

MCAA Track and Field League 2022 – a review (dated 14 Sept 2022)

R G White (League Sec), League Committee, Divisional Secs

A good return to Midland Track and Field league competition after two years disrupted by the global pandemic. Overall numbers have held up well and a number of divisional and league records were recorded. Generally positive feedback for the various innovations introduced for 2022.

Gloucester AC were the overall champions, as division 1 winners, and enjoyed three match wins out of four. Promotions were achieved by BRAT, Cannock and Stafford, Yate, Cheltenham, Leicester Coritanians, Leamington and Newport. Most divisions enjoyed close competitions between the clubs.

Really pleasing to see high quality performances across the league. Congratulations to Katie Holt (City of Stoke AC, 3000m in 9:04.82), to Efekemo Okoro (Birchfield, 400H in 51.52) and to Craig Murch (Birchfield, HT with 68.31m) for setting new league records. Congratulations also to Kiya Dee (Cheltenham and County Harriers, 2kSC in 7:24.7 & 3kSC in 10:47.4), to Sarah Everitt (Bristol and West AC, 5000m in 17:31.76), and to Tamworth AC (4x400m mixed relay) for setting inaugural league records in their events. At divisional level nine new divisional records were established, in addition to the inaugural records for women's 5000m, women's 2kSC and 3kSC and the mixed 4x400m relay.

There were excellent performances across all the divisions, although we note that a number of technical events continue to struggle for numbers and hence quality/depth of competition. We hope to address this with proposals to the 2022 AGM.

We also offer our congratulations to the winners of the best performance award based on World Athletic Scoring tables¹:

- Division 1: Samantha Griffiths, Birchfield;
- Division 2: Katie Holt, Stoke;
- Division 3: Jessica Waters, Sutton in Ashfield;
- Division 4NE: Elliott Powell, Leicester Coritanians;
- Division 4SE: Cleo Martin-Evans, Daventry;
- Division 4SW: Lucy Jones, Tipton;

and to the following athletes for being voted their division's most valued athlete:

- Division 2: Natalie Griffiths, Cannock and Stafford AC;
- Division 4SW: Charlotte Colbert, Hereford & County AC.

Across all six divisions, 1486 individual athletes competed, with on average 721 athletes competing in any given round. Access to raw data reduces our options to compare year on year, but we note that for division 3 (a mid-placed division), 297 athletes competed in 2022 – compared to 313 in 2018

¹ As this award is determined directly by performance it will naturally be realistically attainable by just a few athletes (i.e. the higher ranked athletes). For 2022 we attempted to widen the concept of an individual award so that all athletes had a chance to win – this was the most valued athlete award. That approach did not gain universal support. An alternative would be to use a handicapping system.

and 333 in 2016. Annual numbers at the MCAA Senior/U20 championships provide some context here with overall filled entries (vice competing athletes) of 344 (2022), 369 (2018) and 390 (2016)².

We should be concerned about the trend for declining numbers – but given that the championships and league show similar trends it would appear to be more fundamental than Midland T&F League competition provision.

We note, however, that within the league a number of clubs have “collapsed” in terms of numbers and one club withdrew before the season began. It is likely that there is a tipping point effect whereby below a given number of available athletes it becomes too difficult for team managers to attempt to put out viable teams. This was a particular issue in match four (which clashed with the MCAA U15/U17 championships) where three teams withdrew from the matches.

The date conflict noted for match four was imposed by UKA/EA in their 2022 season planning carried out in 2021. As far as we know there was no consultation for these 2022 dates. In anticipation of 2023 we have worked closely with EA/UKA to ensure that the dates for the league are a better set. We have also established six dates in 2023 – to provide room for league evolution options should the 2022 AGM wish to establish some, or alternatively to provide some flexibility in terms of date selection.

Disappointingly, the League Secretary has received feedback noting unacceptable behaviour from both athlete and officials.

The league introduced a range of innovations for 2022:

- full equality between men and women through the introduction of women’s steeplechase and women’s 5k events;
- photo-finish for divisions 1 and 2;
- regionalisation below division 3 to reduce travel commitments;
- bonus points for strong performances;
- the introduction of flexibility in team composition across events, paving the way for possible further AGM proposals in the future;
- individual competitions - based on a) World Athletic scoring tables and, b) club votes;
- mixed 4x400 relays.

Feedback suggests these have in general been well received. It is likely that further development of these, and other ideas, will be discussed at the 2022 AGM.

