

Malta International Match 10 April 2010

After the long and cold winter in England the opportunity to compete in an early season competition under clear blue skies and brilliant sunshine was enough to inspire a batch of pb and a clutch of 27 medals for the Northern Athletics under 20 team who travelled to Malta for the popular International match on the 10th April.

The Malta International Track & Field fixture was first held in 2008. It was originally a team match between Malta AAA and Northern Athletics under 20s team. The initial match proved so popular that it has now become an annual event in the Malta fixture attracting teams from a number of European countries, including this year a team of 25 athletes from Sweden making their first trip to this meeting.



Naomi Reed leapt to 5th on the UK under 17 all time with a new pb of 12:10 in the triple jump. This was a massive 60cm improvement for the Derby athlete and was reward for her work during the winter. "I was hoping to jump around the 12m mark but 12:10 was an unexpected bonus so early in the season. My goal for this year is to get as close 12:25 as possible or beyond. My coach John Crotty and I have done a lot of work on my technique during the winter and that is now paying dividends."

An athlete looking for a qualification mark was Border's Nick Miller who got proceeding under way with a new pb in the hammer throwing 66:20 albeit just 80cm short of the Commonwealth youth games qualifying distance. Nick did have a 'no throw' beyond the 67m mark so if he gets the competition opportunity he should make the mark. Yasmin Spencer threw 12:97 for a fine victory in the shot while other

highlights on the field included a second and third for Jessica Holt and Samantha Frazer in the high jumps who both cleared 1:65.

Nick Phelps was first on the track and finished a close second in the opening event the 400m hurdle in 55:62. Middlesbrough's Ben Stephenson dipped under 11 seconds to win the 100m with 10:99 then ran 22:19 for second place in the 200m. James Gladman was another who had a fruitful day running the 100m in 11:18 and then 14:43 in his first outing at the 110m hurdles.

Ashleigh Wood claimed victory in the 100m hurdles in 14:60 then jumped 5:54 in highly competitive women's long jump that saw Alessandra Pace set a new Malta national record.

It was a clean sweep in the men's 1500m with Northern athletes taking the first three places in highly competitive race, Ben Connor force the early pace while being closely followed by his two team mates. Phil Hurst went for home with 600m to go with Matt Jackson covering his every move to almost the line. Phil held on to win in 3:58:80.

James Buck came close to dipping under 50 seconds for a fine second place in the 400 with a time of 50:54. In the women's 400 Leigh



Lennon ran 57:52 behind Harriet Pryke of the Isle of Man. Callie Thackery ran a bold 2:22:39 800m

The men's 4x100 relay team of Jamie Phillips, James Gladman, Ashley Wren and Ben Stephenson, ran 42:92 for second behind a powerful Southern team.

The development principal which underpins this fixture gave the majority of the 21 athletes selected their first taste of international competition. Before selection athletes had to meet tough selection criteria which included being in the top 12 of the Power of Ten rankings, they had to compete in Northern indoor championships and also demonstrate a willingness to perform for the North.

Northern Athletics would like to thank our hosts at the Malta AAA for their warm hospitality and help shown throughout the team stay and in the preparation leading up to this fixture. Also congratulations and thank you to the team management led by Sandra White and Chris Warden who both put in many hours of preparation to make this a successful trip.