

DORSET ROAD RACE LEAGUE 2024

Junction Broadstone Quarter Marathon Race Report

Many thanks the Richard Brawn of BAC for writing

It was a fresh new look for the 2024 season for the Dorset Road Race, with the new 'three division' format coming into play meaning First Division and Second Divisions consisting of just five teams. This should keep the season alive for longer, with all teams in the division likely to be either contending for promotion or trying to stave off the threat of relegation.

Another change brought in for the 2024 season sees the clubs that are in the Ladies First Division needing four to score, rather than just the three that it previously had been. That alteration should benefit the clubs with a larger membership base.

Not everything has changed though. The league still kicks off with a bang on New Year's Day as the runners take to the streets for the Junction Broadstone Quarter Marathon. That is one tradition that will hopefully be retained for many years to come. After all, there surely can be no better way of seeing the New Year in though than by running up Gravel Hill twice, right?

The line up for the Broadstone Quarter was mouth watering, with last year's winner Lewis Clarke of Poole Runners and last year's runner up Thomas Corbin of Poole AC both on the start line. They were joined by Poole Runners man Dion Garner, who won the final fixture of the 2023 season, the Boscombe 10k.

Chris Wood and Jez Bragg of Twemlow Track Club were also in the mix, as were Jonathan Cooper and Jamie Barrington of Egdon Heath Harriers, plus Luke Terry of Poole AC.

Following their unprecedented relegation from the top flight, Bournemouth AC were back and were ready to attack the 2024 season with renewed vigour. They had two-time winner Jacek Cieluszecki in their arsenal, along with Rob McTaggart and Oliver James.

Boosting Poole Runners chances of wrestling the Ladies First Division title away from Egdon Heath Harriers, Molly Rasch had made the switch over from Dorset Doodlers. That could well prove a crucial signing for the light and dark blues who also had Gemma Bragg and Lauren Baker-Little in their side.

Joseph Arundel who usually represents Bournemouth AC also showed up for race. He was runner up to Jacek Cieluszecki in the 2018 edition of the Broadstone Quarter and was well capable of a sub 32 minute 10k. He wasn't wearing his Bournemouth AC vest though and hadn't renewed his membership from the previous year so couldn't count as a scorer in the Dorset Road Race League.

Once everyone had said Happy New Year to each other and done their warm up runs, it was time for race to begin. The lead pack set off at a ferocious pace, well under 5 minutes per mile. There is a downhill section shortly after the start followed by a hill that leads almost to the 1 mile point.

It was heading up that hill where Thomas Corbin, Oliver James and Joseph Arundel started to pull away. Oliver and Joe then managed to drop Thomas Corbin, making it a two-horse race for first place.

Making it to the line in an astonishing time of 34 minutes 37 seconds, in any previous year that would have been a new course record for Oliver but this year, it was Joseph who came out on top. He registered a staggering time of 34:18 to take top spot and put his name to the new official course record.

Since Joseph wasn't representing a Dorset League club on this occasion though, it was effectively still a win for Oliver James as far as league points go.

Meanwhile, slightly further back there was a battle going on for third place. It was on that Rob McTaggart had been winning, right up until the last bit of the hill. That was when Gravel Hill specialist Jacek Cieluszecki went past him, demonstrating his extraordinary strength on the ascent.

Reaching the line in 35:19, Jacek had come in just five seconds ahead of Rob in what had been a truly great battle. Rob had to settle for 4th place in 35:24. They were both quicker times than Lewis Clarke's winning time in last year's race and would have won it in quite a few of the previous years as well.

Unfortunately for Bournemouth AC though, Rob wasn't wearing his club vest so again, he didn't count in the results. That meant Bournemouth AC had had the top two scorers but still needed more to wrap up the Second Division victory.

