



Cross Country Awards 2021-22

Hornchurch Conservative Club - 20th May 2022

(text of address by Martin Chester, Chairman)

Good evening everybody and welcome on behalf of Havering Athletic Club to the 2021-22 annual cross-country awards. After holding this on Zoom in 2020, and not at all last year due to lockdowns, it's good to be back in the flesh this year. As always, it's great to see so many familiar & friendly faces, with no hills, mud clogged shoes, a warm temperature and not even a hint of rain in sight.

Firstly, as always, we would also like to recognise and congratulate the parents for making sure athletes got to the start line in the first place, fit and well to wear the club vest with such distinction. **So, as usual let's give them a round of applause!**

Tonight is all about acknowledging the achievements of our athletes for both **Club Best Performance** and just as importantly **Team Member Awards**. The awards are being presented this evening by our Club President, Claire Brennan, and, as ever, the respective team managers have selected the winners.

First of all, we start with the awards for the seniors and veterans.

After the 2020-21 cross-country season was completely wiped out, first due to Covid restrictions on racing and then due to the lockdown in early 2021, it was great to be back in cross country action with a full season of events – and it turned out to be another great winter season for the senior men and women. The senior men won the cross-country relays in October and the Road Relays in April, won four of the five Essex league meetings to add a fourth consecutive league title, while our M40 team defended their Essex League title and won Essex Road relays silver, as the M50 squad won bronze. The senior women were second in the Essex League and won silver in the county championships and the cross-country relays. The team managers would like to thank all of their squads for their hard work and commitment throughout the season.

I'll start with the award for **Club Best Performance by a Male Veteran** where the winner's verve and encouragement, plus his drive to make other team members do their best, make this man stand out. The years may have taken their toll on his legs but he will never give up. He was part of the silver medal-winning team in the Vets cross country championship and helped the team win the Vet League trophy. He was also part of the silver medal winning Vet M40 county road relay team. The award goes to **JASON LENDON**.

The winner of the **Male Veterans Team Member Award** goes to a man who is always trying to do his best and he seems to improve more the older he gets. He was a part of the team that took the Over 50 Essex County road relay bronze. He is a reliable team member, who also helped the club team to win the Vets Essex League trophy. The winner is **GARY ATKINS**.



We now move to the Ladies and the award for the winner of the **Veteran Ladies' Best Performance** award goes to a new member of the Havering AC Ladies team. Having watched her children compete for the club for a number of years, she decided that she might as well join in too! She ran in four of the five Essex XC League races, finishing in eighth position in the V45 Category. She also ran for the club in the Essex Senior Champs at Basildon, finishing 87th. Well done to **CHARLIE YEXLEY**.

The **Ladies' Vets Team Member** award goes to a long-standing valuable team member who regularly turns up to run for the club, and the last cross-country season was no exception. She ran in all five of the Essex League races, finishing fifth in the V55 Category and also ran in the cross country relays. The winner once again is **TRACY O'NEILL**.



Now onto the **Senior Men's Best Performance** award. This man has risen through the ranks and kept the effortless style which has brought him so many honours. He was a key part of the Gold medal winning road relay team, where he brought the team home well clear of their competitors, so clear in fact that he had a lay down before he crossed the line. He was also part of the silver medal team in the county championships. He's a definite ace to have in the team. The well-deserved winner is **BEN DAVIS (unable to attend)**.

Next to the **Senior Men's Team Member** award where the winner was always there or thereabouts, He is a good team member, who has the medals to prove it. He was part of both the gold medal winning cross country and road relay teams, and was also part of the silver medal winning county championship team from where he was picked to run for the county. It's a pleasure to see this man continue his own personal development, and we hope he achieves even better things in future. The winner is **JAMES STEWART**.



