



## **SWEET SUCCESS FOR ILFORD ATHLETES AT ESSEX CHAMPS**

On the 6<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May, Ilford athletes displayed their months of hard training with some excellent performances at the Essex County Championships Day 1, 2 and 3.

The Essex County Championships Day 1 commenced on the 6<sup>th</sup> May at Thurrock Stadium, which saw the Ilford youngsters compete over the distance of 200m and 1500m. The star showing came from Greta Mazeikaite, who in her first ever year of competing in athletics, displayed her sparkling form this season by knocking off a second of her PB to come second in the U15 girls heat 2 in a fine time of 27.77. Her team mate Tolu Adebambo-Abisogun also competed over this distance in which she attained a PB however failed to advance to the semi-finals having ran a time of 29.46 in heat 1.

Greta who advanced to the semi-finals, narrowly missed out on placing 2<sup>nd</sup> after achieving a time of 28.20 in which she gained a qualifying spot for the final. Fatigue was evident in the latter stages of her 200m final though she went on to run a time of 28.48 and achieved a 6<sup>th</sup> place finish overall.

Gabriel Yiadom, also demonstrated his superb talent over the 200m by placing 4<sup>th</sup> in his heat. Despite running into a -1.2 headwind, he obtained a new PB time of 24.59 which was enough to get him into the final. Gabriel's performance in the final mirrored that of Greta's, having finished in 6<sup>th</sup> place with a time of 25.71 which he described as "a very disappointing race, I was tired but I could've done better".

There was some top quality middle distance running on show in the 1500m featuring two promising young talents. Usamah Patel, showed his great strength over this distance after comfortably winning his heat in a time of 4.39.89. Usamah then went on to run in what was seen to be an epic final in which he did enough to gain a bronze medal - which was the only medal of the day for the Ilford athletes. 6 athletes in total all gained a PB in the U15 boys final including Usamah with a new impressive PB of 4.24.53 which now makes him the 39<sup>th</sup> fastest U15 boy in the country this year over this distance.

His training partner Jack Maher, also displayed his excellence over the 1500m. Although it is Jack's first year of being U17, he showed no fear by achieving a new PB of 4.20.22 in his straight final in which he finished in 6<sup>th</sup> place. All in all, it proved to be a good day for both Ian Gain's distance athletes and Jeffery Nkrumah's sprint athletes.

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## **COUNTLESS PB'S & MEDALS FOR ILFORD ATHLETES IN DAY 2 & 3**

The 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May at Chelmsford was an exciting and successful 2 days for the older Ilford athletes with a host of new personal bests, medals and wins over day 2 and day 3 of the Essex County Championships. Although the early morning start proved to be an issue for most athletes, the weather did not disappoint as the sun beamed over the track which reflected the top notch performances over these 2 days.

Leading the way for Ilford was the eldest athlete, Taha Undre who competed in his first ever county championships over the distance of 800m. There was a full field in the senior men's 800m straight final and Taha got off to a flying start with a new PB of 2.14.37 and an 8<sup>th</sup> place finish. Taha also opted to compete over the short sprint (100m) in which he ran a time of 12.20 to finish 6<sup>th</sup> place in his heat and unfortunately did not advance to the final. He was pleased with the outcome of his performances as he stated "I started athletics this year and I am proud of what I've achieved so far. There is definitely a lot more room for improvement".

Also competing for the senior men's was Joshua Iyen who bravely ran all three sprint distances. Joshua ran his first ever 400m which was a straight final, in a time of 56.60 (PB) and he went on to say that "It felt like a warm up, I now feel pumped and ready for my 100m later on today". Joshua also ran the 100m on the same day, and recorded a time of 11.93 in his heat which is a wind assisted PB and finished in 4<sup>th</sup> place; sadly, he did not advance to the next round. With even more determination, Joshua completed his sprint treble with a 200m the following day. He recorded yet again another PB with a time of 24.49 to finish 4<sup>th</sup> in heat and missed out on a place in the final.