The disruption caused by the global pandemic has brought into sharp relief two key issues: shortage of officials; and the poor state of venues. The officials issue is a major concern. A large number of matches struggled with the numbers of officials and it was only through the goodwill of officials in attendance that matches were able to proceed. Officials’ training is part of the solution, but it is likely in the shorter term that match composition (e.g. numbers of teams) may need to change.

Seven clubs will need to apply for re-election to the league as they failed to produce sufficient officials on at least two occasions. Given this, and the fact some clubs struggled simply with athlete

² These are entries, rather than athletes competing, as de-conflicting athlete entries (e.g. 100m and 200m for an athlete) is very time consuming without access to spreadsheet data. On-line entry information is available for 2022 – giving 559 entries against 366 athletes. Competing athletes will therefore be less than the 344 filled entries over the weekend.

numbers, we are encouraging clubs to consider forming composite teams in preparation for 2023 if that makes sense for them.

The poor state of many facilities has also been a worry. Clubs found it more difficult than usual to find licensed venues, and even then conditions were still at times below standard. This is generally a local authority funding problem and will likely be of concern for some time.

Overall, though, a good return to full league competition.

Final Tables

Division 1

Club	Match pnts	Lge pnts
Gloucester AC	1629	23
Notts AC	1366	19
Rugby & Northampton AC	1134	14
Bristol & West AC	1160	12
Birchfield Harriers	1004	10
Tamworth AC	738	6

Division 3

Club	Match pnts	Lge pnts
Yate and District AC	1545.3	25
Cheltenham & County Harriers	1504	22
Stratford-upon-Avon AC	1432.3	22
Bromsgrove & Redditch AC	1181	16.5
Worcester AC	1058.3	14.5
Wolverhampton & Bilston AC	648	7
Sutton-in-Ashfield H & AC	213	5

Division 4SE

Club	Match pnts	Lge pnts
Leamington C & AC	1245	23
Banbury Harriers AC	1032	18
Solihull & Small Heath AC	989	17
Kettering Town Harriers	611	11
Daventry AAC	742	10
Corby AC	266	5

Division 2

Club	Match pnts	Lge pnts
BRAT	1399	20
Cannock & Stafford AC	1357	20
Coventry Godiva Harriers	1351	19
Telford AC	938	10
City of Stoke AC	906	10
Abingdon AC	385	5

Division 4NE

Club	Match pnts	Lge pnts
Leicester Coritanian AC	1660	32
Burton AC	1365.5	25
Nuneaton Harriers AC	1314.5	24
Charnwood AC	1153	20
Newcastle (Staffs) AC	1002	16
Royal Sutton Coldfield AC	944	15
Wreake & Soar Valley	131	7
Saffron AC	115	5

Division 4SW

Club	Match pnts	Lge pnts
Newport Harriers	1410.5	26
Kidderminster & Stourport AC	1321	24
Tipton Harriers	927.5	18
Halesowen A & CC	847	15
Hereford & County AC	729	15
Dudley & Stourbridge Harriers	204	9
Forest of Dean AC	-24	5

Individual Competition. World Athletics scoring - best performance from each match and then highest three of these match scores to count

Division	Name	Club	Match	Event	Perf	Score	Match	Event	Perf	Score	Match	Event	Perf	Score	Total
1	Samantha Griffiths	Bir	1	100	12.09	997	2	100	12.22	974	3	100	12.37	948	2919
2	Katie Holt	Stoke	1	1500	4:23.96	1021	2	5k/3k	9:04.82	1090	3	1500	4:41.30	896	3007
3	Jessica Waters	SinA	1	100	12.3	960	2	100	12.4	943	3	100	12.42	940	2843
4NE	Elliott Powell	Leic	1	100	10.3	1104	2	400	48.6	954	4	100	11.1	856	2914
4SE	Cleo Martin-Evans	Dav	1	LJ	5.91	968	3	LJ	5.67	917	4	LJ	5.77	939	2824
4SW	Lucy Jones	Tipton	1	200	24.1	1049	2	200	24.5	1016	3	200	25.2	960	3025

Athlete numbers by match and division

Athletes per match per division 2022							Athletes for the season. Total competed
Division	Match				Average	Clubs	
1	136	158	157	139	148	6	307
2	142	110	142	113	127	6	264
3	154	132	140	129	139	7	297
4NE	135	132	118	99	121	8	233
4SE	105	103	90	79	94	6	188
4SW	95	103	114	59	93	7	197
Total	767	738	761	618	721	40	1486