

North East Track & Field Championship

Athletes perform just fine!

GLORIOUS weather greeted athletes to Gateshead Stadium for the North Eastern Counties Track and Field Championships, with sprinters and jumpers taking full advantage of the conditions.

Pole vaulters really rose to the occasion on a weekend which produced 19 new championship records – as well as new figures in four events contained in the programme for the first time.



Twelve months ago the pole vault competition was moved into the new indoor facility at the stadium due to the wet and windy conditions.

However, this time around, spectators gathered under umbrellas for protection from the sun had plenty to cheer about – with three championship best performances being recorded.

Gateshead pair Sally Scott and Tim Parkin, who went into their events standing at the top of the UK rankings, showed why they are two of the outstanding young pole vaulters in the country.

Scott, who has an indoor best of 3:90 metres, cleared 3:70m – the best by a British athlete outdoors this year – to comfortably beat the old championship of 2:90m set in 2001 by Middlesbrough and Cleveland's Sophie Dewell.

Parkin, meanwhile, went into the competition with a healthy lead at the top of the UK rankings after a 4:30m clearance indoors in February.

Last year he won the under-17 title with a clearance of 3:81m, and he was in no mood to relinquish his crown as he soared over 4:39m to set a new championship best, improving on Morpeth's Paul Ayre's figures of 4:27m of 1991.

The bar was moved even higher for the senior men's event, defending champion Mark Christie coming into the competition at five metres.

The former Gateshead athlete, now competing for Sale, then went on to clear 5:10m and also his next height of 5:20m.

However, with it being a new championship best height, it had to be remeasured and, unfortunately, it proved to be just 5:19m!

Despite losing out on one centimetre, Christie's new life-time best consolidated his sixth place in the current UK rankings. Conditions also suited the javelin throwers, especially senior women's defending champion Sarah Dunkley of West Sussex.

Dunkley, a Newcastle University student, took advantage of the slight breeze in the opening event on the first day of the two-day programme to throw a life-time best of 42:27 metres, which bettered Jarrow and Hebburn's Stacey Mohamed's 2004 figures of 42:01m.

Another thrower in good form was Teessider Leslie Richards, who retained both his senior shot and discus titles – though he had a bit of a scare in the shot circle when confronted by Craig Sturrock.

Richards, who competes for the City of York club, had a best round of 15:83m.

However, it was equalled by his Gateshead rival, so the result hinged on each athlete's second best effort.

It was Richards who prevailed with 15:72m against Sturrock's 15:65m.

Later in the day, Richards had no problem holding on to his discus crown with a winning effort of 48:90m against runner-up Graeme Level's (Gateshead) 44:42m, which was his debut in senior competition.

The under-20 men's triple jump was another record to fall, with victory going to Blaydon's Craig Fiddes.

Going into the competition Fiddes had a best of 13:45 metres but, like many athletes competing in the championships, produced a pb and record-breaking performance of 14:21m.

Blaydon team-mate Philip Brown had no problem in retaining his under-20 shot and discus titles, while former Blaydon member Lianne Tucker, now competing for Gateshead, retained her senior women's discus title with a three-metre improvement to 40:89m before going on to win the shot putt competition.

Teessider Lloyd Powell (Border) had the spectators applauding after seeing off the challenge of James Stacey (Gateshead) in the high jump.

Stacey went out of the competition after clearing two metres, but Powell went on to clear 2:03m and 2:06m before failing at 2:11m.

Dean Barrett (Gateshead) triumphed in the senior men's javelin, winning by just over a metre from Durham City's Giataganas Dimitrios.

TWO championship records may prove costly for Gateshead sprint ace Richard Kilty.

The 18-year-old had raced to a record-breaking 100m on Saturday, and followed that up by bringing the curtain down on a superbly-



organised championships by doing likewise in the 200m.

However, an outing for GB Juniors in the Loughborough International on Saturday looks in doubt after Kilty pulled up after achieving his second championship record. Kilty, while icing the inflamed thigh, said: "I hope it is not too serious." "I felt it tighten up entering the straight. It did not hamper me too much, but after crossing the line I really felt it.

"I will have treatment before deciding whether to run at Loughborough. I was really looking forward to the meeting." Kilty had eased through the heats of the under-20 100m on the opening day of the championships before going on to improve on his own record of 10:79 seconds, taking it down to 10.62sec.

In the 200m he looked comfortable in the heats winning in 21.80sec. However, despite another inning performance and a new record of 21.43secs in the final, the injury setback threw a cloud over the closing proceedings.

Sara Todd had a busy two-days as she packs in events before she gets married in the summer. She opened up with a 400m hurdles victory, finished runner-up behind Victoria Barr in the 200m and was second behind Nisha Desai (Trafford) in the 400m before ending her hectic programme by winning the 100 metres.

The middle-distance events were generally poorly supported. However, in an exciting finish to the senior men's 1,500m, victory went to Darlington's Lewis Moses, who got the better of long-time leader Ricky Stevenson in the final 30m.

In the senior women's race over the metric mile, victory went to Karen Johns (North Shields Poly) after a tussle with defending champion Ashleigh Gibson of Elswick. Durham City's Rob Hand won the 0,000m, while victory in the 5,000m went to New Marske's Dominic Shaw.

In the women's 5,000, Gateshead's Jess Trowbridge gained her first North Eastern title. In the senior men's 400m Gateshead athletes filled the first four places, with victory going to Jak Lowden.

The under-20 women lined-up with sole senior competitor Nisha Desai in the 800m and the Trafford runner pulled her younger rivals through to really fast times. Desai paid the price entering the home straight as first Laura Weightman (Morpeth) and then Stacey Smith (Gateshead) headed her in the race to the line. Weightman was rewarded by knocking five seconds off Desai's record with a winning time of 2:08.20, Smith also well inside the old figures in clocking 2:08.91. [Results](#)

Report Bill McGuirk

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