



## **Essex Cross Country League**

Braintree 14/01/2017

Ilford Young Athletes had some encouraging runs at the fourth Essex League held at Braintree on Saturday. The snow from Thursday had but gone, but the freezing conditions meant that parts of the course were still frozen and slippery underfoot.

First up was Matthew Hick in the Under 13 race. After a slow start Matthew began to move up through the field and on the twisty part of the course he was flying along. The final part of the course involved a switchback followed by a steep uphill section and long downhill run into the finish. After negotiating the switch back, Matthew flew up the hill and was still taking people as he came into the finish for an excellent 8th place.

The U15 boys have been Ilford's most successful team this season. However they have failed to close a team since the first match and yet again late illness meant they only had three runners competing. However all three had very good runs. The team was made up of Aaron Samuel, Mungo Prior and Bradley Deacon, all of whom made good starts with Mungo and Aaron being up with the leaders and Bradley working his way through. By the end of the small lap a lead of group of about eight had been established of which Aaron and Mungo were a part. A little further down the field Bradley was making good progress. In the final mile the lead group broke up with Leon Wheeler of Thurrock stretching away for Victory. Despite almost falling on one of the hills, Aaron had his best run of the season for 3rd place. Mungo was in his own battle which he just lost on the line yet still ended up in 5th place. Bradley was still moving through the field and powered up the last hill to take 28th place, which was his best position yet in the league and reward for all his recent hard training.

Jordan Hinds was Ilford's sole runner in the U17 ladies race and after a season interrupted by injury and exams is gradually racing her way back to form. After a steady start she was nicely positioned in the middle of the field. Her long flowing style is not ideally suited to muddy cross country, but as the race went on she was moving through the field. As with the others the final part of the race involved a steep hill, and the Saturday morning hill sessions clearly paid off as she pulled away from other runners to take a best place in the under 17 category of 11th.



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The Club seniors once again had a disappointing turnout due to illness, injuries and other commitments and now both mens and ladies squads have a hard battle in the last round at Basildon on February 11th to stay in the top division of the league.

The women's race was over 5.2km and the in form Nicola Hopkinson led home the clubs trio of runners placing 35th in the field of 90 finishers in 26 mins 48secs. Next home was Dianne Crisp in 50th with 28m 43s and Jenni Sheehan was not far behind with 29m 03s for 52nd spot. In the match the team placed 10th in the 12 team division 1 and are 11th in the league.

The mens race was traditionally longer at 7.5km event where Ilford were led home by the ever reliable Malcolm Muir in 9th place, and 2nd in the M40 category, with 25m 45s. Paul Holloway put in a good performance to come home 34th with 27m 28s and Neil Crisp placed 71st in 29m 57s. Dennis Briggs returned from a back injury to finish 123rd in 35m 23s. Another back from injury, Ed Skinner was 138th in 40m 45s, while the 6 man scoring team was closed by Rob Sargent, 139th with 41m 14s. In the match the Ilford squad finished 7th, their best result of the season, and have climbed to 9th in the division 1 table, just above the relegation zone.





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