



Brighton Half Marathon (26th Feb), Essex 20 Langham (5th March)

Ilford AC's Blair McWhirter has been in excellent form of late narrowly missing out on a podium finish at the prestigious Brighton half marathon 2 weeks ago. The Ilford man clocked a speedy 68.58 just 3 secs behind the 3rd place man and with only 21 seconds covering the first 4 places. The race was won by Kent AC's Jonathan Tipper clocking 68.37 in a high class field with the first 6 home all breaking the 70 minute barrier.

Coincidentally it was another member of the same club Kent AC who was to deny McWhirter of the victory spoils a week later in the Essex 20 miles Road Championships held around the rural lanes of Langham. This time James Connor of the Kent Club but, running as an Essex qualified athlete, broke away from the field to take the Essex Gold in an excellent time of 1.49.09.

The 3 lap course started in heavy rain and wind but conditions improved after the first of the 3 laps. The race also incorporated an eight county match and Ilford's Kiwi McWhirter was also representing Essex. Settling into 4th place early in the race he made a determined effort over the last 3 miles to second, overhauling Dean Lacey of Cambridge and Springfield's Paul Molyneux to take the silver medal in the Essex Championship in 1hr 50mins 45 secs and was part of the winning Essex team in the inter-counties match.

There were also some excellent performances from the rest of the Ilford AC team. Malcom Muir, as usual, gave his all to finished 18th in 1hr 58mins 16secs and take the bronze medal in the M40 category, while there was a personal best time of 2hrs 07 mins 35 secs for Paul Holloway in 47th spot. These three athletes combined as the Ilford team and placed 3rd in the team championship.

Next home for the club with solid runs were Neil Crisp in 70th with 2hrs 14mins 27secs and Sam Rahman in 2h 15m 37s for 73rd. Crisp's performance earned him an excellent County bronze in the male over 50s section.

Steve Parker was also in good form in 186th with 2h 38m 52s which placed him second in the M60 age group, winning his his first ever county medal. Dennis Briggs made his debut at the distance and showed his marathon training is on track with 2h 42m 23s while there were also personal bests for Declan Cullen with 2h 43m 47s, in 209th good enough for an excellent bronze in the M60 category and Satha Alaganandasundaram in 243rd with 2h 53m 12s.





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