



MIDLAND VETERAN'S TRACK and FIELD LEAGUE 2023

Worcester's Veteran Athletes (those aged 35 or over) track and field season got off to a flying start on 10 May when they competed in a South Midlands league match at our Nunnery Wood venue.

Huge congratulations to everyone who took part at the first of the four Vet's League matches. The first match of the season is never an easy one, but our athletes really seemed to enjoy their evening of competitive action on home turf. Many thanks too to those who acted as volunteer helpers or officials and without whom the event could not have taken place. It was especially pleasing to have the former Chairman of our Club, Ron Smith, as announcer.



Even before the start of the match and despite the best efforts of volunteers from Worcester AC, we arrived to find that Freedom Leisure (who manage the site) had engaged contractors to repair the Shot Putt circles. Both Shot Putt areas had been taken out of action, on the day of the match, without prior warning or any consideration as to our league fixture. The Shot Putt "stop boards" had been removed from both circles, the base partly dug up and fresh cement (still wet) greeted us upon arrival. We obviously had to cancel the Shot Putt and apologise to the other clubs/athletes.

In the men's match....

We fielded a slightly weakened squad due to illness, injury and other commitments, but such is our Team spirit and strength in depth that we still managed to enter an athlete in every event.

In the **100m sprints** we welcomed back **Rich Drewett** at M60. He had lost none of his speed and ran 15.8s for 2nd place. At M70 it was the turn of **Laurence Oldfield**. Laurence was carrying an injury yet still came home in first place, albeit limping across the line. **Nick Hitchings** stepped in to cover at M50 where he gathered 6 Team points with a time of 14.3s. At M40 **Ben Reeves** recorded 12.2 for the second fastest time of the day across all the age groups whilst at M35 **Dave Price** gallantly covered the slot and picked up 5 valuable points.



Laurence, completing the M70 100m sprint with a grimace, but also with maximum points!



In the **2000m Race Walk**, **Phil Edwards** (M35) in his first competitive Race Walk, came 4th with 15'17.6 and **Rich Drewett** recorded 13'15.9 for a fine victory in the M60 category. Between them, these guys collected a superb 13 Team points out of a possible 16.

Phil (far left) in his first ever Race Walk

At 400m **Dave Price** (M35) managed 3rd place with 59.4s. **Matt Fairlamb** (M40) ran a very reasonable time (62.8s) yet against tough opposition this was only good enough for 5th place. Nick Hitchings went one better coming 4th in the M50 age group with 65.2s. Collectively, another 15 points for Team WAC.

The last individual races on the track in the men's competition were the always popular **One Mile** runs. **Mark Fritchley** recorded 5'01.2 for 4th place at M35, **Darren Kirby** ran 5'12.9 for 3rd spot in the M40 group then **Derek Jackson** (moving down an age group) stopped the clock in 1st place at 5'52.3, more than half a minute ahead of the next quickest athlete.



At this point in the proceedings B&R men were in the lead with a total of 84 team points, whilst Worcester and Stratford had each scored 80. Yes, we certainly had quite a scrap on our hands!!

The Men's Field Events....

We had a bit of a scare as **John Reynold's** had been delayed at work and the M50 Hammer was about to start. Luckily we had a very experienced thrower, **Damon Cripps**, making his Vet's League debut for Worcester as a "guest". Damon's status was quickly converted into that of a "scoring" athlete and he promptly threw 39.74m for maximum points.

In the M60 **High Jump**, **Marc Flannery** cleared 1.35m for another maximum, then did the same again in the M60 **Discus** with a throw of 35.53m (PB).

In the M35 **High Jump**, **Andi Cresswell** outperformed his rivals by clearing 1.60m for 8 Team points, despite dropping down an age group.

Phil Edwards (M50) and **Derek Jackson (M70)** are not really jumpers, but both stepped up to register valid **Long Jumps** to keep the Team points flowing.

Limited marks for style, but top marks for offering to help out with Long Jump.



The final men's event of the evening was the **4x200m Relay**.

Ben Reeves got us off to a flying start so we were leading at the first change. **Dave Price** took leg two and managed to maintain the lead as he handed over to **Matt Fairlamb**. Matt was racing to hold the lead when his hamstring gave way (ouch!) but he very bravely made it to the change-over area and handed the baton to **Nick Hitchings**. By this time B&R had overtaken us but Nick pressed on, crossing the line in 2nd place with a time of 1'50.9, some 3 seconds ahead of the team from Stratford.

In the Team event, Worcester Men's strong finish to the evening had seen us pull away from our rivals and amass a total of 127 points. B&R finished on 117, just half a point behind Stratford's 117.5. Wow, what a tight finish! Lower down, there was an incredibly tight finish between BPJ, MMAC, Sparkhill and Halesowen, with just **6½ points** separating all four clubs! Only Droitwich missed the party, as they didn't have enough athletes to be competitive – next time maybe?

