

The Southern Promotional final for the National Junior Athletic League took place at the Barnet Copthall stadium with the Saxons needing to finish in the top 2 to ensure another season of top class athletics. They were up against some top class teams, particularly Basildon Beagles and Havering and Mayesbrook, but with a full complement, the team were in confident mood.

The initial events put the Saxons ahead. Nancy Epsley won the Pole Vault with Chelsea Coker getting 3rd in the A shot and Evie Castle winning the B event. Ben Clark got 6.45 to finish 3rd in the Long Jump with Ross Fawcett getting 5th. Theo Moore then produced a pb of 26.67 in the hammer to ensure a good start.

There was then a flurry of activity on the track with an extremely tough 100m event where Tom Powell came 7th and Daniel Green 5th in the B race with a pb of 11.83. Hannah Smithdale and Georgia Atkins performed very well to get 2nd and 1st in the A and B races respectively. Lauren Bouchard produced a sb of 59.34 to finish 2nd in the A 400 with Caroline Hill also gaining 2nd in the B race. Dan Green stepped up to the 400 to get 4th place with Matt Constable coming 3rd in 54.7. Andy Constable then came 2nd in the 800 with Chris Youell 5th shortly after Jessica Judd won the womens race with Lucy Barnes coming 2nd in the B race.

The next group of field events provided clean sweeps for the Saxons. Chelsea Coker (43.66) and Georgina Howe (39.95) won both Hammer events for the women. Matti Mortimer won the javelin with a superb 65.42 and the improving Paul Dowding getting a pb of 53.53 to win the B Javelin throw. Georgia Atkins won the Long Jump with 5.36 and Ellie Besford the B jump with 4.58.

Back on the track, Bradley Reed came 3rd in the 110m hurdles with a pb of 15.34 after Georgia Atkins won the 100m hurdles with Evie Castle getting 3rd place in the B race. In between Jessica Judd was very impressive winning the 3K against 2 very good athletes. Each time they challenged she was able to pull away and eventually won by 4 seconds. Ross Fawcett and Tim Byford came 5th and 3rd in their 3K race.

At this point Saxons were still ahead of their nearest rivals and all looked set for a comfortable victory. However, the competition in this league is fierce and Basildon in particular were edging ever closer. In the remaining womens field events, the versatile Evie Castle came 3rd in the javelin with Jess Crissell coming 7th and then convincingly winning the Triple Jump. Georgia Atkins got a sb of 1.55 for third place in the High Jump with Hayley Maclean winning the B with 1.50. Then a major boost for the team came with another clean sweep for Chelsea Coker and Georgina Howe in the discus.

Theo Moore managed 7th place in the shot and 3rd in the discus with Matti Mortimer getting 3rd in the A discus with 36.71. Liam Yarwood attained 3.65 for 2nd place in the

Pole Vault with Ben Clark clinching the B event. It was at this point that the news came that Basildon were ahead, and Havering only a point behind.

Therefore the remaining track events were quite tense. Basildon and Havering gained a brief advantage in the mens 200m before a clean sweep by Lauren Bouchard and Hannah Smithdale in the womens event retrieved the situation. Tim Byford and Ross Fawcett performed miracles in gaining valuable points in the mens 1500 and then after a short gap got up and ran the 2K steeplechase showing great team spirit. Katie-Ann Tuttlebury won the womens 1500 with Emma Burroughs getting 4th in the B race. The 4x100 relays provided 6th place for the men but the women won comfortably. This regained the lead for the Saxons, but it was a narrow margin and it all rested on the 4x400. The men finished 4th albeit with a SB of 3.38, and then it was down to the women who got 2nd place and then there was a wait for the overall match result.

In the end Saxons retained their place in the Premier Division with a victory over Basildon by just 4 points, and congratulations to them for a good contest who will join us next season in the top league. Matti Mortimer also won the Athlete of the match award, the 2nd time this season he has won it, a remarkable feat.