

DORSET ROAD RACE LEAGUE

RACE ONE OF TWELVE

The Junction Broadstone Quarter Marathon Race Report

The curtain raiser for the 2023 Dorset Road Race League saw the county's finest head over to Broadstone for the quintessential Quarter Marathon. Bringing with it much excitement and anticipation for what the next 12 months of racing will bring, it was shaping up to be a superb showdown on New Year's Day, with the clubs eager to start the season strongly.

After storming their way through the Men's Second Division, Twemlow Track Club were rewarded with a place in the topflight, enabling them to pit their wits against 2022 league champions Egdon Heath Harriers, along with the likes of Bournemouth AC, Poole Runners and Poole AC.

The Egdon Heath Harriers women began their title defence, looking to fend off strong competition from Poole Runners again.

With the league restructure now taking place in 2024, there will now be two clubs relegated from the top divisions this season which will make it an intriguing fight for survival.

The top three teams in the Second Division would also earn their place in the new look Second Division, with the two clubs that drop down from the upper tier. The rest of the clubs in the Second Division would then be left to form the new Third Division.

There was a lot at stake for every club in the league this season and getting off to a good start in the first race was vital.

A couple of interesting developments happened over the pre-season break. One was that Lonely Goat man Lewis Clarke, who has been winning races left, right and centre recently had signed for Poole Runners. That would be a massive boost to them and will certainly help their plight to stay in the topflight when it gets reduced to five.

The other one was the Poole AC finally managed to capture the signature of Thomas Corbin who has been ripping up Poole Parkrun for most of 2022 as well as impressing in other road races throughout the year. That could be a real game changer for them and could help put Poole AC back on the map after they almost ended up getting relegated last season. They were in the bottom two but the Dorset Road Race League postponed their plans for the league restructure to the following year, which saved them from the drop.

The course for the Junction Broadstone Quarter Marathon is quite testing, with the route entailing going up the dreaded Gravel Hill climb twice. It's not excessively steep but it's such

a long climb that it can really sap the energy out of you, particularly on the second time of asking.

It was in fact Lewis Clarke who stole the show, charging to victory in a time of 35:26. Thomas Corbin was hot on his heels though there was only two seconds in it in the end, with Thomas taking 2nd in 35:28. That underlined what a big impact those signings could make for their respective clubs.

Dom Willmore gave Poole AC their second man in the top three when he arrived 25 seconds later to seal 3rd place in 35:53. It was beginning to look like the resurgence of Poole AC could finally have come into fruition.

Reigning champions Egdon Heath Harriers weren't going down without a fight though and Christopher Peck arrived to take 4th place just a couple of seconds after Dom, registering a time of 35:55. Then Charlie Williams gave Egdon their second man on the scoreboard, taking 5th position in 36:48.

Steven Yates gave Twemlow Track Club their first finisher, crossing the line in 36:53, before Brian Underwood came in as Poole AC's 3rd scorer. He took 7th place in 37:19.

Jez Bragg claimed 8th place in 37:51 and put Twemlow Track Club's second scorer on the board before Chris Wood arrived to give them their third scorer, getting round in 37:58.

Daniel Thomas of Bridport Runners took 10th place in 38:01, although he wasn't running for a league club so that didn't count in terms of DRRL positions.

Liam Openshaw arrived to give Poole AC their fourth out of the five required scorers, crossing the line in 38:17. He came 11th in the overall standings and was in the 18-20 category for the league.

Jack Galloway was Twemlow Track Club's fourth scorer, recording a time of 38:26 which put him in 12th place. It was Bengy Williams who swooped in to seal the Men's First Division win in race one for Poole AC though.

Also in the 18-20 category, Benjy clocked a time of 38:27 and it was enough to give Poole AC a surprise victory that no one would have seen coming.

Steve Cook was Twemlow Track Club's 5th scorer, getting to the line in 14th place in a time of 38:28. That was enough to seal 2nd place for them in the Men's First Division and it also gave Steve 1st prize in the 50-59 category for the race.

Steven Rigby, also of Twemlow Track Club followed in soon after to take 15th place in a time of 38:52, although he wasn't part of the scoring five in the end. It showed that Twemlow do have the strength in depth to mount a serious title challenge this season though and they will be determined to do that.

Adam Davies finished 19th in 39:11 for Egdon Heath Harriers and Martyn Bell was 21st in 39:27. Matt Faramus came in in 32nd place to complete their scoring team which was enough to put them in 3rd place for the fixture. It wasn't quite the way they would have envisaged the first day of their title defence going.

Poole Runners had Joe Godden in 23rd place in 39:40, Hayden Clarke in 26th in 40:13, Mark Peddle in 30th place in 40:26 and Steve Claxton in 34th in 40:58. With Lewis Clarke winning, that was enough to put them fourth in the league for the race.

Littledown Harriers were 5th and Lytchett Manor Striders 6th, leaving the Bournemouth AC men languishing at the foot of the table. It certainly wasn't the way they would have wanted to open their account for the season.

