



South of England Cross Country Relay Championship

Wormwood Scrubs

Saturday 22nd October 2022

Ilford AC Battle Back After Disaster at Relay Championships

Ilford AC runners put on a heroic fight back after suffering disaster at the start of a major championship race. The four man team were genuine medal contenders when they lined up for the senior men's South of England Cross Country Relay Championship on Saturday.

Current Essex Cross Country Relay Champions, Paul Grange, Tom Gardner, Alex Richards and Ahmed Abdulle, had their sights set on a top three position when lining up at the start of the fast, flat course in Wormwood Scrubs, West London.

But they were soon on the back foot after first leg runner, Paul Grange, lost five minutes to the leaders after being part of a small group which was sent off course - adding a mile onto what should have been a 2.5 mile lap.

Grange had settled comfortably at the rear of half a dozen runners which had just lost contact with three leaders. But as they reached half distance, the lead runner of this group mistook a turn, taking the pack off course and back to where they had come. By the time the mistake was noticed and they re-joined the correct loop, too much time was lost.

Grange clocked a time of 17:39 and handed over to second leg Gardner - in 29th place.

Facing a monumental battle to claw back as much time against the best runners from across the south of England, the team set about a stunning comeback, picking off as many places as possible.

Gardner passed 13 competitors while lapping the course in 12:48, handing over to Alex Richards who blasted past another six runners, clocking a blistering 12.24.

Despite the insurmountable gap, last leg athlete Abdulle unleashed one of the fastest splits of the entire competition, pulling back two more places, on his way to a 11.30 lap.

He brought the team home in 54:21 for seventh place out of 36 teams, 6:21 behind winners Windsor and Hounslow AC, who clocked 48.07. Chiltern Harriers AC came second in 40:18, followed by the host club, Thames Valley Harriers, in 48:41.

Had it not been for the mishap on leg one, the team's time would have put them firmly in the battle for bronze.

Team captain Gardner said: "I couldn't be prouder of the performances - everyone showed fantastic determination despite a major setback.

"While a lot of other teams might have let their head drop facing such a mammoth task, the team got stuck in and fought for every position.

It's a shame we lost so much time because of the confusion on the first leg, where a section of course wasn't clearly marked out and a small second group went the wrong way. But sport's all about how you deal with adversity and Ilford AC showed how we do it."



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CHINGFORD LEAGUE 5km

Olympic Velopark

Wednesday 12 October

The second fixture of the season in the Chingford League took place under the lights at the Olympic Velopark road circuit in Stratford. Ilford compete in the second tier of this competition and produced a good result in the match

In their division two match the Ilford ladies were led by a strong run from Joanne Reeves who came home second, and first in the F40 category, in 20 mins 13 secs.

Hannah Sheikh is improving all the time and finished 7th and 3rd in the F40 group with 22 mins 47 secs, just 4 seconds off her personal best and Alison Sale who recorded 23 mins 21 secs for 10th and 1st in the F50 age category.

Pauline Tester produced a creditable run in 20th with 25 mins 38 secs. Launa Broadley finished in 29th spot in 29 mins 31secs, an improvement of over 4 minutes from her time in the corresponding fixture last year. In the match the Ilford squad finished 2nd.

The first finisher for the men was Richard Woolterton in 14th with 19 mins 29 secs and 2nd in the M50 age group, while there was a good result from Joel Denning in 18th spot in 19 mins 4 secs.

Newcomer to the team Sean Costello recorded 23 mins 56 secs for 45th with Bradley Brown two places back in



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24 mins 15 secs. Jim Tilbrook placed 59th with 26 mins 47 secs. Ray Everingham came home 61 st in 28 mins 11 secs and Ramen was one place further back with 28 mins 32 secs. In the match Ilford finished in 6th spot





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