The team met on a beautiful morning at the Club House in Hayes Way. The air was crisp with the gentle aroma of PBs in the air. Southampton beckoned.

Team selection though had been difficult, the combination of the bank holiday, and the last opportunity for swimmers to win county selection resulted in a smaller pool of athletes to select from. Being new to the role I wanted to go into the YDL with eyes wide open. I put together the range of performances produced at the YDL at the first meeting 12 months ago. The standard was extremely high, and to be frank I was more than a little worried boarding the coach. Morale, though, is such a powerful ingredient in sport.

Word was spreading through the coach that Adefela Lipede with his team from Whitgift School had set a new record in the 4 x 200m at the Achilles Sports Relays. In fact, Ade and his team mates broke two records, they ran 1:36.69, beating the 1988 meeting record of 1:37.50, but also the UK All Comers Under 15 record which Birchfield Harriers set in 1986. This was the kind of form we were going to need on the day.

We were greeted at the track by the welcoming sight of the Blackheath and Bromley Tent (we thought we had an early start on the bus, thank you Dave). Numbers were distributed, teas were bought, and the team settled in. What would the day hold?

Drama, from the word go….

The first event was the **Hammer**. James Lancaster and Henry Henderson representing Blackheath. This was to be Henry’s first competitive attempt at the Hammer. He was being thrown in at the deep end of the YDL, but we have a strong A string thrower. James had thrown a PB of 41.74m at the Easter Monday meet at Tonbridge.  So with two strong lads representing us, we were due to get off to a steady start. Hammer is such a technical discipline though, and James’ throws were ruled no throws. It sounded as if he had been dealt with harshly on throw number one. In spite of this blow, James worked with Henry providing support and advice helping him achieve a PB of 18.87m. Henry placed 5th in the A string.

Meanwhile track-side the **Long Jump** had started. Edward Adams jumped 5.66m for a PB. Adefela Lipede seemed to be holding something back. The record breaking run in the week, had left Adefela with a tight achilles. Paul Patten, who’s experienced eye had seen the problem, stayed by the pit monitoring the situation. Jay Galley gave Ade advice between jumps on how best to relieve the tightness. This support helped Ade jump a PB of 5.01m. Edward placed 2nd in the As, Adefela placed 1st in the Bs. Thank you Paul and Jay.

The first track event followed: **80m hurdles**. It was a win-double. Edward Adams recorded his second PB of the day, winning the As in 12.30. Henry-James Cowie won the Bs in 13.00, beating his previous PB by 0.73 seconds.

Edward had a few moments to recover before the **Discus,** and his hatrick. A new PB of 34.14m placing 2nd in the As. James Lancaster, 1st in the Bs 29.73m PB.

You could feel the momentum growing, whatever worries I had on the coach were starting to dissipate. Blackheath and Bromley were rising to the occasion. The YDL lower league combines scores from the boys and girls teams at U13 and U15. Right now the point count was rising, and the team was sitting in first place. The next event was the **Pole Vault** and the Lewis Bubka Stickings nursing an injury we were unable to enter. Would that come to haunt us later?

**200m** and the PBs kept coming. Harry Taylor recorded 25.50 and Adefela Lipede 24.70. These PBs placed Harry 5th in the As and Adefela 1st in the Bs. The 200m were extremely competitive, and by now much of the team were pushed up against the railings trackside urging the rest of the team on. There was a worry though, the clock was ticking down, and there was no sign of our 800m runner Angus Harrington. News was coming to us that traffic on the M3 was appalling. We would have to switch round one of our 1500m runners. Callum Myatt had just managed to repin his numbers to his vest, when Angus arrived. There was time for a quick warm up, and then it was on the track. Well done to his dad Rod for getting him there.

The **800m** A race Henry-James Cowie got his 2nd PB of the day placing 2nd. 2:10 could put Henry-James into the top 30 in the country on Power of 10. Angus, in spite of the car journey, set a PB of 2:16.8 placing 2nd in the Bs.

In the **800m** non score, Harrison Parker joined the PB party winning the Under 15 boys race in 2:44.4. Achieving that standard will give the team great strength and depth in the KYAL, well done Harrison.

After a great hour on the track for the club it was time to return to the field events. In the **Javelin** solid performances from Angus Harrington (32.41m) and Henry Henderson (25.74m) saw Blackheath take 2nd in the A and B strings. In the **High Jump** Henry-James Cowie and Coleman Corry both achieved 1.45m. Henry-James placed 4th in the As, and Coleman placed 3rd in the Bs, recording a PB.

Back to the track for the **100m**, in the non score Harrison Parker and Callum Myatt produced PBs of 16.2 and 14.3, Callum knocking nearly 2 seconds off the best he set at Ashford last week. In the A string Adefela Lipede placed 3rd and Harry Taylor placed 4th in the Bs. Harry produced his second PB of the day in 12.30. The nicest thank you Harry could give Dad Sean for coming all that way to support the team. Adefela smashed his old PB and broke the 12 second barrier in 11.9.

Following this Angus Harrington and Coleman Corry were back on duty in the **300m**. The lads both produced PBs. In the As Coleman placed 6th in 42.70, in the Bs Angus came 5th in 44.80. The effort in the 300m left Coleman reeling. He had 40 minutes to recover before the 1500m, it looked touch and go. Callum Myatt looked fresh after the 100m, and his mum Kelly had arrived to support in spite of Paul Austridge’s directions.

While we waited to see if a last minute team change would be necessary, Harry Taylor and Henry Henderson made their way to the **Shot Put**. Harry achieved 8.46m missing out on his third PB of the day by just 18cm. This placed him 6th in the As, Henry Henderson came 4th in the Bs with a new PB of 6.32m.

All the while **1500m** heats worked their way through. Coleman and Callum headed up to the start. Following this both boys would be called on again in the 4 x 300m relay. Blackheath and Bromley were still edging second in the competition, but it was close. The rest of the team was encamped by the railings track side, shouting support. Both boys really produced. YDL Southampton can go down in the team’s legend as the PB Southampton. Coleman was 4th in the As in 4:46.1 his third PB on the day. Callum ran the race of his life, finishing 4th in the Bs 5:00.6. His second PB on the day.

The **4 x 100m** relay team diligently practiced baton changes while the 1500m played out. New comer to the team Henry-James Cowie was joining seasoned hands Harry Taylor, Edward Adams and Adefela Lipede. The lads came home second in 48.5 (averaging 12.125s per head).

All that remained was the **4 x 300m relay.** None of the Ashford team who had won spectacularly last week were available, and with athletes bumping up against number of event limits we had to dig deep in to the squad for this event. All of the lads who entered had run either a 1500m or an 800m so it was really gutsy, and with names like Angus, Harrison, Callum and Coleman they could have been taken from the set of Braveheart. Resounding support carried the lads home, their tired legs coming in 6th, but the team had done enough. Blackheath and Bromley had achieved 2nd place on the day, and with 3 more meetings to come, and the prospect of a wider pool of athletes to select from at future meetings, the YDL series is going to be very exciting.

It’s understandable that when the team goes to matches that are further away, as much as they’d like parents can’t always attend. In spite of this the support network around the athletes is tremendous. A big thank you to the team managers, coaches and parents who came. Also it must be mentioned the club earned 35 points from providing officials on the day, a big thank you to them.

The swimmers who couldn't attend the Southampton meeting had put Blackheath and Bromley first a number of times over the winter for cross country duties. We hope they did well as yesterday and would love to hear how it went.

The team’s next match is at Erith in the KYAL, Sunday 11th of May. Can’t wait...

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