Finishing as first female, Molly Rasch was back, showing she is still the quickest woman in the county. Her time of 39:30 put her in 22nd place overall.

Lauren Baker-Little of Poole Runners was the next lady to arrive, taking 57th place in a time of 42:58. Then it was Kate Wilkinson, also of Poole Runners coming in as 3rd placed female in 43:21. She was 60th overall.

Juliet Champion of Poole AC was 4th female in a time of 43:37, which put her in 62nd place overall and 1st in the 40-44 category for the league.

Louise Fox of Dorchester RIOT came in as 5th female in 43:37. That put her in 70th place overall.

Gemma Terry gave Poole AC their 2nd scorer when she crossed the line in 44:07 to take the 6th female spot. She was 73rd overall.

It was the defending champions Egdon Heath Harriers who put three scorers on the board first though. They had Julie Wargent in as 9th lady in 44:53, Alex Door 10th in 45:15 and Hannah Martyn 12th in 45:32.

When Jo Westhead came in as 14th placed female, that was enough to seal victory in race one for Poole Runners though. Jo completed the course in 46:22 which put her in 121st place overall.

That meant Egdon Heath Harriers had to settle for 2nd place on this occasion, with Poole AC in 3rd. Newly promoted Dorchester RIOT took 4th and the Bournemouth AC trio finished 5th.

In his last race before he begins his cancer treatment, Bruce Campbell crossed the line 1st in the 55-59 category, accompanied by his friend and teammate Paul Bullimore. They got round in 43:40 and 43:41 respectively.

Bruce is a popular figure amongst the Dorset running community and it will almost seem strange having races without him there going forwards. Bruce was arguably the backbone behind the rise of Egdon Heath Harriers over recent years and he will certainly be missed whilst he's off the circuit. Not just by them though but by members of all the clubs.

Hopefully his treatment will go well though and he'll return to full health afterwards. Fingers crossed he'll be back on the running scene too somewhere down the line. Bruce was asked to give out the awards for the 2022 season afterwards which was a very nice touch from the organisers.

Julian Critchlow of Purbeck Runners was 1st in the 60-69 category, finishing 29th overall in a time of 40:29. Julian is right at the top of the runbritain National Ladder for the V60 age category which demonstrates just how impressive it is to be running at the level he is, as an over 60.

There was also a Purbeck Runners winner in the Male 70+ category with Christopher Miller topping that chart. He got round in 50:15 which put him in 167th place overall.

His teammate Hamish Murray is in the 70-74 category for the league this season though and he was highest placed in that division, getting round in 45:11 which put him in 95th place overall.

Making it a vintage day for the Purbeck Runners super-vets, Nigel Haywood was 1st to finish in the 65-69 category for league. He registered a time of 50:08 which put him 164th overall.

Bournemouth AC man Ian Graham was first over the line in the 75-79 category for the league. He got to the line in 1:02:50 which put him 326th overall. Ian has featured in virtually every Broadstone Quarter Marathon for the past 30 years.

It was no surprise that Bournemouth AC lady Heather Khoshnevis was quickest in the Female 60-69 category. She completed the course in 51:22 which put her in 180th place overall and 36th woman.

Heather's teammate Debbie Lennon won the 55-59 category in the league last season but this year has moved up to the 60-64 age group. She topped the standings in that category, finishing in a time of 48:41. That put her in 146th place overall and she was 20th scorer for the league.

Barbara Murray of Purbeck Runners was 1st in the 65-69 category for the league, getting round in 58:39. That put her in 272nd place overall 52nd scorer for the league.

Linda Ashmore of Egdon Heath Harriers was 1st in the Female 70+ division. She clocked a time of 57:04 which put her in 251st place overall and 55th lady. She is in the 75-59 age group for the league.

The Men's Second Division saw a very close contest between Westbourne and Dorchester RIOT with Dorchester RIOT coming out on top by just two points. Purbeck Runners took 3rd place, meaning a disappointing start for last year's runners up Wimborne AC put them in 4th.

There's a long way to go though and still a lot of work to do for those teams vying to keep their place in the Second Division. They must finish in the top three to do so.

In the Ladies' Second Division Dorset Doodlers came really close to promotion last season, missing out by just two points in the end. They were back with a vengeance at Broadstone though and with Mollie Rasch spearheading their attack, they ran away with it.

Wimborne were 2nd in the standings but some way behind on points. Then it was a tussle between Royal Manor of Portland and Purbeck Runners for 3rd spot, with Royal Manor of Portland just shading it by one point in the end. Again, a top three place will be required to preserve Second Division status in 2024.

The next league fixture is the Lytchett 10 which takes place on 12th February over a popular, undulating country road route. It will be intriguing to see who can follow up on their successes of race one and who can improve their position in standings and stamp their authority down in race two.

The League is grateful to Richard Brawn of BAC for compiling their race reports.