

Walton men finish as division 3 champions.

The final Surrey XC league match of the season took place on Saturday 10th February at everyone's favourite venue, Lloyd Park in Croydon. The rain held off and there were even some blue skies for the men's race but underfoot was typical of what we have come to expect of Lloyd park.

The first race of the day was the men's division 3 & 4. **Alex Kilby** travelled from Durham to take part and, showing he is a class apart, took the race victory by a huge margin of over two and a half minutes. Congratulations Alex, and thank you for ensuring that a Walton athlete has won at every fixture this season. A remarkable team achievement.

Men's team captain **Duncan Woolmer**, who has two race victories to his name this season, followed in 5th place with **Jani Kraner** only two seconds behind in 6th. With this 6th place finish, Jani secured the men's individual title for division 3, being the highest scoring athlete to complete all 4 races. Congratulations Jani, an excellent achievement in his first cross-country season for Walton. It goes without saying that Jani also claimed the M40 title too.

Our fourth Walton runner across the line was **Robert Smith** finishing in 8th (and 1st M35). Robert moved up to third in the individual league standings, helped by three top ten finishes from the four matches. **Alfie Pike** had a tremendous race and finished 20th, his highest placed finish of the season. This is Alfie's first cross country season and he also secured himself the U20 individual title. Congratulations Alfie.

A few seconds later **Mark Price** crossed the line in 22nd in his first race for Walton. Despite feeling unwell, Mark stepped up and secured valuable points for the team, thank you Mark. Again, just a few seconds later, **Oliver Coppellotti** crossed the line in 25th, providing another excellent score for the team, thank you Ollie. This means that of the top 25 finishers in this race, seven were Walton athletes, which is a better return than 1 in 4.

Chris Ness again showed his class, coming home in 40th, and 4th M50 on the day. This means that Chris finished 2nd in the M50 individual standings for the season. A brilliant effort and a valuable contribution to the team. Not far behind Chris in 45th was **Ben Harling**, who has had a great first season in Walton colours. Well done Ben. Our tenth scorer on the day was **Nicky Grobler** in 63rd, well done Nicky.

Next was the ever-reliable **Jonathan Hiorns**, who, despite being very unwell, turned up and ran for the team. Unfortunately, a fast start and being unwell got the better of Jonathan so he had to ease off and jog down to the finish. I am extremely grateful that Jonathan even turned up given the way he felt, and it is reflective of the commitment he has given the club over the past few seasons.

Christopher Coppellotti was next across the line in 107th, his highest finish of the season, well done on finishing strongly Chris!

On the day, despite the struggle for numbers, Walton finished second behind Stragglers of Croydon by 5 points. The only small blemish on what has been an excellent season, winning the first three matches, having an individual winner in all four matches, and being promoted to division 2 as champions of division 3.

It goes without saying that we cannot struggle for numbers when we are in division 2, our main priority next season is to be competitive and remain in division 2.

The final race of the day was the women's division 2 & 3 race. By now, the ground had been well and truly churned up, but thankfully, the rain had stayed away.

Three Walton runners toed the line and they put in quite a performance. **Alex Slotwinska** was the first Walton athlete across the line finishing 4th, adding to her 6th and 5th places in the previous matches, meaning Alex finished 4th in the individual league standings in her first season for Walton. Congratulations Alex.

Next, storming across the finish line in her highest individual finish of the season was **Michelle Tafili** in 9th. A brilliant finish to a very strong season. Well done Michelle. Women's team captain **Mandy Ruks** was next in 11th, meaning four top 20 finishes this season. Excellent race Mandy.

Despite only fielding three runners and being given a penalty score of 110 points for each of the two missing places, the team finished 8th of 22 teams on the day, which shows the strength of our ladies team. Overall, the team finished 11th in the league across the season. Proving that a full ladies team has a very realistic chance of promotion next season. Well done and congratulation for an excellent season.

Overall, it has been an enjoyable season for me as team manager and I hope that you have all enjoyed competing as much as I have. Let's ride this wave of success and carry it into the road season. Thanks to all the runners that took part in races this season, I look forward to seeing you all very soon.

Robert

Team Photos below



Walton Men (Missing Alfie who had to leave)



Men's race winner Alex Kilby



Walton Women



First Walton woman and 4th overall, Alex Slotwinska