Thomas Corbin was the best of the rest, getting round in 35:38, with last year's winner Lewis Clarke having to settle for 6th place in 36:10. Chris Wood came in in 7th place with a time of 36:40, just ahead of Egdon Heath Harriers pair Jonathan Cooper and Jamie Barrington who came 8th and 9th in 36:43 and 36:45 respectively.

Poole AC man Luke Terry completed the top ten, going over the line in 36:52, with Jonathan Churchill of Egdon taking 11th place in 36:55.

Bournemouth AC got their third scorer on the board when Stuart Nicholas crossed the line in 12th place, recording a time of 36:59. Dion Garner was the next man to arrive at the finish, taking 13th place in a time of 37:05.

That was just enough to edge him ahead of Bournemouth AC's Matt Brown who came 14th in 37:07. He was officially Bournemouth AC's fourth scorer, completing their team for the Dorset League Second Division. That meant that even without Joseph and Rob scoring for them, the yellow and blues still had a lower scoring first four than any other club, including those in the First Division.

Jack Galloway and Jez Bragg gave Twemlow Track Club their second and third scorers, taking 15th and 16th positions with both recording a time of 37:10. Liam Openshaw, Charlie Collins and Dave Hicks then completed the scoring team for Poole AC taking 17th, 18th and 19th positions. That was enough to give Poole AC the win in the First Division.

Champions Egdon Heath Harriers had to settle for second place on this occasion, with Twemlow Track Club taking third and Poole Runners getting fourth.

Wimborne AC were a distant second to a dominant Bournemouth AC men's team in the Second Division and Purbeck Runners came third.

Isabel Davis of Pubeck Runners was first female, getting round in 40:09 which put her 41st overall. Molly Rasch arrived shortly after to take the second lady spot in 40:40. Bournemouth AC's Emma Caplan was third female over the line and 58th overall in a time of 41:50. She was also first vet.

Caroline Wilkins was second scorer for Poole Runners and fourth female in 42:45 which put her 74th overall. Hayley Martin of Poole AC was fifth female in 43:44 and she was 83rd overall. Gemma Bragg was third scorer for Poole Runners and she got over the line as 6th lady in 43:56. That put her 87th.

In previous years that would have been a wrap and a win for Poole Runners but now of course they needed four to score. Therefore, it wasn't done and dusted yet for the Poole Runners women.

Julie Wargent of Egdon Heath Harriers was 7th female, completing the course in 44:17 which put her in 94th place overall. She was first in the 50 to 59 category. Lauren Baker-Little of Poole Runners crossed the line in 44:40 to confirm the victory for them. She was 8th lady and 101st overall.

Heather Khoshnevis, now of Littledown Harriers again, finished first in the 60 to 69 category, recording a time of 47:57 which put her in 154th place overall. Heather won the 60 to 64 category for the league last season so that was just the start she wanted.

Egdon Heath Harriers finished second to Poole Runners in the First Division but they were a long way behind and will need to improve in subsequent fixtures if they are to continue their reign as champions into the 2025 season.

Bournemouth AC sealed the win in the Ladies Second Division ahead of Purbeck Runners who were second, Lytchett Manor Striders who came third and Wimborne AC who took fourth.

In the Ladies Third Division, it was Gillingham Trotters who came out on top, with Christchurch Runners in second.

As for the Men's Third Division, Dorchester RIOT topped the standings with Dorset Doodlers taking second place.

As is tradition at the Broadstone Quarter, the presentation for the previous season took place after the race, with all the team and individual prize winners being awarded their prizes.

It was a fantastic way to begin what should be an exciting new season in the Dorset Road Race League and after playing a somewhat detached role last season, it was great to see a Bournemouth AC team come back with a vengeance.

The next fixture of the season sees the Dorset clubs and athletes head over to Bishop's Caundle for a

real test of grit and stamina in the Blackmore Vale Half Marathon. That will then be followed by the Lytchett 10 which takes place the weekend after.

This next couple of weeks could be really crucial for the clubs as they look to shape their seasons by giving themselves a solid base to work from for the remainder of the year.