Hi all

We had exactly fifty young athletes travelling up to Nottingham for the 2014 National Cross Country Championships and what an impact they all had.

Most of them travelled on the team coach leaving the clubhouse Friday lunch time, heading for our hotel that was to be our base for the next two days. After a long but relaxed journey all were booked into their rooms, some then went swimming, where a game of water polo developed between boys and girls, while a hardy few went for an easy run. After a good dinner and  a fair amount of chatting, lights were out by 10pm ish ready for the next days exertions. Two hours later we had a rude awakening with the hotel fire alarms blaring. A few confused faces in the corridor but soon all boys, girls and adults were assembled on the pavement outside, some with essential "i pads" and no coats and some without room keys! This was the start of our athletes being regularly locked out of their rooms, for one reason or another, and led to numerous trips to reception to get new door key cards. A league table was set up with the eventual winners topping 20 trips. Billy was joint winner with Callum, closely followed by most of the young athletes! We also began speculating as to which of the rival running clubs had actually activated the fire alarm!

In this potentially serious situation the Blackheath and Bromley youngsters all conducted themselves in a mature and sensible way and were a real credit to our club.

Despite this interruption the youngsters  were up bright and early and enjoyed a full and varied breakfast.

Back onto the coach for the short trip to the lovely Wollaton Park, we passed the local Parkrun that had just started and were delighted to see Billy and Jess Keene's dad Mick storming around the field near the front of the pack. A real inspiration!

The setting for this years Nationals was excellent, mainly dry and firm underfoot with a few nasty, dirty water filled ditches and a couple of logs to negotiate all in the shadow of the impressive 16th century Wollaton Hall, which now house Nottingham Natural history museum.

It was great to see so many Blackheath and Bromley HAC vests and gave us an interest in each of the eight junior races.

The U 20 men and women weren't able to field enough for full team honours but great to see Amber Reed 71st, Beth Frost 100th and Will Ruiz 96th all in the top 100.

The U17 boys race saw 400m Hurdler Bailey Stickings leading the pack for about 1/2mile before being swallow and spat out somewhere near the back. However, Bailey's presence did enable the three other Blackheath boys to record a very respectable 12th team place. This was the first time the U17's have fielded a scoring team since Phil Seseman, Greg Proctor,

Will Mercer and Sam Jackson placed 12th in 2010.

Will Fuller continued his excellent season taking a few great scalps and coming in a fine 11th, followed by Richard Webb finishing a strong 44th. Thomas Desborough fresh from gaining his first Kent vest had his best National placing coming home in 128th. They celebrated these great achievements by eating lots of sweets or were they chocolate liqueurs??

The five U17 girls helped the team secure 10th place lead home by another great run from Niamh Bridson Hubbard, despite losing a spike, still ran in a strong 22nd. Leah Everson finished in 115th, Sam Leighton 148th, Jenny Sheasby in her first National 186th and Chloe Haffenden 208th.

The U15 boys only had four boys running after a late withdrawal from Will Pope following a scan that discovered a stress fracture in his back. This stopped Will from competing but didn't

stop him from travelling with the team and enjoying all but the actual racing. The four boys who did run produced a team finish of 20th and saw Marco Arcuri inside the top 100 in 96th, Alek Wiltshire 119th, Charlie Davis 186th and Oscar Hussey 251st.

Highlight of the day came as the U15 girls stormed around to easily win the team trophy and such is our strength and depth that our first five girls individual results would still have easily won, even though only four are needed to score.

Naomi Kingston, with still another year in the age group had her best run of the season powering through the field to finish in 5th. Jess Keene also finished strongly to cross the line in 10th.

Kelsey Fuss 16th, Yasmin Austridge 22nd and Georgina Taylor 28th were all well to the fore in a field of over 350. These girls were backed up by a great debut National run from

Amy Leach 183rd, Jo Clowes 216th, Mary Guy 253rd, Darcy Kirwin 295th and Francesca Pickup 320th.

Athletes have many different ways of approaching races but Naomi's choice of setting up a hair dressing salon before the race and plating the girls hair

(Andy Frankish turned down his offer of a new hair style) clearly helped her to relax and then produce one of Blackheath & Bromley's performances of the day.

