

Stur Half Race Report

The second half of the Dorset Road Race League season began with a trip to Sturminster Newton for a mainstay fixture on the annual schedule. That of course, being the undulating, yet sublimely scenic Stur Half.

Dorset Road Race League men's individual champion Chris Peck was in the starting line up and over a longer distance race of a hilly persuasion, he's often the man to beat.

Chris was joined by several of his Egdon Heath Harriers teammates including Matt Underhill and Steve Kellaway.

Following on from his impressive second place finish at the Blackmore Vale Half Marathon, Rich White of Dorset Doodlers was hoping to replicate that level of performance at the Stur Half.

Bournemouth AC man Josh Cole, who finished fourth at Blackmore Vale, was also in the mix, along with Poole Runners star Lewis Clarke who is one of the top runners on the local scene.

Wimborne AC duo Louis Verdi and Mark Savage, who were first and second in the men's individual table after the first six fixtures, were racing as well, as were Twemlow Track Club pair Sam and Luke Jackson who both ran well at Blackmore Vale.

Team Bath runner Lester James finished runner up to Tommy Corbin in last year's Stur Half, recording an impressive time of 1:13:25. He was back again for another tilt and no doubt hoping to contend for the race win.

After finishing first female at the Blackmore Vale Half Marathon, Vicky Rutter was hoping to repeat those heroics. She was up against Teresa Green of Egdon Heath Harriers who was in a good position in the women's individual standings at the half way stage of the season.

Isabel Zanonato of Purbeck Runners, Emma Mogridge of Dorset Doodlers and Kirstin Hay of Poole AC were also competing at the Stur Half, as were Jenny Walker-Leach and Sarah Swift of Poole Runners.

When the race began, it was Chris Peck and Lester James who broke away from the pack and into the lead. Josh Cole and Lewis Clarke and were the lead chasers.

At least half of the first mile was uphill, but Chris and Lester still went out hard, clocking a 5:13 for their first mile split. Lewis and Josh were about five seconds behind at that stage. Chris and Lester then went through the second mile in about 5:20, with Lewis and Josh getting through it in 5:27.

Blasting through the third mile in 5:08, Lester began to extend away from Chris. It was an impressive show of speed from him. Josh and Lewis clocked a 5:25 for the third mile, followed by a 5:36 and a 5:33.

Lewis then went off in pursuit of Chris and Josh couldn't go with him. There was quite a long, steep climb at 6.5 miles that was tough going. Then on the eighth mile there's another notable climb.

Lester was somehow still able to go at 5:20 pace and was extending his lead over Chris with each mile. Lewis hadn't got that far away from Josh and from miles 9 to 13, Josh was trying to bridge the gap between them.

The last 5k of the Stur Half is super tough with a massive hill going from 11.5 miles to 12.5 miles. Lester was only knocked down to about 5:30 pace for the 11th and 12th miles though and finished with a 5:42 for his 13th mile.

Proving to be a cut above the rest, Lester crossed the line in an astonishing time of 1:10:59. That was an average pace of 5:21 on a course with 500ft of elevation.

Chris Peck arrived two minutes later to clock a time of 1:13:09 which was still an amazing run on that course. His average pace was 5:35 and he was over two minutes quicker than the time he managed the previous year when he finished third.

Luke and Josh were reduced to around six-minute mile pace for the 11th and 12th miles but putting in a strong final split of 5:48, Lewis was able to see out the race and stay ahead of Josh, taking third place in 1:14:06.

That was an average pace of 5:39. Josh arrived 18 seconds later to clock a time of 1:14:24 which put him in fourth place.

The rest of the field was quite a way behind the top four with Salah Dahir, of Royal Manor of Portland, being best of the rest, taking 5th place in 1:16:15. Rich White was 6th in 1:16:21 and Josh Chivers of Lordshill Road Runners took 7th in 1:16:39.

