



Junior Cross country race reports

2019/20 Season

Third league race, 12 January 2020: Pingles Stadium and Warwickshire Championships, 04 January 2020

Due to illness, injury and other sporting commitments, our numbers were a little depleted, however six of our juniors completed the third meeting of the **West Midland Young Athletes' Cross-Country League (wmyaccl.com) 2019-2020** around the stadium on flat, boggy ground. Alice ran well, keeping the Wolverhampton and Bilston runner in sight and eventually overtaking her, while Aoife and Imogen improved their race positions.

Well done to all the athletes and, after three out of four league meetings, Sparkhill Harriers are 19th overall out of 21 teams.

Position on day (over 3 meetings)	Total appearances this season	Athlete	Category and team position on day (over 3 meetings)	Approx. distance
40 (29/54)	3	Alice Stewart	U17 Women 16/16(15/17)	4000m
50 (61/95)	3	James Phillips	U15 Boys 16/16(15/21)	3200m
75 (61/125)	4	Aoife Gallagher	U13 Girls 17/20(19/20)	2400m
95 (67/125)	3	Tom Manzotti	U13 Boys 19/19(19/19)	
50(50/114) 49(33/114)	3 3	Imogen Robinson Layla Wall	U11 Girls 15/19(14/19)	1600m

The team result is included above and, this time, Aoife improved her team position. Full race results can be found at wmyaccl.com – including times and series rankings over the season.

Many thanks again to Dave Reed for his help with the tent and flags and thank you to him, Rob Mills and parents for encouraging the athletes.

The appearances above include the **Warwickshire Championships** which James (18th) and Aoife (36th) took part in on 04 January 2020: Aoife made her way through the field, gaining seven places in her 3km race, and James finished midfield in his 4km race; Emma Stringer also showed her resilience on the undulating course at Warley Woods, completing the 5km U20 race. Thanks to Dave Reed and Craig Hinks for supporting our juniors at this meeting.

The final cross-country meeting will take place on 09 February 2020 at the Aldersley Stadium, Wolverhampton.

Second league race, 08 December 2019: Perry Park.

Once again, eight of our junior Harriers competed at the second meeting of the **West Midlands Young Athletes' Cross-Country League (wmyaccl.com) 2019-2020** around flat Perry Park. Tom Blake and Alice produced much-improved performances and, with running taking priority over football for James, these three youngsters improved their overall team positions. Spectators were treated to two wonderfully competitive sprint finishes by Lucy and Aoife, with Lucy's U11 team improving their overall team position as well.

Well done to all the athletes.

Position	Total appearances this season	Athlete	Category and team position	Approx. distance
37	2	Alice Stewart	U17 Women 13/15	4000m
63	2	Tom Blake	U15 Boys 13/18	3200m
42	1	James Phillips		
84	2	Aoife Gallagher	U13 Girls 19/19	2400m
86	2	Tom Manzotti	U13 Boys 19/19	
91	2	Lucy Hodges	U11 Girls 13/19	1600m
67	2	Imogen Robinson		
47	2	Layla Wall		

The team result is included above and it is clear that a greater number of runners in each category improves the result. Full race results can be found at wmyaccl.com – including times and individual rankings over the season.

Many thanks to Dave Reed for his help with the tent and flags, as well as supporting the athletes. Also, thank you, parents, for encouraging and transporting your child to the venue.

The next cross-country meeting will take place on **12 January 2020 at the Pingles Leisure Centre, Nuneaton.**

First league race, 17 November 2019: Warley Woods

Eight of our junior Harriers got the season started at the first meeting of the **West Midland Young Athletes' Cross-Country League (wmyaccl.com) 2019-2020** around a relatively dry but extremely undulating course; the October meeting at Hatton was cancelled. For Tom Blake and Imogen, it was their first appearance in this league and it was good to see Josh returning to cross country. Unfortunately, James had unavoidable football commitments. Well done to all the athletes.

Position	Total appearances this season	Athlete	Category and team position	Approx. distance
45	1	Alice Stewart	U17 Women 15/15	4000m
69	1	Tom Blake	U15 Boys 15/18	3200m
68	1	Josh Thompson		
81	1	Aoife Gallagher	U13 Girls 19/19	2400m
94	1	Tom Manzotti	U13 Boys 19/19	
93	1	Lucy Hodges	U11 Girls 15/19	1600m
76	1	Imogen Robinson		
35	1	Layla Wall		

The team result is included above and it is clear that a greater number of runners in each category improves the result. Full race results can be found at wmyaccl.com – including times and individual rankings over the season.

Many thanks to Dave Reed for his help with the tent, race numbers and flags, as well as supporting the athletes and to Rob Mills for his duty as funnel marshal.

The next cross-country meeting will take place on 8 December 2019 at Perry Park and, at the fourth Sparkhill Harriers' awards evening next spring, we look forward to celebrating the successes of our young athletes this 2019-20 cross-country season as well as during the completed 2019 track and field season.

