

# **DORSET ROAD RACE LEAGUE**

## **North Dorset Village Marathon Race Report**

### **Wood's Village People! Twemlow star storms through as Nicholas cracks in epic county championship battle**

Just seven days on from the bright lights, noise and grandeur of the London Marathon, the Dorset Road Race League returned to something rather more rustic — but no less demanding — with the fourth fixture of the 2026 campaign, the North Dorset Village Marathon.

For those whose legs had recovered sufficiently from the capital's concrete, this was a chance to test themselves a little closer to home, on a course that offered every bit as much challenge, if rather fewer cheering crowds.

Starting and finishing at Sturminster Newton High School, the route wound its way through the glorious North Dorset countryside, linking together Hinton St Mary, Marnhull, Stalbridge, Todber, Stour Row, Margaret Marsh, West Orchard, Farningham, Child Okeford and Hammoon in a punishing tour of rolling country lanes that served up plenty of elevation, plenty of exposure, and more than enough opportunity for marathon dreams to unravel.

And with Dorset County Championship medals also on the line, there was far more at stake than league points alone.

### **League leaders under pressure**

The season had so far been dominated by Poole AC in the men's First Division, three wins from three establishing them as the early pacesetters, while Poole Runners had mirrored that feat in Division Two.

In the women's competition, Poole AC had taken the previous two victories and were trying to reel in First Division leaders Egdon Heath Harriers, while Bournemouth AC and Dorchester RIOT were locked together after Bournemouth's no-show at Bournemouth Bay had opened the door.

But this was a race where strength in depth, resilience and sheer determination would prove more valuable than reputation.

### **Nicholas goes bold... but Wood goes better**

After finishing runner-up here last year, Bournemouth AC's Stuart Nicholas arrived with unfinished business and wasted absolutely no time in making his intentions clear.

From the gun, Nicholas attacked.

Despite a brutally testing opening four miles packed with climbing, he blasted through at sub-six-minute-mile pace, a fearless front-running display that immediately stretched the field. Even as the course continued to bite, he kept the pressure on through the next section, still hovering just over six-minute pace and looking every inch a man determined to seize control.

But marathons — particularly Dorset marathons — are cruel judges of ambition.

Behind him, Twemlow Track Club's Chris Wood was running a very different race.

Third here last year and fresh from a superb 2:37 in London just a week earlier, Wood ran with patience, precision and ominous control. While Nicholas began to pay for his early aggression somewhere around the 18 to 19-mile mark, Wood did exactly the opposite — he accelerated.

And what an acceleration it was.

As others faded, Wood grew stronger, relentlessly eating into Nicholas's lead before sweeping past. His second half was a masterclass in measured marathon running, and by the final 10K he was positively flying, remarkably producing his quickest split of the entire race in mile 24.

It was an extraordinary performance.

Wood crossed the line in a magnificent 2:44:54 to claim a superb victory and county honours, finishing more than two minutes clear.

Nicholas, after a heroic but painful battle with the closing miles, dug deep to hold on for second in 2:47:15.

### **Wimborne and Twemlow impress in team battle**

Wimborne AC's Mark Savage, another athlete carrying London Marathon fatigue after his 2:45 in the capital, produced an excellent run to storm through for third in 2:49:24.

Twemlow's David Jones backed up his own London exploits with fourth in 2:50:47, while Poole AC's Adam McCrea rounded out the top five in 2:52:22.

Dorchester RIOT's Adam Woollard was sixth in 2:53:19, narrowly ahead of Poole's Luke Terry (2:53:26), while Twemlow's Ed Davies completed their scoring trio in eighth with 2:53:51.

Damien Huntingford gave Wimborne another key scorer in ninth, before Lytchett Manor Striders' Robert Churchward took tenth.

Louis Verdi just sneaked under three hours for Wimborne in 11th, and Julian Scanes led the over-50s in 12th with a superb 3:00:38.

Then came the decisive team punch.

Mark Burden and Lorenzo Bianchi crossed in quick succession to complete a sensational Wimborne AC victory in the men's First Division standings for the day, their strength in numbers proving decisive.

Twemlow may have had four outstanding runners, but crucially lacked a fifth scorer — opening the door for Egdon Heath Harriers to snatch second team spot.

### **Victoria reigns supreme**

In the women's race, Egdon Heath Harriers' Victoria Pye once again underlined why she currently leads the individual standings.

Running with confidence and authority, Pye took the women's title in 3:15:13, finishing an outstanding 29th overall and extending her advantage in the season-long race.

Dorset Doodlers' reigning individual champion Emma Mogridge was next home in 3:23:48 for second female, while Verwood Runners' Miranda Aldridge continued her excellent campaign with third in 3:27:37.

Tracey Harold made it two Egdon women in the top four, Sally Miller was fifth for Dorchester RIOT, and Littledown's Heather Khoshnevis claimed sixth female and first FV60 with an excellent 3:41:06.

Susie Palmer's seventh place further strengthened her own impressive season.

### **Team standings shaken up**

Egdon Heath Harriers were the only women's First Division side to field a full scoring quartet, giving them maximum points and tightening their grip on the title race.

In the men's divisions, Westbourne were the sole First Division team to complete a scoring four, while Lytchett Manor Striders capitalised best among the incomplete squads.

Division Two and Three standings saw equally dramatic shifts, with clubs rewarded simply for getting runners to the line on a day when marathon attrition and post-London fatigue hit hard.

### **Season picture**

Despite finishing only fourth on the day, Poole AC remain top of Men's First Division, though Twemlow Track Club and now surging Wimborne AC are closing.

Poole Runners continue to lead Men's Division Two, while Purbeck Runners still head Division Three despite Dorchester RIOT's excellent showing.

Egdon Heath Harriers strengthened their women's First Division advantage, while Bournemouth Joggers' full turnout in Division Three puts them firmly in command there.

### **Dorset marathon at its purest**

This was a day that perfectly captured what the Dorset Road Race League does best — combining elite performances, local rivalry, county championship significance and sheer grit on some of the county's toughest roads.

For Chris Wood, it was a brilliant victory built on patience and power.

For Stuart Nicholas, a brave gamble that very nearly paid off.

And for everyone who tackled 26.2 miles of North Dorset's unforgiving lanes just one week after London, it was a reminder that sometimes the hardest marathons are the ones closest to home.