DORSET ROAD RACE LEAGUE

Weymouth 10 Race Report

County Championship Glory Contested as League Battles Intensify

The tenth race of the Dorset Road Race League season took runners to Weymouth for the ever-popular Weymouth 10, which also doubled up as the Dorset County 10 Mile Championships. With county medals up for grabs and plenty of league points at stake, there was certainly plenty to run for among the 280 competitors who took to the start line.

The course is predominantly flat, although runners have to contend with a challenging double loop around Bowleaze, which includes a particularly testing climb. It is a course that offers the opportunity for a fast time but certainly isn't without its difficulties.

With just two fixtures remaining after this one, the league tables were beginning to take shape, although there were still some important battles to be settled across all three divisions.

Poole AC had already wrapped up the Men's First Division title following their sixth victory of the season at Round the Lakes. The real battle was for second place, with Bournemouth AC and Twemlow Track Club closely matched. Further down the division, Wimborne AC and Egdon Heath Harriers were battling to avoid relegation.

In the Men's Second Division, Poole Runners were in pole position for promotion after claiming their fifth win of the season at Round the Lakes. Littledown Harriers were still very much in the hunt, though, while Westbourne, Lytchett Manor Striders and Dorset Doddlers were all looking nervously over their shoulders.

The Ladies First Division had developed into a fascinating contest between Egdon Heath Harriers and Poole AC. The latter had kept their title hopes alive with a win at Round the Lakes, but Egdon were still sitting pretty at the top. Wimborne AC, meanwhile, looked increasingly likely to be heading down into the Second Division.

Bournemouth AC were looking comfortable at the top of the Ladies Second Division, with Dorchester RIOT, Poole Runners and Littledown Harriers all needing a strong finish to the season if they were to have any chance of catching them.

There was also plenty of interest in the Men's Third Division, where Dorchester RIOT were leading the way, with Purbeck Runners and Verwood Runners still in contention. Verwood had given themselves a timely boost with victory at Round the Lakes.

The Ladies Third Division was rather more straightforward, with Lytchett Manor Striders having already confirmed promotion following their seventh victory of the campaign. There wasn't quite so much left to play for elsewhere in that division!

Dixon takes the honours

It was a runner from outside the Dorset Road Race League clubs who claimed overall victory, with Shaun Dixon of Bridport Runners producing an excellent performance to cross the line in 55:36.

Dixon was eligible for the Dorset County Championships and duly took the county title as well, although he was given a serious challenge by Lewis Clarke of Poole AC, who finished just 14 seconds behind in 55:50.

Matt Underhill of Egdon Heath Harriers claimed third place in 56:33, earning himself the bronze medal in the County Championships.

Nick Reynolds of Twemlow Track Club was next home in fourth place in 56:38. He had the consolation of taking silver in the Male Masters County Championship, with Dixon having already claimed the gold.

Rich White of Dorset Doddlers followed up his convincing victory in the Run to the Sea 50k with another impressive performance, finishing fifth overall. That was also enough to earn him the bronze medal in the Male Masters County Championship.

Jamie Barrington gave Egdon Heath Harriers another strong performance in sixth place, clocking 57:05, while Mark Savage was Wimborne AC's leading man in seventh with 57:24.

Fergus Johnson of Kent AC finished eighth in 58:55, with Jamie Hill of JH Running Club taking ninth in 59:09.

Completing the top ten was Gergely Arvay of Littledown Harriers, who recorded 59:11. However, he was actually seventh in terms of league points, with the three runners ahead of him not counting for the league.

Louis Verdi was Wimborne AC's second man home in 11th place in 59:29, while Steve Kellaway became Egdon Heath Harriers' third scorer, dipping under the hour in 59:59.

Damian Huntingford was Wimborne's third finisher and also managed to sneak under the hour on chip time, recording 59:59.

Bournemouth AC's Tom Casson was their first man home in 1:00:06, while Giles Heaman gave Egdon Heath Harriers their fourth finisher in 1:00:27. That performance also earned him the prize for first M50.

Harry Butcher was Bournemouth AC's second scorer in 1:00:35, finishing 16th overall and taking top honours in the Under-19 category.

Mark Peddle of Poole Runners took 18th place in 1:01:01, with Christian Rodiger of Littledown Harriers just behind in 19th in 1:01:08.

Joe Cherrett was Wimborne AC's fourth scorer, finishing 21st in 1:01:26.

Johnson leads the ladies home

Madeleine Johnson of Egdon Heath Harriers was the first female finisher, crossing the line in an excellent 1:01:37. That was good enough for 22nd place overall and, more importantly, the Dorset County Championship title.

Gill Pearson of Yeovil Town was the second female home in 1:04:52, although she wasn't eligible for a County Championship medal or league points.

The next female finisher was Niomi Hill of Egdon Heath Harriers, who recorded 1:05:52. She took second place in the County Championships, giving Egdon a particularly good return at the front of the women's field.

Dawn Andrews finished fourth female in 1:06:41, taking the bronze County Championship medal and also claiming the top prize in the Female Masters category.

Emma Mogridge of Dorset Doddlers was fifth female in 1:07:31, while Kitty Cook of Bournemouth AC came home sixth in 1:08:18.

