



Cross Country Awards 2023-24: Hornchurch Conservative Club - 17th May 2024

Good evening everybody and welcome on behalf of Havering Athletic Club to the 2023-24 annual cross-country awards. 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 our 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 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.

We again had a full winter programme although unfortunately the weather did cause the cancellation of some events at short notice, including the National Championships. Our athletes again won individual and team prizes and it was a good season by any standard. For the senior men 2023-24 was a season of runners up spots, and so near yet so far, losing the Essex League narrowly on countback but winning the veterans' title and the seniors came good at the end of the season with victory in the Road Relays. The senior women had a strong winter, finishing second Essex Cross Country relays and third in the Essex League. The team managers would like to thank all their squads for their hard work and commitment throughout the season.

We'll start with the award for **Club Best Performance by a Male Veteran**: This man has represented the club for more years than he would like to remember! Always in or around the top ten in the Essex League, he was part of the cross-country silver medal relay team the fastest Masters 40 in the County road relays, and won silver in the Essex Masters cross country championships helping the team to take the silver medal and he helped the England Masters win the silver medal in the home international in Glasgow. His hard work over the years has paid off: the award goes to **ROB WARNER**

The winner of the **Male Veterans Team Member Award** goes to a man who has been a consistent member of the squad. While he will admit to not being as fast as he once was, but he still puts everything into his runs and is a great runner to have in your team. He finished fourth or fifth M60 in each of the Essex League fixtures and was a good fourth in the overall standings. The winner is **TONY PECORARO**.



We now move to the Ladies and the award for the winner of the **Veteran Ladies' Best Performance** once again goes to a long-standing team member who is receiving an award for the second time. She ran in four of the five Essex League meetings, placing 14th in the W45 table. She was 56th in the main county champs and 57th in the Vets Champs, placing 15th V45 category, and she also placed 21st in the Eastern Champs. Often seen smiling her way round the course, the award for the second year goes to **CLARE RUDGLEY**.



Now onto the **Senior Men's Best Performance** award which goes to an athlete for the second successive year. This young man had another great a season which saw him always finish high up in the Essex League, and third in the league standings. Not just a successful individual he was part of the bronze-medal winning at the county championships and the silver medal-winning cross country relay squad and he finished the season on a high as a key member of the gold medal winning road relay team. The worthy winner once again is **BEN DAVIS**.

Next to the **Senior Men's Team Member** award which goes to a young man who has gone from strength to strength this season. He was always in or around the scoring team and was one of the bronze medal-winning team in the county cross-country championships. His excellent leg in the road relays belied his cross-country form as he was the second fastest overall of the Havering contingent. The winner is **KIERAN O'HARA**.



The **Senior Women's Best Performance** award goes to a key member of the Senior Ladies team who ran in four of the five Essex League races, finishing overall winner, as the team were league runners up. She also ran in the county championships where she finished 10th on the tough Basildon course helping the team to win silver. She trains regularly both at the club and on her own and her hard work and results have earned her this Best Performance award. Congratulations to **MORGAN CAMPBELL**, who is unable to be here but Lauren Redd will collect her award.

The winner of **Senior Women's Team Member** award goes to another key team member who competed in all five of the Essex League fixtures, placing third overall. She came ninth in the Essex Champs at Basildon and also competed at the Southern Champs at Beckenham and was a second and first lady over 35 at the Eastern Champs placing 2nd. She also was part of the Essex XC Relays back in September, helping the team to gain silver and she is a very reliable member of the team. Well done **GINTE BAILEY**.



We now move down to the younger age groups who overall fell short of the high spots of recent years, although winning individual and team championship medals. The highlight were the Southern relay title win for the Under 15 Boys in October and fourth in the National Road Relays.

We start with the **Under 20s**.

