

DORSET ROAD RACE LEAGUE

Purbeck 10k Race Report

The Dorset Road Race League season reached its halfway point on Friday evening as runners descended on the Purbeck 10k for the sixth fixture of the 12-race campaign.

With its relaxed Friday night atmosphere, picturesque surroundings and surprisingly runnable profile considering the Isle of Purbeck's reputation for brutal climbs, the race has become one of the highlights of the league calendar. But behind the sunshine and scenic views, there was plenty at stake as clubs looked to strengthen their positions before the second half of the season.

Poole AC arrived having dominated the Men's First Division, winning four of the opening five fixtures, while the chasing pack knew they desperately needed to halt the blue and whites' momentum.

In the women's top flight, Egdon Heath Harriers have finally found the strength in depth to consistently field a four-woman scoring team and were looking to continue their impressive challenge for the title after Poole Runners' recent domination.

The battle for honours elsewhere was proving just as fascinating. Poole Runners had established themselves as the team to beat in the Men's Second Division, while Bournemouth AC and Verwood Runners had shared the victories in the Ladies Second Division. The Men's Third Division was developing into a fascinating three-way fight, while Lytchett Manor Striders were beginning to stamp their authority on the Ladies Third Division.

Although the race itself was won by unattached runner Thomas Payn, who stopped the clock in an impressive 33:51, the league battle behind him proved just as compelling.

Callum Wadlow led the Dorset League contingent home, finishing second overall in 34:14 to collect minimum league points for Poole AC after Payn was discounted from the league scoring.

Luke Martin continued his excellent season with a superb third place overall in 34:43 for Bournemouth AC, just ahead of Charlie Williams, who strengthened Egdon Heath Harriers' challenge with fourth in 34:53.

Lewis Clarke rounded out the top five in exactly 35 minutes before Bournemouth AC produced an impressive display of strength in depth.

Casper Jakobsen crossed the line sixth in 35:03, Ben Collins followed in seventh in 35:10, while Littledown Harriers' Gergely Arvay took eighth in 35:29.

Stu Nicholas ensured four Bournemouth AC runners finished inside the top nine as he claimed ninth in 35:36, with Cam Clarke completing the top ten for Poole Runners in 36:03.

Former Dorset League men's individual champion Lee Dempster continued his encouraging return to form with 11th place in 36:04 for Twemlow Track Club, ahead of Wimborne AC's Mark Savage, who clocked 36:14.

Poole Runners' David Penwarden was first over-50 home, taking 13th overall in 36:26, before Harry Butcher completed Bournemouth AC's scoring quintet in 14th place with 36:29.

That proved enough to hand Bournemouth AC a morale-boosting victory in the Men's First Division, ending Poole AC's recent dominance and lifting the yellow and blues above Egdon Heath Harriers and Wimborne AC into outright third place in the overall standings. Poole AC remain comfortably top of the table, with Twemlow Track Club still occupying second.

Christian Rodiger led Littledown Harriers home in 15th, while Twemlow pair Nick Reynolds and Steven Rigby crossed in 16th and 17th respectively.

Rob Doubleday was Poole AC's third scorer in 19th, while teammate Adam McCrea completed their scoring four to secure second place in the division despite the club not fielding one of their strongest teams.

Poole Runners once again demonstrated why they lead the Men's Second Division as Myles Peacham completed their scoring quartet in 20th place. Littledown Harriers pushed them all the way, with just a handful of places separating the clubs, but the victory allowed Poole Runners to reinforce their advantage at the top of the standings.

Current men's individual league leader Louis Verdi continued his remarkable record of completing every race this season, finishing 23rd in 37:31 for Wimborne AC.

Twemlow Track Club's North Dorset Village Marathon winner Chris Wood endured a rare off day by his own lofty standards but still completed his team's scoring four in 35th place, helping secure third in the Men's First Division.

Poole Runners' Julian Critchlow claimed first over-60 honours with 37th overall in 38:35.

The women's race saw just one athlete dip under the 40-minute barrier.

Poole Runners' Abigail Jones produced an outstanding run to claim the women's victory in 39:57, finishing 48th overall.

Dawn Andrews continued her consistently impressive start to the season with second place in 41:09 for Poole AC, while women's individual league leader Victoria Pye edged Bournemouth AC's Kitty Cook by just a single second for third.

Pye recorded 41:42, with Cook finishing fourth in 41:43 after another strong performance.

Home runner Jenny Marshall gave Purbeck Runners plenty to cheer about in fifth with 41:52, ahead of Egdon Heath Harriers' Ella Laird, who clocked 42:19.

Sally Miller led Dorchester RIOT home in seventh, narrowly ahead of Westbourne's Carys Gallagher, while Lauren Baker-Little and Phillippa Loakes completed Poole Runners' top three scorers.

Helen O'Neile crossed the line as the club's fourth scorer in 44:13, sealing victory for Poole Runners in the Ladies First Division.

Egdon Heath Harriers had to settle for second on this occasion, with Poole AC taking third, but the Egdon Heath Harriers continue to hold the overall advantage as they bid to wrestle the title away from the defending champions.

Purbeck Runners enjoyed a successful evening on home roads by winning the Ladies Second Division ahead of Verwood Runners, a result which lifts them to the top of the table.

Dorchester RIOT slip to second, while Bournemouth AC drop to fourth after being unable to field a scoring team.

Verwood Runners strengthened their promotion credentials by winning the Men's Third Division from Dorchester RIOT, moving into second place behind Purbeck Runners in what is shaping up to be one of the closest title races in the league.

Lytchett Manor Striders recorded a fourth victory of the campaign in the Ladies Third Division to enhance their promotion hopes, despite Bournemouth Joggers still narrowly leading the overall standings.

Attention now turns to the Blackmore Vale Half Marathon, where the second half of the Dorset Road Race League season gets underway. With soaring temperatures, relentless hills and a testing half marathon distance awaiting, the next chapter promises to provide another stern examination for clubs and individuals alike.

Many Thanks to Richard Brawn of BAC for writing