

Whatever Joe Galvin, Leigh's President, did on Saturday he certainly arranged for ideal conditions for this Championship road relay. Leigh sports village can seldom be as packed for an athletics event that had record numbers of entries. In the end, with the exception of the women from Rotherham, this was a North West dominated event.

In the 6 stage all 3 podium positions went to North West clubs, an event not seen since 2003 at Sunderland, with Leeds City, winners of 4 of the past 5 events finishing in 6th place. It was 14:00 exactly as the first leg runners lined up on the track for their 6800, M, 6 stage event. There had been 121 teams entered, and the athletes quickly moved round the track and out onto their 2 lap course. First back into the stadium was a yellow vest, but this one belonged to Stockport's Patrick Martin in 17.45, with Salford 2nd, Durham City 3rd and Barrow 4th.

Leg 2 saw Salford's Ben Riddle move to the front, ahead of Tony Ford, Sale, as Stockport fell back to 9th. However it was a strong statement of intent from Altrincham that dominated this leg. Mohammed Abu-Rezeq moved Altrincham into 3rd place from 17th with the second fastest time of the day, 17.41.

Leg 3 saw another club play its strongest card, as this leg belonged to Liverpool Harriers Jonny Mellor. His fastest time of the day 17.08 moved his club up from 7th to 1st with another superb performance. Sale's Simon Horesfield was 2nd and Dave Norman held 3rd. The fourth leg saw Liverpool Harriers remaining at the front, Matt Barnes moved Altrincham into 2nd place, ahead of Sale, and Salford's Andi Jones produced his club's fastest time to retain 4th.

Leg 5 saw Altrincham hit the front for the first time, Joe Bailey pulled Salford up into 2nd, as Liverpool dropped to 3rd and Sale to 4th. All very tight and changeable on the last leg.

Leg 6 Altrincham entrusted Andy Norman on the glory leg, and he was never really challenged. The finish on the track was compelling as Liverpool Harriers passed Salford with just 250 M to go, and finishing 6 seconds ahead.

1st Altrincham Time 01:49:25 2nd Liverpool Harriers 01:49:53 3rd Salford 01:49:59  
4th were Sale, 5th Stockport and 6th Leeds City  
Fastest Leg Jonny Mellor Liverpool Harriers & AC. 17.08

Report Ken Smith

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