

TRAMPOLINING special



Steve Walsh with the latest news on the Northants Academy



National finals to have big county presence

COACH Tracy Whittaker hailed a new dawn for Northants Academy as the season drew to a close.

It won't be the last competition for the grade one squad though, as all competitors have qualified for the national finals, something Whittaker says is an incredible achievement.

"It's been a great season," she said. "For all the competitors to qualify for the nationals doesn't happen too often and it highlights the promising future we have here."

The Academy chief also said she expects things to get even better from now on.

"After the Olympics in 2000 things broke down a bit and while it has taken a few years, we've re-structured and rebuilt the performance paths and now we're reaping the benefits."

Whittaker was speaking after more impressive results for the Academy's young stars. Katie Mitchell, who is coached by Jaime Moore, achieved a personal-best finish of third in the under-18 girls.

Whittaker was particularly pleased with the 16-year-old's response to a grilling before the competition.

"Katie was told by a coach that she needed to get her act together and all credit to her because that's what she did," said Whittaker.

Fellow Academy member Amanda Harris pushed

Mitchell all the way, ending up in fourth place by the narrowest of margins.

Elsewhere, world championship hopefuls Danny Creedon and Yazmin Gumbs both made the step up to the elite events, competing against some of the country's best talent.

Gumbs, competing in the ladies' event, admitted she relished the new challenge.

"It's a lot more challenging against the older, more experienced people, and I enjoyed it. I feel I hit peak performance again, which is great, and to come third was brilliant."

Creedon came home in sixth position in the men's and aims to use the competition as good experience for the future.

"It's a different standard and it'll be good practice for future years," said the 17-year-old.

The academy picked up second place in the under-15 girls team competition. Penny Mitchell was the highest-placed member of the team in eighth place, followed by Victoria Payne in 13th.

Payne finished just 0.1 points in front of clubmate Katie MacKenzie (14th).

William Howell returned to competitive action with a solid performance. The youngster came home ninth after missing the last competition through illness.

And in the over-18 girls competition, Helen Kirby continued her consistent form to finish in fifth.



■ ON THE RISE – Danny Creedon gained valuable experience from competing in the men's elite event

Sixfields pitch being re-laid

THE Sixfields pitch is being renovated with the aim of getting it in peak condition for the start of next season.

Having staged more than 60 games last season, work is being carried out to improve the standard of the surface, which already has a reputation of being one of the best in the Football League.

"We have already taken the top layer of the pitch off," said head groundsman Paul Currier.

"We have got rid of the anaerobic

By Jefferson Lake
Football Writer

layer and have verti-drained the pitch. We will be re-seeding and applying the top dressing and also adding 150 tons of sand."

Currier explained the reasons for the work being carried out. "There were a couple of areas that have given us problems in the past in terms of retaining water," he said.

"Hopefully this work will improve things in those areas and stop water gathering.

"Overall though, the pitch performed very well throughout another busy season and this work is in line with our wish to improve and upgrade the surface each season.

"Last season we had 60 games on the pitch and that takes its toll, but I am confident this work will improve a very good pitch even further.

"We are also carrying out similar work on the training pitch and athletics infield behind the east stand."

The next game at Sixfields is the pre-season friendly against Birmingham City on July 27.

■ THE Cobblers have added a fixture against Hitchin Town to their pre-season friendly schedule.

The game will be staged at the Southern League Premier Division side's Top Field ground on July 13, kick-off at 7.30pm.

NSC keep a tight grip on trophy

■ Swimming

NORTHAMPTON SC held off fierce competition to win the Premier Warehousing Trophy for the fourth year running in Coventry last weekend.

Sixteen teams from five Midlands counties competed at the gala, hosted by Braunston (Leicester) SC.

Northampton were the team to beat – having been trophy holders for the previous three years they were not in the mood to give up their silverware.

Racing in two separate heats, both Town teams fared well with Northampton A setting the early pace and never being realistically challenged.

At the end of an exciting evening Northampton A had won by 64 points with Northampton B securing seventh place.

Freddie Little won the 50m freestyle and the 50m butterfly in the 11-years category while Vicky Kightley landed the 50m breaststroke and added the 50m freestyle in the 15-years category.

Simon Porter and Rachel Williamson won back-to-back events in the open men's and ladies' 50m backstroke.

Myles Crouch Anderson (fly), Jack Howarth (back) and Amelia Newell (breaststroke) were also winners in their age groups.

Also victorious was the girls' 8x100m relay team comprising Charlotte Milligan, Amelia Newell, Jade Willis, Emma Herd, Vicky Payne, Vicky Kightley, Rachel Williamson and Jodie Barber.

Final points: Northampton A 474, Braunstone A 410, Learnington Spa 385, Haden Hill 362, Whitney and District 345, Bilston 338, Northampton B 332, Hinkley 278, Burntwood 273, Melton Mowbray 271, Coalville 268, Boldmere 261, Leicester Neptune 243, Lichfield 221, Braunston B 123. Did not show: Market Harborough

McClatchey record

OLYMPIAN Caitlin McClatchey set a new Scottish record at the Irvine Meet in California.

The Brixworth ace beat Olympic medalist Sachiko Yamada of Japan in the women's 800m freestyle, going 8:37.05 to take victory on the touch from Yamada, who clocked 8:37.25.

The Scot's time bettered the 19-year-old record of 8:48.82, set in 1986 by Ruth Gilfillan by a big margin.

McClatchey also finished second in the 400m and 200m freestyle events at the same meet.



■ RECORD – Caitlin McClatchey