

## Essex League Cross Country 12<sup>th</sup> February

A trio of West Suffolk AC athletes made the trip to Chingford in Epping Forest for the final meeting of the Essex Cross Country League.

In what proved to be very exacting conditions the three athletes acquitted themselves extremely well in the highly competitive fields.

First to go was Emily Baker in the combined U17/U20 Women race over 5km on the outskirts of Epping Forest. The conditions were soft underfoot and in places waterlogged and muddy which along with the undulations and steep inclines made for tough going.

Running tactically for the opening 3.5km, Emily's increasing experience and confidence allowed her to draw on reserves of strength and speed endurance to finish strongly in a very impressive 18:35 for 15<sup>th</sup> (6<sup>th</sup> U20) overall.

Better was to follow as Emily's improved performances placed her a superb 3<sup>rd</sup> in the series for the U20 age group, a fine reward for her efforts.

Next to go was the combined U20 /Senior men's race over 8.5km contested by 128 runners and including Alex Dunbar in the U20 category and Colin Ridley in the Senior Men's.

This course, was, by general agreement of all competitors, the toughest of the series to date. The conditions were challenging to say the least with deep mud and steep hills and an abundance of brambles which made for an energy sapping race.

Alex proved it's equal however and after packing in behind two older runners, ran tenaciously over two loops of a course which very quickly resembled a mud bath, maintaining third spot throughout and 1st U20 clocking 31:59.

Alex's efforts over the series resulted in a gold medal for 1<sup>st</sup> U20 and, a very impressive 2<sup>nd</sup> male overall.

Colin Ridley ran a very determined race and quickly began picking off competitors following a congested start.

Moving up through the field of 146 runners, Colin ran consistently and strongly in very trying conditions, crossing the line in 28<sup>th</sup> in a time of 35:47 to place 4<sup>th</sup> in the Vet 40 category. In the overall series standings, Colin finished 22<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Vet 40.

With 2 out of 3 club runners achieving top 3 series positions in their respective age categories in a very competitive league, West Suffolk AC endurance squad runners continue to excel and these awards reflect the overall efforts and dedication of the entire club and coaches.

Attention now turns to the forthcoming English Schools and Inter Counties competitions to be held in March in which West Suffolk AC athletes are again well represented in the Suffolk teams.