In the ladies match....

We knew that we had a strong team, but feared that our main rivals Stratford might be even stronger!

The match started with the **100m sprints**. In the W60 age group **Angela Bryant** ran a solid 16.3s to secure 2nd place and 7 valuable Team points. Angela was recovering from illness and was up against a rapid Elaine Ledden from Stratford.

At the W70 age group **Iris Holder** showed her rivals a clean pair of heels as she acquired maximum points (8) with a season's best (SB) time of 20.7s whilst at W50 the tables were turned when Stratford's World medal winning Sprint Hurdler (Paula Williams) had a comfortable victory. However, **Louise Kirby** for Worcester came home in 2nd place, maintaining our good start to the match.



Jade (W35) storming to victory in the 100m

Nicola Guiver (W40) and **Jade Merry (W35)** continued gathering great points with a 2nd and 1st respectively. For Jade, it was the first time she had raced for the club – what a start!

Next it was the **2000m Race Walk**. Sadly, we were unable to enter an athlete in the W60 age category. Fortunately **Cat Hutchison** competed at W35 completing the race in a time of 14'16.8, a time bettered only by a specialist race walker from the Halesowen club.

Following the Race Walk, our Team total was 51 points and Stratford were also on 51 points! We knew it would be a challenge.



Next on track were the **400m races**. At W35 **Sara Saunders** (70.0) chased home a fast B&R athlete for 2nd place and 7 Team points. Next to cross the line was **Gema Torres Solis** (72.4s), also from Worcester, setting a PB whilst running as a non-scoring guest (see photo above).

At W40 **Emma Oldham** in her first race for Worcester added another 7 Team points with a PB of 71.3 whilst Ros Townsend-Hope managed 3rd place at W60 with 90.7s for another 6 points on the total.

In the **One Mile races** at W35 **Emma** was back on the track and produced an excellent performance to obtain another 7 points in a time of 6'39.9. **Cat Hutchison** in the W40 age category matched Emma's points tally with another 2nd place finish. At W50 we welcomed back **Becky Selvey** from injury as she ran 7'05.5 for 6 Team Points – and a new club record for her age group.

At the end of the track races (apart from the relays) just 3 points separated Stratford and Worcester.

And so to the Field Events –

In the **High Jump (W35)** Worcester were represented by **Clare Gratrix** and she did us proud, coming joint 1st in a three way split, as they all cleared 1.25m and couldn't even be divided on countback.

In **High Jump (W60)** the ladies Team Captain, **Mel Garland**, joined the competition after the other athletes had been eliminated. Mel equalled the (W60) Midland Vets League Record with 1.25m as she acquired maximum Team points.



In the **W60 Discus Mel Garland** again scored maximum points with a throw of 20.54m for a new club record. Worcester's **Jan Timberlake** and **Ruth Wells**, both specialist throwers (but in younger age groups) also took part in the Discus as non-scoring guests, achieving 20.62 and 23.14 respectively.

In the **W50 Hammer, Gill Repton** swung the 3kg metal ball 16.77m for 6 valuable Team Points. **Ruth Wells** with 19.78m appeared as a non-scoring guest.



In the **Long Jump (W50)** **Jan Timberlake** cleared a very respectable 3.68m for 2nd place and 7 Team points whilst **Louise Kirby** (on her birthday!) competed as a non-scoring guest managing 3.24m.

In the **W70 Long Jump** we were represented by **Iris Holder** who cleared 2.32m for maximum points, despite competing in a younger age group.

Great technique from Jan in the Long Jump

And then it was the **4x200 Relay**...

Two days before the competition Worcester lost one of their fastest sprinters, **Amy Pinkney**, due to illness. Newcomer **Jade** hasn't run a 200m so in stepped **Mel Garland**. She may be in the W60 age group, but as the previous 4x200 relay she ran this year was as part of the **World Championship Gold Medal** winning Team GB squad, it seemed the correct decision. And so it proved, as Mel got the team off to a flying start and handed over a 15m lead after the first leg. On leg two, **Nicola Guiver** stormed around the top bend and further extended our lead. Following a great hand-over **Gema** (running her first ever relay race) continued to put space between Worcester and the opposition. Finally the baton was safely in the hands of **Sara Saunders** and with a lead of 50m she was not to be caught. The outcome was one very happy relay squad with maximum Team points and big smiles for a job well done.

WAC's victorious ladies relay team Sara, Gema, Nicola and Melanie



The scores on the doors showed that Worcester Ladies had clinched a fine Match victory, accumulating a total of 136 points to Stratford's 125.

What an amazing way to start the new league season, a fantastic double for Worcester, who now head the men's and the ladies league tables. We had home advantage this time, but for the next fixture (14 June) the situation will be reversed as Stratford will be hosting the match.