Mark Savage continued his fine form to come in in 1:18:28 and he was second vet after Chris Peck. After being out injured for a while, Tommy Corbin was building his fitness back up and he put in a controlled effort to get round in 1:18:41.

Unattached runner Charles Ford took 10th place in 1:19:12 and Matt Underhill claimed 11th place in a time of 1:19:26.

Bournemouth AC new signing Alex Knauf went out hard and managed to get through the first 10 miles in 57:39. He found the last 5k a bit of a slog but still managed to make it to the line in 1:19:48 which put him in 12th place. He was first Under 21 man over the line.

Luke McKenzie of Poole AC registered a time of 1:21:56 which put him in 16th place with former Bournemouth AC man Sam Jackson getting round in 1:22:05. Mark Peddle of Poole Runners recorded a faster chip time though of 1:22:02.

Lee Dempster ran strongly over the second half of the race, gradually working his way up the field to end the race in 19th place in a time of 1:22:08.

David Penwarden of Poole Runners was first V50 in a time of 1:22:23 and also moving up the field over the last five miles or so, Louis Suggett of Bournemouth AC took 21st place in a time of 1:22:49. Louis Verdi crossed the line just after, registering a chip time of 1:22:51.

Corey Stone was third scorer for Egdon Heath Harriers in a time of 1:23:08, although Pete Doughty was a second faster on chip time. They were 24th and 25th. Luke Jackson had a decent run to get round in 1:23:14 which put him in 26th and he was third scorer for Twemlow Track Club.

Christian Rodiger of Littledown Harriers faded a touch towards the end but held out for 27th place in 1:23:55.

Haydan Clarke, now of Twemlow Track Club and Rich Brawn of Bournemouth AC had been working together to manage the testing headwind over the latter stages of the race. Then Dave Hicks, another of Twemlow Track Club's recent signings, caught them up near the end.

Haydan found some extra energy though and broke clear to take 28th place in 1:24:18. Rich Brawn was 29th in 1:24:24 with Dave Hicks following in a second later. He ensured Twemlow Track Club were the first time to get in a scoring team of five. The only issue for them was that they didn't have anyone in the top 15.

Dave Hicks was the first of three MV50's to finish consecutively with Mark Packer taking 31st place in 1:24:39 and Richard Swindlehurst placing 32nd in 1:25:05.

Clocking a time of 1:25:54, Thomas Woods finished 33rd and was fifth scorer for Bournemouth AC. They'd done well to get all five scorers in that high up and it was certainly one of their better days in the Dorset Road Race League thus far. In fact, it was just what they needed.

The battle for first female spot was between Isabel Zanconato and Emma Mogridge and it was Isabel who shaded it in the end. She finished in 1:28:06, which put her 47th overall, with Emma coming 20 seconds later to take 49th place. Teresa Green was third female in 1:33:10 which put her in 65th place in the overall standings.

The Poole Runners ladies performed well on the day though. They had Francesca Kenway-Christopher who was 5th female in 1:35:09, Jenny Walker-Leach who was 8th lady in 1:37:57, Sarah Swift who was 10th woman in 1:38:26 and Lillian Docherty who was 15th female in 1:40:09.

Heather Khoshnevis was first over 65 female in 1:40:46, which made her 16th placed lady.

The Twemlow Track Club men had finished on 92 points but the Egdon Heath Harriers men had just eclipsed that, finishing on 89. Of course, in the Dorset Road Race League scoring, it's the lower the better.

It was the Bournemouth AC men who took the win on this occasion though, with a grand total of 77 points. That was the win they wanted and a victory they desperately needed in all honesty.

The next race in the schedule is the newly introduced Boscombe Prom 5k, which will be contested over the same course as the recent Boscombe Winter Series event, organised by Poole Runners.

Before September is out, the Round the Lakes 10k will also be taking place, and that race habitually attracts a high standard field and provides a platform for some ferociously fast racing.