**Tonbridge win eight out of ten county team team titles**

Tonbridge Athletic Club’s distance runners started the new year with some very strong team performances at the Kent Cross Country Championships, held at Brands Hatch, on Saturday. Across the ten events, they secured eight team titles, one second place and one third place, making it the first time ever that they had gained podium places across all the age groups.

Despite the team successes there was only one Tonbridge runner who was able to secure an individual win, which was Katie Goodge in the under 17 women’s race. She was backed up by Alex Evans (9th) and Flora Currie (11th) as the team finished second to Blackheath.

The Tonbridge senior teams produced significant winning margins. The men won both the six and twelve to score competitions, in the former placing all six scorers in the top ten of a field with more than two hundred starters. Ben Cole battled with the leading group for much of the race, but could not hold Owen Hind of Kent AC who pulled away over the last quarter of the twelve kilometre race. Cole finished fourteen seconds away and was followed in by Corey De’Ath (3rd), Cameron Payas (4th), Jamie Goodge (7th), Michael Ellis (8th) and Dom Brown (10th). The points total of 34 was well clear of Kent AC’s 81.

The senior women’s team also won both of their competitions, scored with three and six runners. Great Britain international Emily Hosker-Thornhill was a convincing individual winner, whilst Tonbridge athletes Lucy Reid and Phoebe Barker followed her home. Harriet Woolley (12th) pipped Alice Wood (13th) on the line, whilst Maria Heslop (14th) and Tina Oldershaw (15th) were not far behind.

Both Tonbridge under 20 age group teams won, with Abianne Coates (7th), Steph Puxty (9th) and Meghan Watson (10th) scoring for the women and James Kingston (3rd), Dan Schofield (4th), Adam van der Plas (5th) and James Stoney (9th) scoring for the men. The under 17 men had five runners in the top ten with the scorers being Matthew Taylor (3rd), Alex Beeston (5th), Fraser Gordon (6th) and Henry Taylor (8th).

The under 15 boys finished eight in the top sixteen of the fifty-nine finishers to again have a healthy margin of victory. Josh Prendergast took 5th with Adam Jeddo (6th), Ed Coutts (7th) and Ananjan Ganguli (9th) scoring.

Lily Slack came closest to a second individual victory for the club, as she led into the last four hundred metres of the under 13 girls’ race, but was overtaken by Abigail Richards of Cambridge Harriers. Penny Horne (5th) and Georgia Conroy (8th) had fine runs to secure the win.

The under 13 boys won through Tom Daly (6th), Harrison Fraser (7th), Tim McLain (8th) and Oliver Head (12th), although will have been thankful that Thanet couldn’t complete a scoring team, after placing three in the first four individuals.

The under 15 girls completed the club’s medal set with a third place, behind Blackheath, plus Medway and Maidstone. Sophie Slack finished 2nd, just five seconds behind the winner Anna Palmer of Medway and Maidstone. Olivia Breed showed that she is returning to form in 4th, whilst Ella Ayden (20th) had her best race to date.

Meanwhile at the Sussex Cross country Championships, held at Bexhill, Nicole Taylor won the senior women’s race by a minute and twenty six seconds, over the ten kilometre course.

**Church wins bronze medal at National Indoor Championships**

Lewis Church, of Tonbridge Athletic Club, won the bronze medal at the National Indoor Heptathlon Championships, at Sheffield, over the weekend.

Thirty-eight athletes started the seven-event competition, although ten didn’t finish, demonstrating how tough multi event championships can be. Amongst these was Harry Kendall who felt a tight hamstring in the Long Jump, which was the second event and had to withdraw.

Church moved through the field from being 13th after the initial 60 metres sprint, where he equalled his personal best of 7.39. A Long Jump of 6.69m, Shot Putt of 13.89m and High Jump of 1.99m put him 6th at the end of day one. He then set a pb of 8.43 in the opening event of day two, the 60m hurdles and followed with a 4.23m Pole Vault. This left him 5th with just one event, the 1000 metres, to go. He won his 1000 metres heat with 2.44.33, going three or four seconds quicker than two of the athletes ahead in the competition, to snatch the bronze medal. His total of 5391 points was just four away from the club record, which he set before Christmas.

Alex Hookway also competed, finishing 18th with a personal best points total of 4133. Along the way he set a Long Jump best of 6.01m and equalled his High Jump best with 1.75m. At the same venue there were solid season openers for Simon Coppard and Kieran Reilly, in the British Milers Club races. Coppard had his first track race for eighteen months and ran 1.53.26 for 800 metres, whilst Kieran Reilly ran the 1500 metres in 3.47.25.