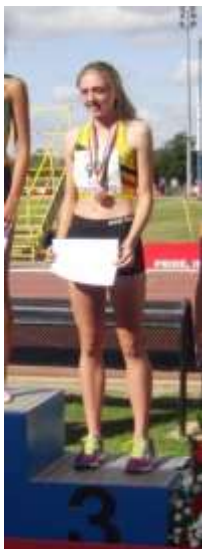


Medal Winner at National Combined Events Championships

Danielle Hopkins from Worcester Athletic Club competed in the Under15 girls National Combined Events Championships in Bedford on 20 & 21 August. In very windy and showery conditions, the fourteen year-old competed in three events on each of the two days and finished the hexathlon winning the National bronze medal and the Midlands gold medal. Danielle started the first day running the 75m hurdles in a personal best (PB) time of 12.23 seconds, which placed her 10th out of the 40 competitors. This was followed by the long jump, where she did the 4th furthest jump with a distance of 5.19m, moving up into 6th position overall on the points table. The first day finished with javelin, which is her newest and weakest event (not unlike the Olympic heptathlete KJT!). A throw of 20.57m put Danielle in 8th position going into the second day, which started with another throw. A shot putt of 9.30m dropped Danielle into 11th position overall. However, as she is ranked second in the UK in high jump with a PB of 1.72m, Danielle showed her class by soaring over 1.68m, a massive 9cm higher than the second best high jumper on the day. The huge number of points gained in high jump moved Danielle up into 3rd position and only 12 points behind the girl in second place. The final event was the 800m. With tired legs but determined to try and win a medal, Danielle gave everything she had left and finished just behind the girl in the silver medal position to secure her bronze medal with a points total of 3471. The silver medal was won by Mia Chantree of Chelmsford AC with 3499 points, and the gold medal was won by Jess Hopkins, also from Chelmsford AC, with a score of 3769 points. As the Midlands athlete with the most points, Danielle was awarded the Midlands gold medal.

Deirdre Elmhirst, Danielle's coach at Worcester AC said "this was Danielle's first ever hexathlon and she performed well across the events. She was thrilled to come away with a national medal in her first year competing in combined events". Earlier in the summer, she won the schools county and regional pentathlon competitions and has the national schools pentathlon in mid-September. Elmhirst continued "Danielle is an excellent high jumper and has made great progress learning the other events this year". Danielle said she is looking forward to moving up to the heptathlon next year [200m is the extra event] and thinks the slightly greater distance between the hurdles will suit her long legs better. Elmhirst said "training to be a heptathlete is incredibly hard work, but Danielle has the motivation, dedication and passion to do the high volume of training. She has been inspired not only by Jess Ennis-Hill and KJT, but also by 16-year-old Niamh Emerson, who won the heptathlon bronze medal at the European Youth Championships in July. Danielle trains in the same group as Worcester high jumper Joel Khan, who competed for GB at the European Youth Championships. "Success within the group breeds further success" said coach Elmhirst. Both athletes are hoping to increase their medal haul this weekend at the National Age-group Championships; Danielle is competing in the high jump and Joel in both the high jump and triple jump.



Danielle on the podium



Danielle on the podium with the other medallists



Danielle and coach Deirdre Elmhirst