

Worcester AC high jumpers start the 2014 indoor season flying high

This weekend saw the high jump squad from Worcester AC dust off their spikes and start the indoor competition season. 19 year-old Ella Gibbons, winner of the 2013 City of Worcester senior sports women of the year award and now a student at Loughborough University, started her season well jumping 1.71m at the Loughborough open competition on Saturday. With several good attempts at a personal best height of 1.76m, she promises to go much higher over the next month as she rounds into peak form for the major competitions.

On Sunday, there was a real sense of excitement at the first Midland Indoor Competition at the High Performance Centre in Birmingham as many of the UK's top high jumpers were competing. In the under 15 age group, 13 year-old Luca Lemon-Morgan jumped a personal best of 1.45m and 14 year-old Joel Khan jumped a personal best and club record of 1.75m, putting him at the top of the UK rankings in the age group for present. In the under 17 age group, Hannah Tapley jumped an indoor best of 1.60m and both Luke Southall and Cameron Edmunds jumped personal bests of 1.60m. In the under 20 age group, 17-year old Hakim Shepherd jumped an indoor best of 1.95m and had some excellent attempts at the milestone height of 2.00m, while Edward O'Hara jumped an indoor best of 1.80m. Worcester AC's high jump coach, Deirdre Elmhirst, said "I could hardly have wished for a better start to the season. The athletes have put in the hard work in training over the winter and it is starting to pay dividends. I want to express my thanks to the Royal Grammar School for supporting our efforts in providing an indoor training facility once a week."

The next few months see most of the athletes competing again at the Midland Indoor Championships and then at the National Indoor Championships. Coach Elmhirst said "Worcester AC is now considered a centre of excellence for high jump in England and I am very proud of that. These talented young athletes are a great credit to me and the club and some of them have a very promising future in the sport."

In addition to the high jumpers, there was a number of other Worcester representatives at the High Performance Centre. The hurdles events proved popular. Amongst the girls Molly Hanson and Abigail Gill ran in the under 17 and under 15 sprint hurdles races respectively, both of whom were making their debut with new hurdle specifications having moved up an age group since the summer. Abigail was doubly pleased with her time of 10.3 seconds as it bettered the qualifying standard for the England Age Group Championships by 0.2. Katie Harris also had a strong performance in the under 13 girls' sprint hurdles race, her time of 10.8 seconds consolidating her excellent performance at Cardiff the week before.

The only male Worcester hurdler was multi-eventer Ben Clarke who has clearly transitioned well to the under 17 age group, recording a time 9.41 seconds, over half a second faster than his personal best over the lower under 15 age group hurdles last year. Another multi-eventer taking part in advance of the England Indoor Combined Events Championships in March was Ellie Calderwood, who competed in the long jump.

Throws specialist Candy Lockett made a big impact in her debut for the club recording club records in the under 17 women's hammer (31.32 meters) and discus (25.23 meters). Candy also competed in the shot putt where she placed third to round off a busy day's activity. Also representing Worcester in the field events was Becky Donnelly, who vaulted 3 meters.