The winner of the **Club Best performance** award for **Junior Men** is an athlete who was part of the incomplete team that nearly won a medal in the county cross-country championships and he also ran in the cross country relays. A good start to the season where he was always trying to get into the scoring six, also saw him finish ninth in the County Championships to earn selection for the Essex Under 20 team at the Inter Counties, and he also represented the Essex Schools team in the Southern Schools event. We hope to see more of him next season – the winner is: **CHARLIE BURGESS**

Now for the **Junior Men's Team member** award, which goes to another runner who was part of the incomplete team at the Essex cross country championships in January, where he finished seventh individual. His great run in the Essex league at Colchester in December, which saw him finish as third Under 20, kept the team in contention for the overall league title. He would have had an even better season but this good runner's competitions were interrupted by his university commitments and we look forward to seeing him in action this winter: **MATTHEW BLACKLOCK**, who is unable to be here as he is away at university so his father Peter will collect his award.



Onto the **Junior Women Best Performance** award. The dedication and hard work of this athlete has seen her representing Havering AC, Bath University and also Essex under-20 women this season. She finished fourth at the Essex championships, 49th at the UK Inter-counties and came first in her age group at the Writtle University 5-mile race and the Havering Boxing-Day handicap. She is sure to continue this success into track season, this award goes for the second year to **MADDIE BARKER**, who is unable to attend.

On to the **Junior Women Team member** award which once again goes to a hugely talented distance runner who regularly runs for the club and is currently third in the UK all-time rankings for the T20 5k road race. Her impressive performances saw her place runner-up in the Essex Cross Country league, eighth in the Essex Under 20 county championships and 67th in the South of England Championships. Always giving 100% commitment to her races, this award goes to **REBECCA O'ROURKE**.



The team manager had a close decision with little to choose between two **Under 17 Men** athletes who had competed consistently through the winter, just as they had done in past years since joining as Under 13s, and both are deserving of their awards.

The winner of the **Club Best Performance** award for **Under-17 Men** had a good winter season competed in four of the five Essex League fixtures, the Essex County Championships and the Essex Schools Champs, earning Essex selection for the Schools Inter Counties. The winner is **TOBY JOHNSON**.

Under 17 Men Team Member award also competed in four of the five Essex League fixtures, the Essex County Championships and the Essex Schools Champs, and like Toby earned Essex selection for the Schools Inter Counties. Good luck for the summer season **RYAN CARROLL**.



The winner of the **Club Best Performance Award for Under-17 Women** goes to a dedicated young runner whose hard work saw her as the first scorer home from her team on four separate occasions this winter. She finished in the top six in each Essex league race she completed, and her 12th place finish at the Essex schools' championships secured her selection for the South East Schools inter-counties in Ardingly. Kind, considerate and an asset to her team, this award goes to **HANNAH EVANS**.

The winner of the **Under 17 Women Team Member** award demonstrated maturity and resilience in her first year in the under-17 women's category. She was the only female runner in her age group to complete all five league races and this determination saw her place eighth in the individual league rankings and helped her team place third out of 13 clubs. Smiling her way round even the toughest of courses, this award goes to **ROSIE WARNER**.



The **Club Best Performance** award for **Under-15 boys'** award goes to an athlete who by his own admission does not like cross country or distance running but realise that it is a means to an end to improvement in his track events, particularly the 800m where he has achieved outstanding success. He was inside the top five at his three Essex League races and was a key part of the trio who won gold at the South of England Cross Country Relays and placed fourth at the National Road Relays. We look forward to another track season in the Under 17s from **FINDLAY MCLAREN**.

The **Under-15 boys Team Member** award also goes to another fine athlete who was also a member of the Southern cross-country relay gold medal team and fourth placed National Road Relay team. He was ever-present in the Essex league appearances, with his highest placing fourth, and he finished eighth in the individual standings. He is a valuable team member who fully deserves this award **SHEA SWEENEY**.



We now come to the award for **Club Best Performance for under-15 girls** which goes to a young runner who has gone from strength to strength in her first year of this age group. She ran the fastest leg of any Havering girl at the Essex cross country relays and her eighth-place finish at the Essex championships helped her team to win a silver medal. Finishing sixth at the Essex schools' championships guaranteed her selection for the South East Schools inter-counties, where she finished in an impressive sixth place, to earn selection for the National Schools Championships, where she rounded off the season in style with a 25th place finish. The worthy winner is **ORLA FRIEL**.

