took seventh in the hammer. The county champion's best throw of 62.47m came in the fourth round of the contest.

Harewood just failed to make the final of the 800m when she came third in her

heat with 2.05.81. Further disappointment for the Corby AC runner was that her best time this season was fractionally faster than the winner in the final.

Bailey, who runs for Rugby & Northampton, couldn't quite match her recent form and went out in her 100m heat, clocking 12.45 for seventh.

Jaime records national success

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emotional because I knew Paul quite well and after doing so much for our sport he'll be sadly missed.

"It was definitely my best performance since I've been back. I'm really pleased and I couldn't have done any more."

Moore narrowly missed out on bagging a second title, finishing as runner-up in the ladies event by 1.1 marks.

The academy claimed the under-18 girls' championship title as the team of Yazmin Gumbs, Amanda Harris and Katie Mitchell struck gold.

Gumbs was narrowly pushed into third place, finishing just 0.7 behind the eventual winner. Harris and Mitchell finished 14th and 15th while Gumbs also grabbed eighth place in the ladies, an excellent result for the youngster.

In the over-18 men's event Danny Creedon took fifth with a fine display, the 17-year-old producing one of his best performances yet, beating his nearest rival by 1.6.

Creedon narrowly missed out on a top-ten finish in the men's, ending up in 11th spot, while clubmate Steve Walsh finished off a fine season with a disappointing performance, an error-filled second routine seeing him down in 14th.

William Howell put in a fine first two rounds to finish ninth after day one, but a mistake in his final routine meant he dropped a place, ending the weekend in tenth.

The academy picked up bronze in the under-15 girls' team competition, solid performances from Penny Mitchell (11th), Victoria Payne (16th), Katie MacKenzie (24th) and Faye Kopka (33rd) meaning that the club eventually finished just 0.3 in front of their nearest rivals.

Head coach Tracy Whittaker said: "It was a good weekend, although we didn't quite achieve all our goals.

"Jaime showed she's able to cope with the pressure and win a title over three rounds. Danny put in an awesome performance.

"The main focus now is to go away over the summer, work hard on increasing the difficulty being performed and hopefully we'll be in an even stronger position next year."

Due to the postal strike this week, we have been unable to carry several of our regular Saturday articles. These will appear in your ET at the earliest possible opportunity. We regret any inconvenience this causes