



Track & Field Report 2023/24- Another busy and eventful year

As ever, our Track & Field activity centred around our Wednesday evening Track & Field League.

Running successfully through the summer of 2023 with 17 teams participating including new teams Newmarket Joggers and Wellingborough & District AC. We also saw some former teams returning now forming composite teams with Loughton and North Herts Road Runners combining with Thurrock and Fairlands Valley Spartans respectively.

We followed our traditional divisional structure of North, Central and South although this did lead to an imbalance in the number and strength of teams in each division with North only having 4 teams not all of whom were consistently strong. This resulted in a serious lack of competition in many of the events which was disappointing and frustrating for the athletes who did participate.

Reflecting this imbalance in the competitive structure we changed the qualification for the League Final from Top 2 in each division and next best 3 overall to Winner of each division and the next best 5 teams overall. This seemed to work successfully and will be maintained as the qualification for the Final this year.

Also responding to the weakness of North division last year, we have reconfigured the divisional mix this year to level the divisions out a little.

Again, there are 17 teams entered in the League for the 2024 season (although at the time of writing there are still other minor teams considering whether to enter), we have lost Wellingborough & District AC but gained Peterborough based Helpston Harriers.

We have reallocated the divisions into Central West, Central East and South with Corby joining the Central West Div and Cambridge & Coleridge and St Edmunds Pacers the Central East.

The 2024 competition is scheduled to start on Tuesday 30th April for Central East Division (at Peterborough) and Wednesday 1st May for Central West and South at Corby and Chelmsford respectively. Full details of match dates, venues and programme of events are on the new EMAC website.

This year's Final will be at Milton Keynes on Sunday 15th September.

The 2023 Final was held at Bedford and despite some slight organizational problems on the day saw an exemplary level of competition in what were very tightly fought out competitions.

Bedford & County AC winning the men's competition for the first time in a few years followed by a very strong City of Southend AC who beat Marshall Milton Keynes AC by half a point to gain 2nd place.

Peterborough & Nene Valley AC won the ladies' competition by just 6 points ahead of Thurrock/Loughton composite. This was a great performance by Thurrock/Loughton ladies being



their best performance in a long time but also immensely disappointing for them as they were initially announced as joint winners of the competition and medals shared out accordingly.

Cambridge & Coleridge were 3rd with their best team performance for a very long time in this competition if not ever. Peterborough & Nene Valley AC won the Carl Baldwin trophy for the best combined men and women's results. Paul Channing took the trophy for the athlete of the match.

Again, we were unable to stage an outdoor EMAC Championship.

Finding a venue, practicable date, and adequate officials for such an event continues to defeat us.

It is the intention to stage an Outdoor Championships in 2024 although as of the time of writing there are still no firm arrangements for one. The preferred approach with organizing the Outdoor Champs (as is successfully done with the Indoor Champs) is to undertake them on a shared basis with another organization but so far discussions have not resulted in any practical opportunities.

A successful Indoor Champs was staged at Lee Valley in mid-February in conjunction with VAC. Overall entries for these Championships were significantly up on previous years partly reflecting that SCVAC were unable to stage their own Championships this year. Operationally these Championships ran more smoothly this year through greater cooperation from our partners.

The Outdoor Masters Inter Area Championships were held at Nuneaton at the beginning of August in 2023. With a record entry of 9 teams. Being on Midlands Masters' home territory meant that they turned out their usual very strong squads and although EMAC challenged for the lead at several times during the day in both men's and women's competitions we ended up as runners up to MMAC in all 3 Cups (Men, Women and Combined).

The Indoor Masters Inter Area was again staged at Lee Valley at the end of February now organized by EMAC's own Chair Carey Hollick who is also the Track & Field Secretary of the England Masters Athletics Association – the organization responsible for the Masters Inter Area competitions.

This also saw a record entry of teams.

EMAC men took an early lead in the competition after the success of our hurdlers in the first events and held onto the lead for most of the day although MMAC did show through briefly later in the afternoon but a strong performance in the relays meant that EMAC ran out winners of the Men's trophy for a second year and only the third time ever.

The Ladies' competition was much tighter with MMAC controlling the competition for much of the day but with flashes where EMAC took the lead- however a very strong finish by MMAC in the last few events ensured that they ran out winners by such a margin that they took the combined trophy too. EMAC were second in the Ladies' competition and second overall.

The Outdoor Inter Area will be staged within the EMAC area this year, taking place at Corby on Saturday 7th September. Please mark this date in your diaries, we would like to try and make having home advantage for this competition give us a greater chance of retrieving some of the silverware from Midlands Masters where it has been for too long!

Graeme Packman