Fifth league race, 10 February 2019: Aldersley Stadium, Wolverhampton

Ten of our junior athletes competed in the final meeting of the **West Midland Young Athletes' Cross-Country League (wmyaccl.com) 2018-2019** around the soggy fields and paths at Aldersley Stadium. For Emma, Zac and Dylan it was their final appearance in this league and all athletes who have competed this season are listed below.

Position	Total appearances this season	Athlete	Time	Category	Approx. distance
39	5	Emma Stringer	18.45	U17 Women	4000m
14	4(w)	Zac Minchin	16.56	U17 Men	4800m
18	3(w)	Dylan Sudworth	17.09		
-	5(wm)	Alice Stewart	-	U15 Girls	3200m
-	2	Harry Bull	-	U15 Boys	
-	2	Ben Frost	-		
28	7(wm)	Lola-May Smeulders	9.39	U13 Girls	2400m
-	1(m)	Josh Murtagh	-	U13 Boys	
53	4(m)	James Phillips	9.42		
93	5	Tom Manzotti	6.56	U11 Boys	1600m
106	5	Aoife Gallagher	7.34	U11 Girls	
121	3	Lucy Hodges	8.02		
107	3	Rebecca Hodges	7.35		
58	4	Layla Wall	6.45		

(w and m) indicates that the total appearances include competing in the Warwickshire Championships on 5 January 2019 and the Midland Championships on 26 January 2019 (U11s can take part in neither).

Sparkhill Harriers finished 17th out of 20 teams overall at the end of this season, while Wolverhampton and Bilston (this meeting's hosts) won the league. Sparkhill's U17 Men finished 7th out of 15 teams on the day and our U11 Girls – at full strength – finished 12th out of 19 teams on the day. Lola had a flying start after being spiked on the start line, but James' performance was affected by his competing in a Park Run yesterday.

Full race results can be found at wmyaccl.com – including team positions and individual rankings over the season; please remember that results received on the day may be altered.

Thanks again to Dave Reed for being ready and waiting to help with the tent and flags at every meeting, as well as supporting the athletes.

At the third Sparkhill Harriers' awards evening, we look forward to celebrating the successes of our young athletes this cross country season as well as during the 2018 track and field season. Look out for details on the website.

Midland Cross Country Championships, 26 January 2019: Newbold Comyn, Leamington

Four junior athletes took part in the Midland Cross-Country Championships held at Newbold Comyn in Leamington.

The new (golf) course was firm but claggy underfoot with some demanding slopes. The Sparkhill girls both had strong starts, while the boys – the two footballers – had strong finishes.

Position	Athlete	Time	Category	Approx. distance
38	Josh Murtagh	13.17	U13 Boys	3000m
80	James Phillips	14.18		
87	Alice Stewart	22.01	U15 Girls	4000m
27	Lola-May Smeulders	14.08	U13 Girls	3000m

Alice and Lola also competed in the Warwickshire Cross-Country Championships earlier in the month and, last year, Alice was our sole representative in the Midland Cross-Country Championships.

Fourth league race, 13 January 2019: Abington Park, Northampton

Six of our junior athletes competed at the fourth **West Midland Young Athletes' Cross-Country League (wmyaccl.com) 2018-2019** meeting in unseasonally mild temperatures around the fields and paths in Abington Park, which included some testing slopes.

Position	Total appearances this season	Athlete	Time	Category	Approx. distance
36	4	Emma Stringer	22.07	U17 Women	4000m
72	4 (w)	Alice Stewart	18.47	U15 Girls	3200m
21	5 (w)	Lola-May Smeulders	12.06	U13 Girls	2400m
98	4	Tom Manzotti	9.47	U11 Boys	1600m
75	4	Aoife Gallagher	9.47	U11 Girls	
82	3	Layla Wall	9.59		

(w) indicates that the total appearances include competing in the Warwickshire Championships on 5 January 2019 (U11s cannot take part).

Sparkhill Harriers are currently 18th out of 20 teams with one race meeting remaining; there is a close contest between Rugby and Northampton (this meeting's hosts), and Wolverhampton and Bilston to win the league. Full race results can be found at

wmyaccl.com – including team points; please remember that results received on the day may be altered.

Tom and Lola had much improved performances and Layla had a fast start and a good finish, while Aoife's solid performance won her number-one spot for Sparkhill's U11 Girls. Meanwhile, Alice won her uphill sprint finish showing her true competitive spirit.

Thanks again to Dave Reed for his constant help and support and, with extra help from Grace, Emma and John Goulding, light work was made of the start and finish flags. Also, a big thank you to parents for encouraging their youngsters and transporting them to this more distant venue.

