

## CITY SLICKERS SEE OFF ARCH RIVALS IN DEFENCE OF THEIR TITLE WHILE SALFORD SHOCK ROTHERHAM TO CLAIM VICTORY IN THE WOMEN'S CONTEST

LEEDS CITY and Salford celebrated victory in the Start Fitness Northern Athletics' Autumn Road Relay Championships held on traffic-free roads adjacent to the promenade at Redcar.

In surprisingly sunny conditions which defied the local weather forecast it was Keighley and Craven's Joe Hudson who was first across the line after the first of the six 6k stages. Unfortunately for Joe his equalling third fastest time of the day of 17min 33sec was in vain for, after slipping back in the later stages, his club only managed to field five runners.

Derby's Daniel Haymes was six seconds adrift in second place followed by Lincoln Wellington's Ronny Wilson, then Morpeth, with new recruit Finn Brodie, followed by defending champions Leeds City (Andrew Smith).

On stage two Keighley and Craven continued to lead thanks to James Lund. However, it was Salford, who were 14<sup>th</sup> after leg one, who had moved into second place with an equalling Hudson 17:33 by Marc Brown. Leeds City moved through to third (David Mullarkey) while Gateshead were fourth thanks to a 17:50 by teenager David Race after taking over in 19<sup>th</sup> place.

On leg three Leeds City hit the front for the first time thanks to Josh Dickinson's effort though Salford (Robert Smyk), now in second position, were just one second adrift at the half-way stage of the contest. Blackburn had moved into the top three for the first time thanks to Callum Davidson (17:51) with Tyne Bridge, who were 21<sup>st</sup> at the first changeover, now fourth thanks to the combined efforts of Tom Charlton, Carl Smith – a former Leeds City athlete – and Michael Hedley. Hallamshire were another outfit making a forward move and were now in fifth position at the half-way point of the contest.

On stage four Salford hit the front for the first time as David Barrett turned round the one-second gap into an eight-seconds advantage with the second quickest time of the day of 17:27. Leeds dropped back into second place (Matthew Grieve, 17:36) while Ben Fish consolidated Blackburn's third spot ahead of Lincoln Wellington's Tom Straw (17:50) and Morpeth.

Leeds City quickly returned to pole position on the penultimate stage thanks to John Beattie's 17:49 stint though Gary Priestley's 18:13 meant Salford were just 16 seconds adrift going into the last leg. Lincoln Wellington moved back into a medal position thanks to Jamie Hall's 17:56 with Blackburn dropping back to fifth behind Hallamshire.

Leeds City certainly kept their powder dry until releasing Richard Allen on the last leg and, after a recent third place in the Mid-Cheshire 5k where he posted an impressive 13:55, he managed to widen the gap with every stride so much

so at the finish line the winning margin was over a minute. Salford were certainly worthy silver medallists as they also had over a minute in hand over the third team to finish which was Blackburn Harriers who had new recruit Nick McCormick to thank for a superb 17:39 last leg, the 2012 Olympian's performance bringing huge smiles to the club's and Northern Athletics' chairman, Tony Wood's face! Hallamshire finished just three seconds adrift of Blackburn with Morpeth crossing the line in fifth place thanks to a fine 17:36 by Alex Brown.

Leeds City made it a winning double by picking up the B-string awards after finishing in seventh place out of the 86 teams which toed the line.

#### SENIOR WOMEN (4x6k)

Disappointingly, Leeds City, who led at the midway point thanks to the second fastest time of the day of 20:28 by Jenny Walsh and Leila Armoush (20:42) the Yorkshire outfit were without any athletes to take advantage of a great start which opened the door for Rotherham, the defending champions, who were in second place (Sophie Cowper) at the first changeover.

Lincoln Wellington were third (Sophie Wallis) followed by City of York (Katy Wood) and Hallamshire (Laurajane Smith).

On leg two Rochelle Harrison moved Lincoln Wellington into second place behind Leeds City with Rotherham (Mya Taylor) dropping back to third ahead of Salford and Cheshire Dragons.

On the penultimate leg Rotherham hit the front for the first time thanks to Nicola Devine's 20:37 effort. Salford were in second place 15 seconds adrift. Lincoln Wellington were now in third place followed by Cheshire Dragons and Hallamshire.

It looked as though it was going to be another victory for the black-vested Yorkshire outfit. However, Salford had other ideas with Anna Bracegirdle contesting the final 6k just six days after posting a half-marathon pb of 74:52 in the Great North Run.

Surprisingly, Bracegirdle showed no signs of discomfort or tiredness as she quickly reeled in the leader (Samantha Hughes) and then pulled smartly away to come home in pole position 47 seconds ahead of Rotherham after posting the fastest time of the day of 20:24. Thanks to Katie Palfreeman, Hallamshire moved through from fifth to third to claim the bronze awards ahead of Lincoln Wellington and City of York.

Special mention is in order for Cheshire Dragons who were making their debut in the event and finished in a superb ninth place. The newly-formed Cuddington-based club who meet in a car park showed what can be achieved

and should be the envy of many of the more established clubs who, for whatever reason, decided to give the championships a miss.