Henry James Cowie, also sporting a new hair cut had an equally great race also finishing a tremendous 5th position. The U13 boys had the biggest number of BBHAC vests running and finished a brilliant 5th place only 31 points off gold and 11 off bronze. Backing up Henry were Michael Eagling, sacrificing a Kent County swim to run, coming home a great 39th followed by two boys, neither 100% fit having missed a fair amount of training through injury. Angus Harrington's gutsy run in 57th and year young Peter Guys 65th completed the scoring team.

Joseph Georgiadis, also a year young and in his first National had a fabulous run in 103rd. Coleman Corry in his first National was 113rd. George Pope and Lewis Stickings were again almost inseparable (on and off the course) with only 3 seconds separating them in 162nd and 168th respectively. The next three boys all at their first Nationals and all with next year in the age group were Keir Lundy 197th, Billy Keene 209th ( wearing spikes for the first time) and Ben Gardiner 221st. Callum Myatt 276th,  finished unrecognisable as his face was covered in mud after going through one of the water features. He was soon able to wash it off in the Hotel swimming pool! Cameron Swatton on his first National was 301st and Charlie Short making up for his mum Jane Bradshaw's absence (foot stress fracture) 380th.

The U13 girls had nine girls in Nottingham but only eight ran as Isabelle Bridge went down with a fever, not helped by standing on the pavement at midnight waiting for the fire bridge to give us the all clear. The young girls did the club proud finishing 8th team place with Millie Smith a brilliant 21st, Jessica Sellar a great 74th, a strong 102nd from Grace Scopes and

Emilie Penlington 123rd completing the scoring 4. They were backed up by Lauren Goddard 206th, Claudia Pickup 258th, Lily Tappenden 349th and Zoe Austridge 380th. Interesting to note that five of these girls will still be U13 next year.

It was great to also have two club athletes, Shannon Riskey and Lorna Clowes supporting the athletes at the start of each race. Thanks also to former team manager Paul Riskey for his help ensuring the athletes got to the start on time. Probably about time for Paul to get officially involved again!

In the senior women race all three BBHAC ladies were mums to young athletes and so in the re named "Mums race"  Emilie's mum Carole finished in 245th, Bailey and Lewis' mum  Charlotte came 307th and Yasmin and Zoe's mum Claire came 444th.

After the short journey back to the hotel driven by "coach driver of the year" Peter, it was back in the pool for more water polo and general high jinks before getting ready for the National Supper. After dinner and a few dull speeches the boys and girls went off to the pool room / lounge to play!!  To quote one young athlete “what goes on tour stays on tour" !!

So no further comment!

Many thanks must go to the numerous parents and Blackheath past presidents and members for all their tremendous support on and around the course. Great to see Graham (Gary ) Botley, Ian Wilson, Tim Souter, Mike Mahoney, Bill Foster, Terri Shotton, Roy Smith  and Pat Calnan.  Special thank you to Mr Motivator coach Nigel Stickings for inspiring all the athletes to achieve so highly! Thanks to Dave Cordell and Peter Tucker for once again pitching the tent, supplying chairs and endless cups of tea, mainly consumed by Peter T!! See photos.

President Bob Cliff, ever present at the cross counrty events and always supporting from seemingly inaccessible places. A special thank you for the great photos, on our website within hours, all taken by Mike Peel. Nice to see Ken Daniel supporting both the women and men this time! If anyone has his lost GB speedos, last seen pool side, could they please return them.

Coleman's dad Nic, soon to be U15 boys Kent league team manager joined us for the weekend and many thanks go to him for providing the much needed liquid refreshments!

The weekend was a great success and in no small way down to Hanna Cordell's huge efforts and organisational skills. Her professionalism was evident throughout and only faltered once when she thought the youngsters had eaten all the Haribo fried eggs before she could get her hands on any!!

Andy Frankish, the girls team manager, Hanna and myself owe a huge debt of gratitude to Nigel and Charlotte Stickings, Carole Penlington, Jane Bradshaw and Claire Austridge for the tremendous support they gave the young athletes throughout the weekend.

For full results and photos please go to   <http://www.bandbhac.org.uk/national%2022-02-14.html>

For videos of all races go to    <http://www.athleticos.org/coverage/251436-2014-National-Cross-Country-Championships>

If you have any good photos that are suitable for our web site please send to Mike Peel        mike@mikepeel.co.uk

Regards

Paul Austridge