

As the Warwickshire Road Race League starts to draw to a close for another season a number of Stratford AC members have continued to do well in this 6-month festival of running. The 'Nuneaton 10' not only incorporated one of these WRRL races, but also the county 10-mile championships and the Midland Masters Championships, and the four SAC folk in attendance managed to take away a staggering 5 prizes between them! This rather profitable event had a last-minute change of route, due to resurfacing work in Wolvey, but it was the blustery wind and undulations that caused the runners more concern as they wound their way around the two-laps.

The finishing order of this successful quartet was Kate Wright (66:16, 23<sup>rd</sup>), John Turner (73:00, 49<sup>th</sup>), Phil Brennan (78:31, 66<sup>th</sup>) and Andy Turner (89:31, 81<sup>st</sup>), and as far as the distribution of honours went: Kate was 3<sup>rd</sup> female in both the open and county races (and 2<sup>nd</sup> F45), John Turner won 1<sup>st</sup> O65 prizes in both the county race and the Midland Masters Championships, and Phil Brennan completed a Stratford one-two in the latter with a well deserved and hard earned silver. Andy Turner didn't get a prize but certainly deserved one for announcing beforehand that this time he really was going to start slowly, and then promptly doing the first two miles in just under 14 minutes! The winner, who was over 3 minutes clear of the runner-up, was veteran Gordon Lee (Leicester Corinthian) who chalked up an impressive 52:50, with Leamington's Sue Harrison (61:38) crossing the line as the first female.

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It was then onto Kenilworth for the equivalent WRRL fixture over the half-marathon distance – 13.1 miles of quiet and undulating country lanes, starting and finishing at Castle Farm Sports Centre and basically looping around the small village of Beausale. The Sunday morning dawned cold and grey, ideal for those who like running in such conditions, although the sun broke through soon after the 10am start and warmed up considerably thereafter.

All four of the Stratford AC Nuneaton attendees were then amongst the eight chaps and one lady who turned up from the club for this penultimate race in the WRRL, and that sole lady did the club proud as Kate Wright (1:27:03, 34<sup>th</sup>) produced a storming run to come in as 2<sup>nd</sup> female and 1<sup>st</sup> F45. Andy Cockerill (1:31:41, 68<sup>th</sup>) has been running so well recently that expectations were sky-high, but unfortunately it was a day when he just didn't feel good and actually ended up showing great determination to finish in such a respectable time. One of the club's crop of golden oldies was third back, with John Turner (1:37:50, 118<sup>th</sup>) doing extremely well to take home a prize (for 2<sup>nd</sup> over-60), especially as there was no over-65 category for him.

Dave Maundrell (1:40:35, 147<sup>th</sup>) and Allan Coldicott (1:40:36, 148<sup>th</sup>) have been involved in so many sprint finishes with each other recently, that after running all the way round together this time it was a fairly half-hearted battle that ensued at the finishing funnel! The two pushed each other along very nicely throughout though, with Dave only missing out on a half-marathon PB by a matter of seconds. Another unnaturally fit pensioner, Phil Brennan (1:47:48, 235<sup>th</sup>), came in behind this pair, while Andy Turner (1:50:53, 273<sup>rd</sup>) continues to gain strength and speed all the time. Michael Oliver (1:51:28, 278<sup>th</sup>) again ran well to finish so high up in the field of 464, with perpetual motion man Tony Hunt (1:56:09, 332<sup>nd</sup>) completing the SAC contingent. First man home was Paul Andrew (Northbrook) in 1:13:56 and first lady was Myshola Kirkham (Cov Godiva) in 1:23:56, with both easing home fairly comfortably.

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We all perhaps need a bit of a reminder occasionally as to why we actually do what we do sporting-wise, and for Pete Evans one of those moments came recently at the World Duathlon Championships in North Carolina (USA). For such a high-profile event to go so badly wrong, and yet still be one of his finest moments, says everything about the importance of putting things into perspective.

Pete was hoping to put an injury and illness-filled 12 months behind him with a respectable performance in the States, but waking up on race day with a recurrence of a long-term ankle issue did not bode well. With the event not starting until 15:30 plenty of stretching, icing and massage followed, but even so his race warm-up consisted purely of limping around the start area. After being persuaded to start, mainly because of the distance that he'd come, Pete did the first 10K section in 49 minutes – about 10 minutes slower than he should have been!

The torrential rain then gave the Stratford AC star some assistance, with his superb handling skills on the bike moved him rapidly through the field and away from last place in his age-group. Unfortunately after this 59-minute 40K blast Pete's ankle gave way again in transition, and the final 5K run was really more of a

hobble. Coming in just under the half-hour mark he was again the slowest in his age-group by a distance, but his excellent cycling did mean that he somehow clawed his way up to 36<sup>th</sup> overall out of 41 in his category. As the boy himself put it “I have always worried about being in top shape and losing seconds here and there, and thinking if I am not quick what is the point of turning up, but I experienced a whole new side to the sport and realised that just completing an event can be rewarding. At the finish the group we had been socialising with were all stood in the downpour cheering me over the line when they could have been in the athlete’s lounge getting warm and recovering. From a personal point of view I think this is one of my proudest achievements, but I am looking forward to getting back to being fast and competitive next year!”

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Stratford AC’s annual off-road bash over the Welcombe Hills takes place this Sunday morning, so if you fancy doing either a 1-lap 5K or 2-lap 10K then on the day entry can be gained by turning up at the Leisure Centre well before the 11 a.m. start. There is also a 3K Family Fun Run (£2) starting an hour earlier at 10.