

British League Men's Report 2018

After a more successful season in 2017, finishing second in the league, we went into the winter on 2017-2018 in good positive form preparing for to back up the challenge of the previous season for 2018.

It was identified that development of our current members and recruitment for a number of field event areas was going to be the key to keep the positive direction of movement for the men's BAL would be the key. A number of significant young talents were welcomed to the club and the men's BAL squad in the winter months.

At the winter BAL AGM, the fixture list was presented, and a significant clash was noted for the first match of the season with the British University Championships. I with others attempted vehemently oppose the fixture clash, but the vote of all members of the BAL carried the fixture list through as proposed.

Our first match of the season saw the team travel to Leigh Sports Village, a tremendous facility, near Manchester. On the day the team were a superb mixture of new young and established Beagles. Of note, long term internationals Niall Flannery and Jason Harvey Brought home nearly a full house of points with 1st and 2nd in the first track race of the day, the 400h. A new member of the Beagles crew was Ben Snaith, who throughout the season, will prove to be a magnificent addition. Despite being a little 'below par' by his own standards, due to recent illness he proved to be a strong contender in the 400m A race bringing home 3rd place. As always, the ever-reliable Frank Baddick brought home top points in the 3000m, from my point of view the race of the day. Frank is the ultimate poker payer racer. He never led the race once until the finish line, it was a real masterclass of experienced distance running. A very difficult day in the field was directly as a result of losing nearly all of our top field eventers to the BUCS championships. At the end of the fixture, we were left finishing second on the track events scoring and last in the field events scoring. This all contributed to a 7th place position going forward to match 2.

Match two saw the Beagles venture into the valleys. Cardiff were celebrating their 50th birthday and welcomed us with some spectacular weather. The squad were buoyed by the return of the BUCS athletes, missing from the first match. Hassan Abdelgawad and Tom Head scored superb points in the first field event of the day with 2nd and 1st respectively in the Hammer. Arguably field performance of the day went to Michael Pupilampu, a renowned high level Triple Jumper, helping the team out in the Long Jump with a lifetime best of 7.52m in the name of 'helping the team out' – a n excellent 2nd place in the A string. Furthermore, winning the Triple Jump later in the day. The field results kept coming for Beagle, with BUCS champion George Armstrong scoring a 2nd place in the Discus, backed up with a win the B string for Beagles stalwart Matthew Baptiste. On the track it was a trickier day for the Beagles compared to the first match. Track star of the day was Ben Snaith, who again performed well in the 400m, bring home a 2nd place, along with anchoring home the 4x100m team to a solid 3rd. The reversal in the points scored by Beagles compared to the first match, saw the squad score nearly 3 times the amount of field points than achieved at Leigh, and indeed winning the field events on the day. Unfortunately, the track events were

slightly down on the first match, scoring a 6 place overall for the track disciplines and finishing the day in 5th. Moving to match 3 it left the squad in 6th place.

The Big Saturday fixture at Bedford saw all divisions in the league performing on the same day at the same venue. This fixture was always going to be a stronger affair for all teams involved. Beagles were no exception. Our track performances were back up to where they should be. A 3rd place on the day for track points were contributed to by excellent performances across the board. Highlight for the Beagles again came in the 1 lap event. Ben Snaith again kept getting better, winning the A race but more so backup in the B string by another new signing Chris O'Donnell also with the win. The two athletes switched places for the 200m, but the point kept coming with O'Donnell bringing home 3rd in the A string and Snaith winning the B. To cap off a solid track day with two wins in both relays, really did bring confidence and show the strength was returning to the track team. On the field another new recruit, Jack Roach, brought some excellent points with a 2nd place in the Long Jump. A returning Beagles favourite, Greg Beard, came out of retirement to bring home top points in the B shot putt. The Beagles again, started to move up the league table standings after match 3 with a 4th place on the day and moving to 5th for the season.

The final fixture of the year was the closest to home, Allianz Park, Barnet. This proved to be a turning point, although slightly late in the year, for the Beagles. For 3 seasons Birchfield harriers had remained unbeaten in any league fixture of the Premiership Division. Track highlights of the day came from a titanic dual between two Beagles over the steeplechase, Jayme Rossiter and Rory Chesser were the class of the field from the gun to tape. The only separating them was their own competitive nature, both sharing the lead throughout the race, it was Rossiter who came out on top during a cracking race, but both bringing top points for the Newham duo. Another distance points bonus for the Beagles came from Josh Trigwell and Eoin Pierce in the 1500m, with 2nd and 3rd respectively. As was the 200m with top season points scorer, Ben Snaith bringing home 2nd place in the 200m and BAL debutant Marlon Hogg-Williams winning on his first ever race at the BAL. A sprint relay win, anchored home by Hogg-Williams, made it very special day for Marlon. On the field, Jack Roach capped off his Beagles season with a win in the A Long Jump, with his later win in the final ever competition of Olympic Champion Greg Rutherford in the Gateshead Long Jump City Games event making sure 2018 was a year to remember for Jack. As always George Armstrong, Matthew Baptiste and Gregg Beard weighed in with solid points to enable the Beagles field eventers to finish 2nd on the day, to back up the winning track eventers. This meant for the first time in 3 seasons defeat was tasted by the retaining champions Birchfield Harriers. It also preserved a very long-standing record help by the Beagles Squad of remaining undefeated for 3 full seasons.

The primary focus moving forward now for the BAL team is to build on a strong finish to a year which started in such a tough way. I would like to thank the club and the committee as always for supporting the squad and enabling these athletes to be so proud to wear the Beagles colours.

Rowan Griffiths
Manager