The **Senior Women's Best Performance** award goes to a very valuable team member who represents the club at any opportunity. She ran in four of the five Essex League races, finishing second overall, she was fourth at the Essex Senior Cross Country Champs and was 64th at the Southern Champs at Beckenham. She was part of the ladies' team at the Nationals at Parliament Hill, coming a fine 135th. She also took part in the Essex XC Relays. She trains regularly both at the club and on her own and deserves to be awarded the Best Performance award once again, Congratulations again go to **GINTE BAILEY**.

The winner of **Senior Women's Team Member** award goes to a young lady who has competed for the club through the young athlete ranks and is now part of the Senior women's team. She was ever-present in the five Essex League races, finishing 11th overall and ran in the Essex Senior Champs, the Southern Champs and the Nationals at Parliament Hill. She is a friendly, happy member of the team, usually with a smile on her face! Well done to **EMILY JAMES**.



We now move down to the younger age groups who also had an excellent season with the Under 17/20 Women and the Under 13 boys winning Essex League titles, the Under 17 Women, the Under 15 boys and Under 13 Boys winning cross country relay gold, and the Under 17 men, the Under 15 girls and Under 13 Boys winning the county road relays, also winning many other individual and team championship medals.

We start with the Under 20s.

The winner of the **Club Best performance** award for **Junior Men** is an athlete who we anticipate a lot from. He came third in the county championships earning Essex selection for the inter counties Championship. He was part of the gold medal winning cross country relay team at the start of the season and has helped the team retain the Essex cross country League. **ALEX FORD (unable to attend).**

Now to the winner of the award for **Junior Men Team Member**. Although this athlete's cross country appearances last winter were limited to two Essex League races and the Essex Cross country relays, when he does pull on a club vest this young man puts everything into his running which is all that a team manager want from his athletes. **LOUIS BERRETT.**



On to the **Junior Women Best Performance** award. The winner competed in four of the five Essex League fixtures to finish third in the individual standings. She was sixth in the Essex School Champs, going on to represent the Essex Schools team at the South East Schools Inter counties and English Schools event. This young lady has been with the club for many years and is no stranger to these award evening and continues to be an excellent cross-country runner. Congratulations go to **SYDNEY FOLEY. (unable to attend).**

The winner of the **Club Best Performance** award for **under-17 men** was definitely on form this season. He finished in the top five of all of the four Essex League races he competed in, placing him a superb third in the end of season league standings. He helped the team to the Essex League runners-up position and team bronze medal at the Essex Cross Country Relays. He was first club athlete home in ninth place at the Essex Championships, winning a team bronze, eleventh at the Essex Schools Champs and retained his winners title at the Brentwood 5K Fun Run. He finished the season as one of gold winning team at the Essex Road Relays. The clear winner is **MATTHEW BLACKLOCK.**

The **Under 17 Men Team Member** award goes to an athlete who showed consistent form throughout the cross-country season, scoring for the team in four races to contribute to the team's second position in the league. He also finished eighth in the individual league standings. He was also a member of the B team in the Essex Cross Country Relays, who were placed fourth, and competed in the London Youth Games and South of England Championship. Well done and good luck with the track season **MAX ROBBINS.**



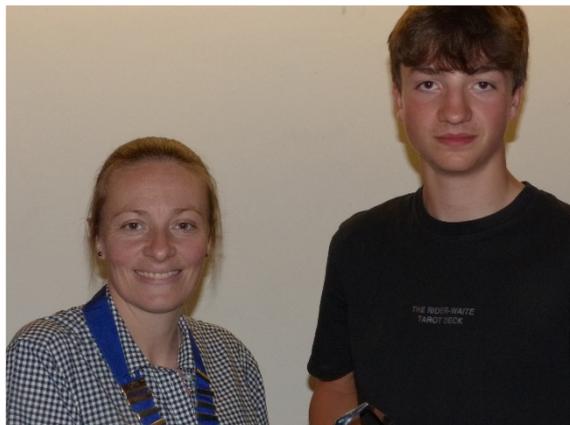
The winner of the **Club Best Performance Award for Under-17 Women** goes to a young lady who had a fantastic season leading the team to the Essex league title and winning the individual Under 17 league standings. She was third in both the London Youth Games and the Essex Schools Championships and ran the overall fastest leg at the Essex Cross Country Relays in which the team won gold. She also ran the fastest leg of the day at the Essex Road Relays at which the team won silver. A fantastic ambassador for the club and a great role model for the younger generations. Well done **NATALIE SEWELL.**