The final league meeting will take place at Aldersley Stadium, Wolverhampton on Sunday 10 February 2019. Before that, on 26 January, some young athletes will be competing in the Midland Championships.

County Cross Country Championships, 5 January 2019: Newbold Revel, Rugby

Four of our junior athletes took part in the Warwickshire Cross Country Championships at Newbold Revel in Rugby.

The new venue presented Lola with a course comprising fields, lakeside paths and woodland tracks; Alice was set an additional challenge of running around arable fields, while the U17s and U20s experienced the testing climb on an otherwise flat course. Sparkhill Harriers were represented in each age group as follows:

Position	Athlete	Time	Category	Approx. distance
12 (32)	Zac Minchin	21.34	U17 Men	6000m
13 (33)	Dylan Sudworth	21.35		
27 (38)	Alice Stewart	25.24	U15 Girls	4000m
12 (14)	Lola-May Smeulders	13.41	U13 Girls	3000m

Worcestershire clubs were also participating, so position in brackets is overall position in the race.

Lola was shortlisted for the Inter-Counties Cross Country Championships in Loughborough on 9 March, and Zac and Dylan had a closely fought battle as they sprinted into the finish together.

Third league race, 9 December 2018: Perry Park, Birmingham

Ten of our junior athletes competed at the third **West Midland Young Athletes' Cross-Country League (wmyaccl.com) 2018-2019** meeting around the flatish fields and paths at the back of Alexander Stadium. Football and West Midlands Schools commitments prevented us fielding a dozen runners. Our competitors experienced drizzle, sunny spells and blustery, tent-testing wind, which at least put paid to some ominous black clouds.

Position	Total appearances this season	Athlete	Time	Category	Approx. distance
38	3	Emma Stringer	21.36	U17 Women	4000m
33	2	Zac Minchin	18.56	U17 Men	4800m
61	2	Harry Bull	16.17	U15 Boys	3200m
71	2	Alice Stewart	16.54	U15 Girls	
42	3	Lola-May Smeulders	11.30	U13 Girls	2400m
117	3	Tom Manzotti	8.28	U11 Boys	1600m
76	3	Aoife Gallagher	8.18	U11 Girls	
124	2	Lucy Hodges	9.37		
108	2	Rebecca Hodges	9.02		
46	2	Layla Wall	7.50		

Full race results can be found at wmyaccl.com – including team points; please remember that results received on the day may be altered.

Well done to the U11 Girls who improved their team position by two places, finishing 12th out of 19 teams (Sparkhill Harriers are currently 19th out of 20 teams after three race meetings). Finishing strongly, both Lucy and Rebecca gained places up the dog-leg finish.

A special mention should be made about our lone runners - competing without the support of teammates – one of whom, Alice, won her battle with a group of girls by moving ahead of them during the second lap of the final race and staying ahead around the lake.

Finally, many thanks to Hilary, Rob and Ambrose who helped throughout this meeting as marshals.

The fourth and penultimate league meeting will take place at Abington Park, Northampton on Sunday 13th January 2019 and, before that, the Warwickshire Cross-Country Championships will be taking place on 5th January for U13s and over.

We look forward to celebrating the effort and achievement of our Club's young athletes at Sparkhill Harriers' Awards Evening at the end of this cross-country season.

Second league race, 18 November 2018: Warley Woods, Smethwick

At the second **West Midland Young Athletes' Cross-Country League (wmyaccl.com) 2018-2019** meeting, Sparkhill's junior harriers raced around the undulating course under a bright-blue sky at Warley Woods. Ten young athletes ran on Sunday, three of whom were running their first ever cross-country races: Leyla, Lucy and Rebecca, while Emma competed in her twentieth league race.

Position	Total appearances this season	Athlete	Time	Category	Approx. distance
36	2	Emma Stringer	21.32	U17 Women	4000m
72	1	Harry Bull	15.32	U15 Boys	3200m
46	2	Ben Frost	13.30		
46	2	Lola-May Smeulders	12.09	U13 Girls	2400m
52	2	James Phillips	11.27	U13 Boys	
123	2	Tom Manzotti	9.16	U11 Boys	1600m
71	2	Aoife Gallagher	8.39	U11 Girls	
130	1	Lucy Hodges	10.19		
125	1	Rebecca Hodges	10.07		
42	1	Leyla Wall	8.14		

Full race results can be found at wmyaccl.com – including team points; please remember that results received on the day may be altered.

Having a team of four girls in the U11s' race resulted in us achieving 14th position out of 19 teams in that race. Well done to all our athletes, competing hard for Sparkhill Harriers across the age groups.

Thank you to Rob Mills and Dave Reed, for continually supporting the young athletes at each meeting, and a special mention to Dave for helping to set up and clear away the start and finish flags. Furthermore, thank you, parents, for encouraging and transporting your youngsters.

The third league meeting will take place at Perry Park on Sunday 9th December.