

Anglian Schools Cross Country Championships 2011

Corby, Northants was the venue for the 2011 Anglian Schools cross country championships. Teams representing Suffolk, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire took part. There were 13-16 runners in each team and West Suffolk AC provided 18 of the Suffolk squad and 1 of the Cambridgeshire squad.

The course was somewhat disappointing, run around a completely flat grass field. Gale force winds on parts of the course made it all the more uninviting.

Races ran in age group order starting with minor girls (years 6&7) over a relatively short 2000m. Having won this event last year as a year 6 Sophie Tooley was the favourite to defend her title and did so emphatically. A natural front runner Tooley led from the off but took the first 1000m steadily just 20m ahead of the field but pushed on in the latter stages to win by over 100m clocking 8:06. Training partner Nella Walters was almost as impressive with 3rd overall and 2nd Suffolk finisher in 8:32. Walters is a year 6 pupil so will look to emulate her team mate next year. Suffolk were the clear winners of the team competition.

Not to be outdone Cameron McKie also took the gold medal in junior boys (years 8&9) in 13:06. McKie led from the off but dropped into 2nd in mid race, tracking the leader before making a decisive break in the final 800m. Seb Anthony continues to improve and was an excellent 4th overall (2nd Suffolk) in 13:42. Likewise Michael Bartram was close behind in 6th (3rd Suffolk) clocking 13:59. Ben Eames was disappointed with his run to 30th (8th Suffolk) but as a year 8 can look to improve next year. Suffolk again took the team win.

There were contrasting fortunes for West Suffolk AC's two runners in the inter girls race (years 10&11). India George had her best race so far in her first season of cross country. 14th at the Suffolk county schools championships she improved to 7th Suffolk finisher and 36th overall. Beth Tooley was somewhat below her best, running with her team mate for the first half of the race but fading to 49th (12th Suffolk) at the close.

Inter boys saw a Suffolk 1-2 with Mac Delo moving through the field after a slightly slow start to take an excellent silver behind his team mate, clocking 21:08 and well clear of the 3rd place finisher. Clearly under the weather, Adam Cripps may have been unwise to compete and found the going hard but only really lost ground in the final stages to finish a below par 35th (10th Suffolk). Jack Anthony suffered a recurrence of his ankle injury sustained at the county champs and had to pull out of the race early on. Suffolk took another team win.

Holly Archer led home five West Suffolk AC runners in the senior girls race although following a change of schools, this time she was representing Cambridgeshire and was their first finisher in 5th overall. Justine Anthony has hit a rich vein of form recently and was an excellent 20th (3rd Suffolk) with Sophie Tupman just behind in 23rd (4th Suffolk). Grace Waters looks to have secured her place in the Suffolk team for the English schools championships in

March with a solid run to 43rd (8th Suffolk). A special mention must go to Emily Rogers for her efforts in reaching this stage of the competition. Emily is a specialist 100/200m sprinter with no background or training in distance running and yet she still managed 53rd (12th Suffolk).

The final race of the day, the senior boys over 6900m, saw still more excellent performances with year 12 pupil Simon Dawson a superb 5th (2nd Suffolk), Dominic Thackery 7th (4th Suffolk) and Asa Burnett 20th (8th Suffolk) despite being accidentally kicked by another running and running most of the race in considerable pain. Suffolk took their 5th team win and unsurprisingly ran out convincing winners of the overall competition.

Suffolk schools will now select 8 runners from each race (except the minor age group) to contest the main event of the year, the English schools championships at Nottingham in March and West Suffolk AC can look forward to being well represented.