The **Under 17 Women Team Member** award goes to a young lady who is always the first to reply to the emails and is always a willing competitor in any race, competing in all the Essex League races, and was part of the title winning team, finishing fifth in the individual standings. She also competed in the Essex County and Essex Schools Championships, both the Essex County Relays, the English Schools Cup Final, and the Virgin London Mini Marathon, always giving her best. Keep up the good work **HANNAH YEXLEY.**



The **Club Best Performance** award for **Under-15 boys'** award goes to an athlete who started the season earning a gold medal with his teammates at the Essex Cross Country Relays. A key member of the Essex League team, running in four league races which earned him ninth position in the standings and helping the team to a superb runners-up place. He raced at the Essex Schools Championships and London Youth Games, and finished the season with a great silver medal in the Essex Road Relays. Well done to **DANIEL LAMMAS**.

The **Under-15 boys Team Member** award also goes to an athlete who could always be relied upon and showed great improvement through the season. Running in four Essex League races, he finished a credible 13th in the league standings, contributing to the team's second position in the league. He competed at the South of England Champs, London Youth Games and National Championships at Parliament Hill, finishing the season with his team mates to win a silver medal at the Essex Road Relays. The deserving winner is **SEAN LANGAN**.



We now come to the award for **Club Best Performance for under-15 girls** which goes to a young lady who had a cracking first season in the age group. Her consistent performances in the Essex league helped the team finish second and saw her finish third in the individual table. She was part of the winning Essex Road Relays trio, and won bronze in the Essex Schools Championship representing Essex Schools and Essex County teams in the Inter Counties events. A busy winter season also included the London Youth Games, South of England champs, the National Champs and English Schools Cup Final. Still an Under 15 this winter, and always running with a smile on her face, the winner is **ROSIE WARNER**.

The **Team Member** award in this **under-15 girls'** age group goes to award goes to a young lady who was a dedicated team member, competing in all the Essex League races helping the team finish second, and finishing eighth in the individual table. She also competed for club teams in the cross-

country relays where the team won bronze, the County and the Southern Championships and represented Essex Schools in the Southern Inter Counties, always giving her best. Keep up the training **ABI SWAN**.



An excellent season sees the **Club Best Performance** for **under-13 boys** award go to an athlete who began the winter in fine form, a member of the gold winning team at the Essex Cross Country Relays and his superb second place at the second round of the Essex League, earned him Essex County selection. Injured during the middle of the season, he still ran three out of five league races and placed seventh in the final round to secure first place for the team and be crowned League Champions. He was second Essex runner home at the Inter Counties Champs in Loughborough and his season finished with another team gold at the Essex Road Relays. The deserving winner is **FINDLAY MCLAREN**.

The **Team Member** award winner for **under-13 boys** goes to an athlete who earned a team bronze medal at the Essex cross country Relays. He ran in four out of five Essex League races, improving his positions throughout the season, finishing fifth overall in the individual standings, and was a key member of the team, contributing to them becoming League Champions. His fifth place in the Essex Championships earning a team silver medal, and he was third in the Essex Schools Year 7 Championships. He also raced twice at Parliament Hill in the London Youth Games and the Nationals. Always ready with a smile, and with another winter in the Under 13s, we can expect more from **LIAM BATTRUM**.



