Hi all

Blackheath and Bromley HAC young athletes have started the New 2015 Year in fantastic fashion at the Kent Cross Country Championships, winning four team trophies, one set of team silvers and two sets of team bronzes along with individual gold, silvers and bronze medals.

The girls are now Kent Champions in the U13, U15 and U17 age groups and won silver in the U20.

The boys are now Kent Champions in the U13 and bronze medalist in the U15 and U17's. A very impressive set of results.

The weather was typical cross country weather, constant rain and the going under foot was difficult with long grass, boggy puddles, mud, adverse cambers, flint and hills all coming in to play but fortunately we were once again protected from the elements by our impressive club tent.

Many many thanks to the sterling work Hanna and Dave Cordell do in difficult conditions for the rest of us to enjoy. The day would have been unbearable without the tent!

With the English channel rolling in the back ground the U13 girls got us off to a winning start, securing the team gold, beating Tonbridge by two points (three athletes to score). First home, having a brilliant run was Emilie Penlington finishing strongly to win a fine silver medal in 2nd place. Jessica Neal and Rosie Allen had great runs and could only be separated by a second as they took 6th and 7th place respectively. Lily Tappenden 14th and Alice Prentice 16th were next BB finishers followed by Morgan Squibb 25th, Gracie Horton 26th, Niamh Milo 30th, Zoe Austridge 40th and Lauren Goddard 56th.

Jessica, Rosie, Morgan and Niamh will all still be U13 next year. It was also good to see their team mate Isabelle Bridge supporting them especially as she is out with an injury at present.

The eleven U13 boys standing on the start line must have been inspired by the girls as they stormed to a team gold as well winning by 15 points. Rowan Fuss continued his fantastic season winning comfortably with Joseph Georgiadis giving himself a great birthday present winning the bronze medal in a strong 3rd. Peter Guy who won the bronze here last year had to settle for a still respectable 5th place having worked hard throughout the race. Keir Lundy finished well in 12th completing the scoring four (four athletes to score for the boys). To prove Blackheath's strength in depth we had three bunched together with Ben Gardiner 15th, young Thomas Penlington, making his BB debut in a fantastic 16th and Robert Suckling placing a great 17th. Leo Braden was just behind in 19th followed by Cameron Swatton in 30th and Ethan Kitteridge, also making his BB debut in 38th. Young Sam Reardon was having an impressive race but was hindered by a painful knee injury late on into the race. Such was Sam's determination to finish he continued, albeit hobbling, through to the finish. A great team player. Impressively Thomas and Sam still have two years left in the U13 age group along with Rowan and Ethan who have one more year, the future is looking bright.

The U15 girls continued the winning streak but the result was a lot closer, in fact we were tied on points with Tonbridge but as our third and final scorer finished before Tonbridge's last scorer, we won! Yasmin Austridge started off in determined mood and clawed back an extra place in the final 100m finishing 4th. Great to see the black vests in large numbers as four girls crossed the line one after the other with Naomi Kingston in 6th, Kelsi Cornish in 7th, Millie Smith in 8th and Genny Allen in 9th.  Amy Leach had another strong run finishing in 22nd followed by Carlotta Wietzel in 25th. To prove what fantastic team spirit there is amongst our athletes it was great to see Grace Scopes and her dad there supporting the team despite having only just landed at Heathrow a few hours earlier after returning from a winter break in sunny Florida.

Nine U15 boys made the start line and their collective efforts won them team bronze, medals. Angus Harrington looked great finishing 11th, Lewis Mills making his BBHAC debut came storming through the field to cross the line in a great 12th just 2 seconds behind Angus.  Henry Cowie had a difficult run in 18th, not surprising as he has been recently clocking some of the fastest indoor 800m times in the country. Obviously in pain he dug in and helped the team to 3rd. The scoring team was completed by a real gutsy run from Callum Myatt finishing in 20th. Good to see Oscar Hussey back running over the country despite having to juggle other sporting commitments in 25th, George Pope sprinting the home straight 27th, Coleman Corry 28th sporting a fetching Blackheath & Bromley club hat! Lewis Stickings 30th and Charlie Andrews 37th completed the BB results. Interesting to note that Angus, Henry, Callum, George, Coleman, Lewis and Charlie are all still U15s next year. As I say this is great for the future.

The U17 girls welcomed back Niamh Bridson Hubbard to the team after a long time away through injury. Depite limited training and only a few steady runs it was great to see her set off with real determination and lead the Blackheath girls out. In form, but not 100% well, Jessica Keene just passed Niamh in the run in but their great results won them team gold. The scoring three were Jess 2nd behind National Champion Sabrina Sinha, Niamh 3rd and Kelsey Fuss 4th. They were well backed up by great runs from Joanna Clowes 8th, Georgina Taylor 10th and Mary Guy in 14th. Shannon Riskey unfortunately had to pull out during the race after feeling unwell.

Seven U17 BB boys started their 5.1km race and great runs from Joss Barber in 6th and Marco in 7th along with Alek Wiltshire 22nd and Will pope in 27th help secure team bronze medal for Blackheath and Bromley.  James Crawley had a difficult few minutes before his race after discovering that his spikes had been accidentally taken home by someone with a similar spike bag. Left in its place was a brightly coloured pair of spikes 5 sizes too small! Joss Barber came to the rescue and selflessly offered James his pair of clean dry trail shoes. James wore these and finished 28th. I didn't realise the scale of the gesture until I saw Joss after his race walking around in the now sodden trail shoes. A very kind act. Bertie Harrington, having watched younger brother Angus run earlier and anticipating watching dad Rod run later finished just behind James in 29th. Charlie Davis started but had to pull out with recurring knee problems but not before he had got muddy enough to make it worth while.

The U20 women continue our medal haul winning team silver with Kate Curran placing 4th, Anna Myers 7th, Sam Leighton 8th and Shauna Paice making her BB championship debut in 9th.

Thomas Desborough, just back from a hip injury was our only representative in the U20 men after other withdrawals due to illness and injury, didn't enjoy his day much as he had to pull out when his hip problem flared up again. Hopefully a little rest and we will soon see Tom flying around the country again.

Todays conditions were very difficult and resulted in the senior men and women's races being altered at the last minute after one athlete broke her ankle after a fall running through the valley. Although the emergency services were at her side quickly and were able to keep her dry, warm and comfortable it took over an hour and half to move her due to the awkward terrain and ground conditions.

Many athletes stumbled or fell as did some spectators including team manager Andy Frankish. Fortunately Andy was wearing his new Christmas coat, a present from his training squad, maybe next year they should buy him some spikes!!

It's no surprise that Blackheath and Bromley are such a great club with great athletes, members and parents. Despite the weather and location of this years County Championship many of our club's members made the trek to support our athletes along with even more keen and willing parents. Great to see Dick and Sheila Griffin, our Mr and Mrs President all over the course, Tim Soutar our Chairman and U20 ladies team manager, Norman Park track manger and past president Ken Daniel and as mentioned previously our ever present Hanna and Dave Cordell.

Hanna and Dave arrived at Hythe at 8am in the morning, set up the tent in heavy rain (not an easy task), Dave spent the day officiating the races and Hanna spent the day handing out 10 sets of team numbers and pins and generally taking charge in the tent. Once all the races were complete they then dismantle the now sodden and muddy tent, fold away and transport back to the club house, where they get it all out once again and hang it up to dry. They have a very full, long day and we genuinely could not do without the Cordells.

Full results can be found here    <http://www.kcaa.org.uk/race%20results%2015.htm>

Paul Austridge