## JUNIOR CONTESTS

### Under-13 Boys (3x3.1k)

Salford, thanks to Evan Grime's fastest time of the day of 10:23, led at the first changeover followed by Blackburn's Sam Aspey (10:39) and City of York's Daniel Campbell (10:47). Wirral were in fourth place followed by North Shields Poly.

Blackburn swiftly moved to the front on leg two thanks to Theo Robinson as Liam O'Brian (11:07) moved Sale into second place ahead of Trafford (Pio Aron, 10:53). Liverpool were fourth and Wirral fifth.

Blackburn consolidated pole position on the final stage thanks to Oliver Brown (11:09) as Sonny Cassell (10:55) moved Liverpool into the silver medal position ahead of Trafford as Wirral finished just outside the podium places followed by Sale.

### Under-13 Girls (3x3.1k)

An incomplete Liverpool C team led at the first changeover thanks to Erin Fay's 11:13. Fay was followed across the line by the Mersey club's A team (Holly Cross, 11:16) and Rotherham's Layla Roden (11:18). Then came Liverpool's B team followed by Sale.

On the penultimate stage Liverpool's A team moved to the front after Bailey Hughes posted the day's fastest time of 10:55, the only athlete to dip under 11 minutes. Rotherham moved up to second after Graihagh Turner's 11:14 with Liverpool's B team now third thanks to Isabella Doran's 11:20. Wakefield were fourth followed by Sale.

Molly Carvell extended Liverpool A's advantage with the fastest time of 11:12 on the final leg with Rotherham (Grace Ingoe, 11:27) finishing runners-up 36 seconds behind. Liverpool B finished in third place with fourth-placed Wakefield being awarded the bronze medals as the rules stipulate only one set of championship medals can be awarded to one club though a special set of medals go to the first B team to finish.

### Under-15 boys (3x3.1k)

City of York led at the first changeover after the day's fastest time of 10:07 by William Keens. Liverpool (Max Webster) were in second place four seconds adrift and one second ahead of Wirral (Louis Hatton) City of Sheffield and

Dearne (William Platts) were in fourth place followed by Morpeth (Oliver Calvert).

On stage two Ben Williams (10:36) moved Wirral to the front with Morpeth (Oliver Tomlinson, 10:40) progressing into second ahead of Liverpool (Riley Malone, 10:52). Warrington moved into fourth followed by Rotherham.

Wirral extended their advantage on the final leg after Oberon Kiearney's 10:13 as Morpeth (Joseph Close, 10:36) consolidated second spot ahead of Liverpool (Oscar Kewley, 10:40). After finishing in ninth place on the first leg Blackburn moved through to finish fourth just ahead of City of York.

#### Under-15 Girls (3x3.1k)

Stockport were in pole position at the first changeover thanks to the fastest time of the day by English under-15 1500m champion, Freya Murdoch.

Rotherham (Isabella Waugh) were in second place seven seconds behind with Salford (Marissa Caldwell, 11:07) in third position followed by Keighley and Craven and Darlington.

On stage two Rotherham (Caitlin McCloy, 10:52) moved to the front with Salford (Sophia Roiduis, 11:09) moving into second ahead of Stockport (Niamh Mackintosh, 12:17) as Rotherham B progressed into fourth ahead of Elswick.

On the final leg, Lilia Harris (10:31) extended Rotherham's advantage all the way to the finish as Salford consolidated second place ahead of Rotherham B and Sale with the Greater Manchester trio being awarded the bronze medals due to the one club rule.

#### Under-17 Men (3x3.7k)

English under-17 1500m silver medallist Josh Blevins (Gateshead) led the field home on the first stage with the day's fastest time of 11:02 and was closely followed by Wakefield's Ethan Bradyjones who posted 11:05. Rotherham (Zak Ferguson) were in third place a further four seconds back followed by Gosforth (Silas Christie, 11:11) and Morpeth (Devere-Owen, 11:13).

On stage two Wirral moved to the front thanks to Tj Jones' 11:06 with the Merseyside outfit being followed by Morpeth (Joe Dixon, 11:27) and Rotherham (Luke Parker, 11:50). Salford were in fourth and Gosforth fifth.

Wirral extended their lead on the last leg thanks to William Strickley's 11:30 as Morpeth (Bertie Marr, 11:53) consolidated second place ahead of Rotherham who held off Gosforth to claim the bronze awards.

#### Under-17 women (3x3.7k)

North East clubs Birtley (Katie Francis, 13:10) and Elswick (Imogen Bungay, 13:22) were at the head of affairs at the first changeover but neither athlete

had anyone to pass onto which left third-placed team Kingston upon Hull (Tabitha Ford, 13:26) going to the front at the start of the second stage. Blackburn, who were in fourth place, moved into the lead thanks to Isobel Holt's fastest time of the day of 13:06 and were followed by Rotherham (Anna Maddocks, 13:50) and Wakefield (Paige Watson, 14:05). The positions remained the same on the final leg with Kiera Haxton (14:35) bringing Blackburn home in first place ahead of Rotherham (Amelia Topliss, 14:26) with Wakefield finishing in third position (Holly Walker, 14:52). Holly Waugh with the day's third fastest time of 13:13 moved North Shields Poly through to fourth after an initial start of 12<sup>th</sup>.

**\*\*THANKS** go to Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council for their excellent support of the Championships and to the New Marske Harriers under the leadership of Graham Hall for hosting a memorable event.