We have now come to the final age group, the **Under-13 girls** and the **Club Best Performance** award which goes to a young lady who is a future star at whatever event she decides is best for her. In her first season on the Cross Country scene, she represented Essex, competed in the Essex Relays, the English National Championships, the Southern Championships, South East Schools and of course the Essex League, where she got stronger as the season progressed. The young lady says

that she does not like running up hills but she seems to be very quick at running down them! With another year as an Under 13, the winner is **JESSICA PAGE**.

The **Under-13 girls Team Member** award winner had a really impressive first season where she gained excellent experience competing in the Essex League, the South East Inter Counties, the English National Championships and also the Essex Relays. She is always keen to compete and always puts in excellent effort and also with another year as an Under 13 we look forward to more of the same from **ISABELLA TAYLOR-BUSH**.



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We now come to the first of the special awards where the winner has been selected by the Club's Management Committee. The Committee can elect each year to make a special presentations to those athletes who have excelled when competing outside the League structure – for example in prestigious County, Regional and National Championships.

The first of these special awards is in the **Male Under-20 to Veteran category** It is hard to begin to say how well this athlete has performed this season so I'll let his medals do the talking. Gold in the Vets cross country championships, where he was part of the silver medal-winning team. Part of the Gold medal-winning road relay team and the gold medal winning cross country relay team. An ever-present member of the Vets Essex league winning team where he won the individual Vet 40 league. Part of the county cross-country championship silver medal-winning team. But the award goes for his achievements outside club competitions where away from Essex he won the Eastern Counties cross-country Vets gold medal and the Eastern Masters gold, and he also took silver in the British Masters cross country championships at Tonbridge. Someone who proves that it's not just talent but hard work, focus and perseverance that achieves success. These are the cornerstones this man works by. Congratulations once again go to **ROB WARNER**.



The second of these awards is in the **Male Under-13 to Under 17** The season opened with his first Essex League win at Hockley followed a week later by the fastest Under 13 Boys leg in the Essex Cross country Relays to win team gold. He dominated the county scene, winning all five Essex League races, the County Championships, the Essex Schools Championships, running against boys a year older, and running the fastest leg at the County road relays, and his club teams also dominated Essex events. He won London Youth Games bronze at the tough, muddy Parliament Hill course, and at the Southern Champs was pipped on the line into fourth position, and at the National recovered after falling to finish a creditable fourteenth and he was part of the second place Essex team at the English Schools event. Popular with his teammates and a fantastic young talent whose future looks bright as he moves up to the Under 15s. Congratulations to **FREDDIE ROWE**.



The third & final of these special cross-country awards is in the **Services to Cross Country category**. One of the reasons that the club has such a good reputation is because of our many volunteers who go above and beyond to support our athletes. The winner of this award is one such volunteer who has managed teams for more years than any of us can remember and has stayed on as team manager even though her daughter has been studying in the States for several years. She won this award way back so it's long overdue for her to win again. We're delighted to present this award again to **JANE HALLAM** who is unable to be here as she is in the USA after her daughter's recent wedding there.

The final award this evening is one that we haven't presented for a few years, due to various lockdowns – it's the **Sidney Edwards Award for Services to Coaching**. Sidney Edwards was a club coach stalwart back in the 60s, 70s and 80s, always encouraging and helping his athletes, and the well-deserved winner of this award certainly has all these attributes and qualities.

He was an excellent athlete in his own right joining the club way back in April 1974 before taking up coaching in the early 1990s. He is a vastly experienced level 4 endurance coach and over the years he has gradually built up his own training group, and in the process has helped develop many fine male and female athletes along the way - including many up to international standard such as Jessica Mitchell, Kate O'Neill, and most recently Kieran O'Hara & Rebecca O'Rourke who are both on the Paralympic programme. He will always be seen at cross country venues across the country totally irrespective of the weather, providing much valuable advice and guidance to his current athletes for which many are now the bedrock of our current club teams. **Well Done & Congratulations to - PAT GAHAGAN.**



That concludes the formalities of the evening, so in a moment could all the winners join us at the front for the traditional group photo. The food will also be opened, so please help yourselves. Thank You.

