



English Schools Championships Birmingham 30th June & 1st July 2023

The club's nine representatives at the prestigious English Schools Championships in the Birmingham Stadium which hosted the Commonwealth Games last year came away with three individual and two relay medals, setting two club records along the way.

Findlay McLaren was an outside medal hope going into the junior 800m event, but he was a class ahead of the rest striking gold and improving his best by almost five seconds, not only setting a new club Under 15 record but also beating the Championship best dating from 1986. Findlay lined up in his heat on Friday against UK number 1 Evan Grime, who had clocked the second fastest ever time by a UK Under 15 two weeks before, but Grime was caught unawares by Findlay's fast tactics which saw him blast to a 55.45s opening lap and hold on to finish well clear in 1m 56.00s, to dip under the CBP, as the favourite qualified in second. The pattern was repeated in Saturday's much windier conditions which kept Findlay to a 57 second first lap but despite Evan Grime's efforts to cut the gap Findlay crossed the line two seconds ahead of the Salford athlete in a time of 1m 58.00s. Findlay's time was not only a club U15 record, but is also the third fastest in the club Under 17 lists, which he now has two years to improve.

Steph Okoro missed out on competing in last year's event as she was competing for the GB Under 18 team at the European Youth Championships where she won bronze. Steph was the fastest qualifier from Friday's senior 400m hurdles heats, with a comfortable 62.40s just faster than the 2022 runner up Hermione Mason (Cheshire). Saturday's windy conditions badly affected the athletes' usual stride patterns and the Cheshire athlete was closing the gap on Steph's lead approaching the final hurdle but Steph was able to put away on the run in to take gold in a (for her) modest 61.21s as Hermione was five metres back.

Ruby Tillson had travelled to Birmingham having broken the club Under 17 heptathlon record, and also equalling the club U17 high jump record and was ranked joint second of the entrants for the Inter girls' high jump. First time clearances up to 1.71m for Ruby, Matilda Secker of Kent and London's Mabel Scales decided the three medallists and Matilda's first time clearance at a PB of 1.74m, was followed by second time clearances & PBs for Ruby & Mabel. As all three were unable to master 1.77m Matilda was the outright winner and Ruby and Matilda were joint silver medallists. Ruby's 1.74m PB was a new club U17 and U20 record, and equalled the club senior record dating from 2015.

There were top six finishes for four of the club contingent. Bobby Williams had aimed to upgrade his Inter javelin bronze medal from last year and was ranked second of those competing but he was unable to match his PB of 63.50m which would have won gold, and his best throw on the day of 54.24m placed him fifth.

Paris King was another 2022 medallist, then winning silver in the Inter 80m hurdles and this time was contesting the senior 100m hurdles. After qualifying for the final as a fastest loser Paris placed sixth with 15.05s.

Freddie Rowe's recent form had brought him U15 club records at 1500m, one mile and 3000m and he was highly ranked among those entered. A comfortable front running heat win on Friday saw Freddie through as the fastest qualifier and in Saturday's final he tracked the fast early pace of Warwickshire's Archie Lane until the bell but was unable to stay with the leaders and had to settle for fifth in 4m 16.00s s Lane took the honours.

Joel Ajayi had no expectations at his first national event and after qualifying for the inter boys 100m from Friday's heats placed a fine fifth in Saturday's final with 11.01s.

The club line up was completed by Zak Williams who was 10th in the junior javelin in his first English Schools appearance with a throw of 42.04m and Maddie Barker who signed off from her Schools' career with 17th in the senior 3000m final.

The final medals came in the senior girls' 4x100m relay as Steph Okoro and Paris King combined with Chelmsford's Kissiwa Mensah, the 200m champion, and Southend sprinter Maisy Tyrell to win silver in the 4x100m sprint relay.



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