Daniel Okeowo set out to compete in what was his first ever championships and was all the more excited to take on this new venture. Daniel competed over the most hotly contested race of the day - the U20 men's 100m featuring his former team mate and rival Ridge Wa-Beya. Daniel was keen to go sub 12 and for the first time he managed to do so thus was very delighted with a wind assisted PB of 11.62 and a 5<sup>th</sup> place finish therefore he did not proceed to the final. Daniel also competed over his first 200m of the season which was a straight final. Although he was feeling unwell prior to the race, he went on to attain an impressive PB of 25.17 which put him in a courageous 6<sup>th</sup> place finish.

In addition, it was a good weekend for team mate Ridge Wa-Beya who also took part in the sprint double and the long jump. When asked if he was ready to run he simply replied with a



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strong “yes” and Ridge indeed delivered by getting off to a blistering start with a PB of 11.47 in the heats of the 100m to finish in 5<sup>th</sup> place. Unfortunately, Ridge was late to his 100m final therefore missed his 100m final however this made him even more determined for success over the 200m and long jump. Ridge again showed his sprint strength however this time over the 200m where he attained an impressive PB of 23.97 and just missed out on a bronze medal and had to settle for 4<sup>th</sup> place. In the field, Ridge leapt to a personal best of 5.94 to place him 5<sup>th</sup>.

Also in the U20 mens long jump final was his training partner Tino Nyabowa who also leapt to a personal best of 4.71m to finish in 6<sup>th</sup> place. Tino, who’s main event is triple and long jump is showing superb form this season and stated that “the best is yet to come.”

The best and most thrilling performance of the day was seen in the U20 men’s 400m which featured a promising future prospect – Sam Malpass. He blasted to win and clock a superb time of 48.84 which is a new PB and places him 17<sup>th</sup> in the country over 400m this year. Sam narrowly missed out on breaking the clubs U20 men’s 400m record.

There were also strong performances coming from the women namely Kelly Mavididi who attained a bronze medal in the 200m, 400m and 800m. She attained a superb bronze medal in the 400m – an event in which she is ranked 52<sup>nd</sup> in the country this year, and clocked at time of 59.57 in which she stated “I know I can go faster than that, now I am so much more determined to run 57.” The following day, she contested in a tightly packed field over the distance of 800m and finished strongly to gain another bronze medal in a time of 2.21.75 which is close to her indoor PB of 2.20.96. And later on that day, she went on to gain a shock bronze medal in the 200m, narrowly missing out on a silver medal having run a wind assisted time of 26.27 (PB) and knocking a second off her previous PB.

Tamara Chambers also competed over the distances, 100m and 400m. Tamara obtained a new personal best time of 63.68 to finish just behind team mate Kelly Mavididi over the 400m to finish in fourth place. Tamara impressively shaved 3 seconds off her previous PB. Also, in an event she’s most familiar with, she ran her 100m race to perfection though in the latter stages pulled her hamstring and had to settle for silver. Tamara ran an amazing wind assisted PB of 12.39 and is currently ranked 36<sup>th</sup> in the country this year. Tamara is even more determined to run 11.9 this season.

The medals continued to seep through for the girls however this time; it was produced by Greta Mazeikaite. Greta competed over an event she is unfamiliar with – the U15 girls 100m. Having run a time of 13.60 (PB) to place her 2<sup>nd</sup> in her heat, Greta attained an automatic



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qualifying spot for the semi-final. She then ran a time of 13.64 to place her 7<sup>th</sup> and unfortunately out of contention. Though upset with her performance over the short sprint, Greta put all worries aside and obliterated the field in the U15 girls 300m in a new personal best time of 43.11 and gained the second gold of the weekend. This performance has placed her 17<sup>th</sup> in the country of this distance this year. Greta again displayed her excellence however in the field event; she leapt to a PB of 4.66m in the long jump final to place her 5<sup>th</sup>.

All in all, this was an excitable and memorable weekend of athletics for Ilford. All sprint athletes credited their Coach Jeffery for his excellent coaching and the amount of time he has dedicated in order for their success such as devising an individual training programme for each athlete which has certainly paid off. Also his desire for his athletes to be great at everything they do and his inspirational speeches has helped his athletes mentally and most importantly changed their lives and has definitely led to their success. Also credit to Ian Gains who has led his small group of middle distance athletes to great success at this championship and the future certainly look bright for both coaches and all the athletes who took part. Lastly, a massive credit to Andy Catton who has pulled everything together for Ilford AC.