Victoria Pye of Egdon Heath Harriers was seventh female in 1:09:06, which earned her the silver medal in the Female Masters County Championship.

There was more success for Egdon in the same category, with Ellie Laird finishing eighth female in 1:10:24 and taking the final Female Masters medal.

Sally Miller of Dorchester RIOT was ninth female in 1:12:45, just ahead of Miranda Aldridge of Verwood Runners, who completed the top ten in 1:13:12.

Egdon deliver on home territory

With the individual performances out of the way, attention turned to the team competitions, and there was some particularly significant movement in the league tables.

The biggest result of the day came in the Ladies First Division, where Josie Wait ensured the wait was over for Egdon Heath Harriers as they claimed victory on their home patch.

It was a massive result for Egdon in their bid for the division title, extending their advantage at the top of the table. Poole AC could only manage third place, with Littledown Harriers splitting the two leading contenders by taking second.

That was a particularly important outcome given Poole's victory at Round the Lakes, which had briefly threatened to make the title race a little more interesting.

The Men's First Division was already settled as far as the title was concerned, with Poole AC having done enough to secure the championship. They nevertheless had to settle for third place at Weymouth, with Egdon Heath Harriers taking the victory.

That was a hugely important result for Egdon, particularly with Wimborne AC finishing behind them. These were the two clubs battling to avoid relegation, so the result could hardly have come at a better time for the Heathens.

Wimborne had put up a decent fight, though, with Mark Burden completing their scoring five in 35th place in 1:04:20.

The battle for second place remains a much closer affair, with Bournemouth AC and Twemlow Track Club still very much in contention.

Littledown close in on Poole Runners

There was a significant twist in the Men's Second Division, where Littledown Harriers claimed victory ahead of Dorset Doddlers, with league leaders Poole Runners having to settle for third.

That was a terrific result for Littledown, who have now moved to within a single point of Poole Runners at the top of the table.

Poole Runners will therefore be looking over their shoulders with just two fixtures remaining. Having looked reasonably comfortable in their promotion bid, they suddenly have a genuine challenger breathing down their necks.

Dorset Doddlers also deserve credit for their second-place finish, which will have provided a welcome boost in their battle to stay in the division.

There was a rather different story in the Ladies Second Division, where Dorset Doddlers finally got their hands on a team victory, claiming their first win of the season.

They were helped by the fact that Verwood Runners were the only other club to get a team of three out.

Bournemouth AC, meanwhile, didn't manage to field a team. However, they had already done enough over the course of the season to confirm their position as Second Division champions and secure promotion to the top flight.

Dorchester RIOT, Poole Runners and Littledown Harriers will be left wondering what might have been, having all been chasing Bournemouth after keeping their promotion hopes alive at Round the Lakes.

Verwood turn up the pressure

The Men's Third Division produced another important result, with Verwood Runners claiming victory for the second consecutive fixture.

That moves them to within a single point of league leaders Dorchester RIOT, who had to settle for second place at Weymouth.

Verwood have certainly timed their charge well, and Dorchester will now be acutely aware that they cannot afford another slip-up if they are to hold on to top spot.

Purbeck Runners remain in the mix, although the immediate pressure is very much on Dorchester to respond.

There was rather less drama in the Ladies Third Division, where Lytchett Manor Striders had already confirmed promotion with their seventh victory of the season. Their excellent campaign has left the other clubs with little more than the battle for the remaining positions to contest.

The Ladies First Division was something of a different proposition at Weymouth in terms of team numbers. Royal Manor of Portland were the only club to get a team of three out, with just two other clubs managing to field even a single runner: Weymouth St Paul's Harriers and Gillingham Trotters.

Individual league battles

There were also some important developments in the individual league competitions.

Lewis Clarke's second-place finish was particularly valuable, as he was the first scorer for the league. It gives the Poole AC man a useful boost in his bid to catch Thomas Corbin, who continues to lead the Men's Individual Championship.

Clarke is still some way behind, but with two races remaining he has at least kept the possibility alive.

In the women's competition, Victoria Pye remains firmly in control. She has built up a substantial advantage over Dawn Andrews, who currently occupies second place, and it would take a remarkable turnaround for anyone to catch her now.

Next stop: Wimborne

The Weymouth 10 provided another excellent day of racing, with some outstanding individual performances and plenty of movement in the team competitions.

Poole AC may have already secured the Men's First Division title, and Bournemouth AC and Lytchett Manor Striders have done likewise in the Ladies Second and Third Divisions, but there is still plenty to be decided elsewhere.

Egdon Heath Harriers have strengthened their position in the Ladies First Division and given themselves a potentially decisive advantage, while Littledown Harriers have breathed new life into the Men's Second Division promotion battle.

Verwood Runners have also made their intentions clear in the Men's Third Division, and Dorchester RIOT will need to respond quickly if they are to protect their lead.

The next fixture is the penultimate race of the season, the Wimborne 10, where there will be another opportunity for clubs to strengthen their positions, settle a few scores and perhaps throw one or two more surprises into the mix.

With so much still at stake, the season is certainly building towards an exciting finish!