The **Team Member** award in this **under-15 girls'** age group recognises the commitment of a reliable and much-valued team member over a number of seasons. Utterly dauntless in the face of wind, rain, hail and snow she completed all five Essex league races, and was the only runner in her age group to brave the hills at the South of England main championships. Always staying behind after her race to cheer on the other age groups, the deserving winner is **GRACE TILSON**.



Just as in the Under 17s, the team manager had a close decision with little to choose between two strong contenders **under-13 boys** awards.

An excellent season sees the **Club Best Performance** for **under-13 boys** award go to an athlete who is following in the footsteps of his older brother. He recorded top five finishes in his Essex League races and was seventh in the Essex Championships, and tenth in the Essex Schools for his age group. The award goes to **OLIVER WEST**.

The **Team Member** award winner for **under-13 boys** goes to an athlete who had matched results with Oliver, who just had the edge at key races. He was in the top seven in his Essex league races and was eighth in the county champs. The team manager praises his dedication this winter but says that you sometimes have to slow him down for his own good! Congratulations go to **JOE SEWELL**.



We have now come to the final age group, the **Under-13 girls** and the **Club Best Performance** award goes to a talented young lady who completed a second successful cross country season at Havering. Her performances this year saw her run the fastest Under 13 Girls' leg for Havering in the Essex cross-country relays, and cross the finish line first out of her team at the Essex championships. More recently she represented Havering at the mini marathon finishing 33rd in London. Well done **ELENA WILLIAMS**

The winner of the **Under-13 girls Team Member** award had a very busy season, representing Havering no fewer than five times and scoring for her team on each occasion. Not only did she help her team place fifth in the Essex league but her dedication to Havering AC saw her sporting perfectly co-ordinated blue and yellow knee socks to match her vest! A great performance all round from **SKYE EASTMAN**.



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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** where we recognise an athlete who has been a great asset to the club since he joined in 2018. His main focus is on the roads but this year he also had a full cross-country season, winning the Essex masters cross country title, Eastern Championships and the M40 Essex League title. He was part of the silver medal winning team in the cross country relays and brought the team home to win gold at the Essex Road relays. On his favoured roads he was third overall and first M40 in the Reading Half Marathon and sixth in the Brighton Half (& first M40) and also won the Southend 10k and Run Through Victoria Park events. Once again we recognise the achievements of the one-and-only **JAMES CONNOR**.



The **Female Under-20 to Veteran category** sees us welcome back a great athlete who has been recognised at these evenings over many years in her long and distinguished career. She had an impressive season on the country with top four finishes in her Essex League races, was tenth in the Essex event and a fine 17th in the Inter Counties. But like James, it is on the roads that she now excels. She comfortably won the Essex Half Marathon title at Pleshey in September and won the Wokingham Half Marathon in February setting a new club record. The next month an easy run earned her the Brentwood half title but the highlight of the season was her club record at the London Marathon last month where she improved her best by six minutes was fifth woman from the mass start and fastest M40 overall. The winner is of course **LAUREN REED**.



We now come to the final individual award – that for **Males in the Under-13 to Under 17 age groups** which again goes to a returning winner. Unbeaten in his four Essex League races comfortably earned him the individual Under 17 title and he added second place in the Essex Championships, fourth in the Essex Schools and he was fourth in the Southern Championships at Beckenham. He was a key part of the superb trio who won gold at the South of England Cross Country Relays and placed fourth at the National Road Relays but the icing on the cake came at the Inter Counties Championships at Nottingham in March where he joined an elite group of club athletes who have won National medals by winning bronze. His success continue last month when he was runner up in the London Mini Marathon, and 10th in the national event. The winner for the third successive year is **FREDDIE ROWE**.



Finally, we conclude these special cross-country awards with the presentation of 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 and organised the girls' cross country teams with superb dedication and efficiency for the past few years and we're delighted to present this award to **LOUISE WARNER**



That concludes the formalities of the evening, so in a moment could all the winners join us at the front for the traditional group p



The buffet will also be opened, so please help yourselves.

Separate report to follow on the recognition of Pat Gahagan's 50 years at the club.