

Report on Lexus Croydon 10k (Held 9th April 2006)

By Robbie McIntyre

Sunday's Croydon 10k saw Herne Hill Harrier Iain Lockett lead home 894 runners with one of the strongest performances seen at the event in recent years.

The 38-year-old completed the one lap course in 31.26, breaking a PB which had stood for over ten years and giving him a cushion of more than 30 seconds over Belgrave Harrier Richard Ward.

Ward finished as runner up for the second time in six months, frustrating for the 24-year-old Croydonian given that his time of 32 minutes was almost two minutes quicker than he had managed in October.

He said: "I thought I had a good chance to win it but didn't bank on someone as good as this guy turning up."

Third man home was Walthamstow AC's Nick Shasha, who smashed his PB with a run of 32.55. The 32-year-old put his strong showing down to his sensible race tactics, after containing his pace to let the leaders go early in the race.

The class of the field in the Women's race was 21-year-old Aldershot and Farnham District runner Alice Lethbridge. She returned from injury to run away from the rest of the women's field and give herself a boost before tackling the steeple chase in the upcoming track season.

Second woman home was Emma Harraden, who fought off 40-year-old Croydon Strider Helen Furze. Furze was not only the third placed woman but took victory in the Vets 35-44 category with her time of 39.58.

Behind Furze were Straggler's Juliet Cleghorn and South London Harrier Vivienne Mitchell, while the 45-54 category was dominated by Janet Ray from Dorking & Mole Valley. She finished comfortably ahead of Epsom & Ewell's Marilyn Gradden and Hastings Road Runner Jeanette Yeowell.

The Women's 55-64 age group was won by Bromley Vets AC member Anne Unseld, who had a massive lead over closest rivals Sue Lewis and Anne Harris.

Croydon Running Sister Brenda Ottewill could be proud to be the only lady in the Over 65s race, and ran well to finish with a time of 1:07.00.

The Junior Men's field was headed by Sutton and District AC's talented 17-year-old Harry Martin. He continued the good form he had shown in making the Surrey team for the English Schools during the cross-country season, narrowly missing out on his PB with 36.24.

Behind Martin there was good news for Croydon Harriers as their juniors Ben Robson and Terry Lapins were the next two finishers. Both smashed their PBs, Robson finishing in 36.58 and Lapins improving his best by three minutes to record 38.50.

Lapins will be running the London Marathon later this month and he looks to be in great shape to perform well. Both Lapins and Robson are part of Mike Fleet's training group and their progress can only bode well for the future of Croydon Harriers.

The Men's 40-49 category was won in style by Blackheath & Bromley's Nick Kinsey in 35.19, followed by South London Harrier's David Ogden. He was followed across the line by Colin Oxlade. Oxlade, a Croydon Harrier running for his first claim club Broxbourne Runners, overcame a cold to come home in 37.18.

The Men's 50-59 category was won by Croydon Strider Robert Ewan, ahead of Hailsham Harrier and former Croydonian Bill Fraser and fellow Strider David Batten.

The men in the 60-69 category had a strong field, led by South London Harrier David Newland ahead of Fred Green from Hercules Wimbledon. Making up the top three was Epsom & Ewell Harrier Philip Turley.

Vets AC dominated the Over 70s race as David Earl and George Frogley came in first and second ahead of James Betts.

In the 3k race, 12-year-old Archbishop Tenison's pupil Samuel Honey ran away with victory ahead of 13-year-old Croydon Harrier Scott Fanner. Fanner's training partner Zack Dennington also ran well to place sixth. First girl home was huge talent and budding triathlete, 14-year-old Emma Stevenson.

The team award went to the consistently strong Striders of Croydon, who had 50 runners competing on the day. Team Whitgift took the corporate prize, led by teacher and Croydon Harrier Duncan Byrne. Collecting the award Byrne said: "We look forward to competing against a Trinity team at the next race."

Amongst the strong performance by the leading runners, the Croydon 10k boasted its usual collection of characters raising money for various charities. Most notable was Neil Walsh, 34, who completed the course dressed as a pint of beer to raise money for PHAB Kids, a charity which looks after physically handicapped and able-bodied children.

Walsh now faces the challenge of completing 26.2 miles in costume at the London Marathon, and with the race taking place on St. George's day he hopes his outfit will induce those watching to raise a pint in celebration.

October's race saw the remarkable Claire Forbes complete the race, becoming the first person on two artificial limbs to do so. She has since become the British President of the Achilles Track Club, an organisation which encourages disabled athletes to take part in mainstream athletics. Unfortunately she could not compete, but, the Achilles Track Club were represented by cerebral palsy sufferer Lewis Fry, 15. He completed the course with the company of Eiffie Verboort, who had also accompanied Claire in October.

Thanks must once again go to Lexus Croydon Manager Peter West for sponsoring the event, to local Surrey Street running shop Runathon for their support in conjunction with New Balance and to Adidas and Waitrose of Croydon. The Wolff Clinic provided invaluable help with a warm up routine and massage, while the events of the day were helped to run smoothly by St John's Ambulance, 1st Selsdon and Addington Scouts and Croydon Lions.

Croydon Harriers again did a fine job of running the event in conjunction with Croydon Council Environmental Cultural and Sports Services, whilst Martin Rowe must take great credit for providing everyone with a great day.

Anyone who wishes to take part in the next Croydon 10k which also incorporates a 3k race for 9-14 yr olds in October will soon be able to find details at www.croydon10k.com.