

Colchester Harriers 2024 AGM – 17 October 2024

Senior Endurance Report (2023/24 Season)

It was another successful year for the club across all formats.

The women's team again dominated the 2023/24 county competitions, winning the Essex League XC and the County XC Championships – both for the third successive year, and also taking the Essex XC Relays title at Weald Park. On the roads we won gold and silver at the Essex Road Relays and are also challenging for a third successive Road Grand Prix, with one race still remaining. Our superb V50 team also continues to dominate – winning Road Relay and XC Relay titles as well as the Essex Vets XC at Writtle.

All the above is mainly due to a superb team effort from an enthusiastic, talented squad, but there were a number of standout individual accomplishments too. Lizzie Wellsted had another fine season including receiving international recognition – after being in the gold medal winning GB team at the European XC Championships in Brussels in February, finishing a fine 13th in the individual race she was also selected for, and ran in, the 5000M in the World U20 games in Lima, Peru (having finished first U20 in the National Championships in Birmingham). Lizzie also pretty much swept the board locally, including taking the individual title in the Essex League XC and the U20 Essex XC Championships.

Other standout individual women's achievements include Roanna Vickers who continued to enjoy international recognitions for England Masters and, along with Lydia Callan and Holly Freegard, was selected to represent Essex in inter-counties competition. Also worthy of mention is Heidi Hogan-Steele – who came back stronger than ever following the birth of her daughter with some fine performances perhaps capped by taking the gold medal at the recent Essex Half Marathon Championships, in an fabulous time of 1:20:08 (unfortunately the course measuring slightly short).

The men also had a strong year – particularly in Cross-Country with a fine third place finish in the Essex League (up from seventh the previous year) – we believe our highest ever finish in this always competitive league and helped by winning our home fixture at Hilly Fields - and a brilliant second place at the Essex Championships in Basildon, missing out on the title by the narrowest of margins. We also remain very strong in the veteran age groups, in particular our V60 team who as well as winning the Essex Vets XC and Road Relay titles, capped off a fine year when the team of Paul Mingay, Paul Spowage, Colin Ridley and Chris Stevenson swept all before them to take the South of England Road Relays title in Aldershot recently.

There were also a number of excellent individual performances – with Paul Mingay winning 3 medals at the World Masters Championships in Gothenburg - including a gold for the Half Marathon. Paul also ran 1:19:53 last weekend at the Great Eastern Half, missing out on the British M65 record by just 4 seconds despite being – shall we say – not exactly at the younger end of his age group. Adrian Mussett also continues to astound, with a string of fine performances particularly over 10K where he has twice gone under 32 minutes this year and there were a number of really strong runs at the Essex 5K championships a Northern Gateway with James Morley joining Dean Willaimson in the sub-15 minute club.

The club also made its annual pilgrimage to the Ipswich Ekiden – fielding 12 teams in total and, despite the odd heavy shower, it proved an hugely enjoyable not to mention successful day as we came away with winning the men's senior, V50 and V60 the women's and women's supervets

titles and we once again entered two teams into the Essex Way Relay – a trail event following the Essex Way from one side of the county (Epping) to the other (Harwich).

In addition to organising a club relay event at Northern Gateway we also once again hosted the Essex Road Relays there and this year also organised, in conjunction with CATs, an Essex League XC fixture at Hilly Fields. In addition to also hosting these races next year we are also hoping to organise and host a road race to commemorate the memory of the sadly departed Arthur Whiston.

None of the above would have been possible without the help of the many volunteers who give their time to the club and I would like to thank in particular all the members of the Endurance Committee, the women's (Nicola and Justine) and Men's (Dan) captains and of course, all the coaches who (often in not very good conditions) oversee their groups' twice weekly training sessions.