

Track & Field Report - A busy and eventful year

The core of EMAC's Track & Field offering continues to be the Wednesday evening Track & Field League. This ran successfully through the Summer of 2022 although with an increasing level of complexity and effort.

Not only were additional requirements brought in by England Athletics as part of the process to gain permits for the match (the need for tracks to have certificated floodlights for evening matches)- which enforced earlier starts for the long throws at a number of meetings but also the quality of track maintenance continued to deteriorate such that some tracks could not host particular events.

But overriding both of these major factors was the continued increasing difficulty in finding enough officials. This is a major threat to the running of the League particularly with England Athletics trying to enforce higher officiating standards upon meetings.

Nevertheless 16 teams competed in the League with 8 mens and womens teams going through to the September Final in Bedford.

This was a match of the highest standards of Masters' competition with Marshall Milton Keynes AC again emerging as winners of the men's competition over a very strong Bedford & County team and Peterborough & Nene Valley AC winning the Ladies Championship for the first time in a while.

The Outdoor Masters Inter Area competition held at Nuneaton on July 31st suffered from being staged right in the middle of the Commonwealth Games taking place nearby in Birmingham. This meant that many of our athletes were tied up at the Games as officials, volunteers or spectators - although this should have been the case for the other teams too. It did mean a bit more doubling up of events than is usually the case for the athletes who were there. Midlands Masters took full advantage of being at home and organizers of the meeting to win the Men's, Women's and Combined competitions with EMAC being a very creditable 3rd in the Men's, 4th in the Ladies and 3rd in the Combined competitions.

Unfortunately, we were unable to stage an Outdoor EMAC Champs during the Summer for a number of reasons. The UK based Commonwealth Games compressed the season causing fixture congestion but also no club came forward to offer to host the Championship.

This is our preferred method of organization of the Championships and it is a great fund raising opportunity for the hosting club.

However we are looking to take a different approach this year and organize an Outdoor Champs through EMAC- plans are being developed and we hope to have more news as to venue and dates soon.

The recent Indoor season proved much more successful with an outstanding performance at the Indoor Masters Inter Area match at Lee Valley at the end of February.

Despite the usual problems of drop-outs on the day through illness and transport problems the EMAC men's team won their competition convincingly with the ladies coming a very close second only 5 points off the lead behind Midlands Masters. We firmly believe that if the Ladies 3000m race had been allowed to finish properly and therefore count EMAC would have won the Ladies competition too as our athletes were so well positioned in that event.

This meant that we won the Combined competition leaving Lee Valley that evening with two trophies under our arm.

Although the results of the events for the team competition were clear (except the Ladies 3000m) they were not clear enough for inclusion in Power of 10.

It has been a major bone of contention amongst many of our field athletes that day that their performances were very late to appear on Power of 10 or have not appeared at all- and are unlikely ever to.

This was due to an organizational problem on the Field where there were not enough qualified officials and there was poor organization of those that were there with inadequate records of who covered which events.

The quality and consistency of officiating at an event is now closely checked by England Athletics before a result is allowed to appear on P10.

A considerable amount of effort went into trying to validate these results but unfortunately some may never be possible to be validated.

To say that our athletes affected by this are unhappy would be an understatement.

There has been a huge amount of activity behind the scenes as to how this can be prevented from happening again and many actions have been put in place to make sure the Summer Inter Area is managed more robustly. One of the key actions here is that EMAC Chair Carey Hollick has taken over as Track & Field Secretary of England Masters Athletics Association who are the ultimate organizers of these events.

The Outdoor Inter Area will be at Nuneaton again on Sunday 6th August- please mark in your diaries.

We staged a successful Indoor Track & Field Championships jointly with Vets AC at the end of March. Although a joint event it was effectively completely organized by EMAC and in particular Carey Hollick who spent well over a year getting the event pulled together. It wasn't ideal that the date happened to be the same as the opening of the World Indoor Masters in Torun so that many of our better athletes were unable to compete. But such is the pressure on use of Lee Valley stadium that this was the only date available to us. Nevertheless a large number of EMAC athletes were able to compete and went home with a large collection of medals.

The next major Track and Field activity for EMAC is the start of the Track & Field League on May 10th. The number of teams entering this year has increased to 18 with Newmarket Joggers and Buckingham & Stow joining the Central Division.

There are some extra teams joining in with existing clubs on a composite basis with North Herts Road Runners joining with Fairlands Valley Spartans in the Central Division and Loughton Men joining with Thurrock in the Southern Division.

The Final will again be in Bedford on September 10th.

Graeme Packman