

## **EKAC REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2020**

2020 was quite a year, with everyone experiencing massive changes in their lives in order to combat coronavirus. As a Club, we followed all the guidance from Governments and from Scottish Athletics and despite all the restrictions and event cancellations, we still managed to record some amazing performances throughout the year.

### **January 2020**

Early in the New year at the Scottish 3000m indoors Hannah Anderson continued her great season with 2nd place in the under 20 Women's race. Her time was not only a new PB, but an U20 club record and places her 8th in the Scottish all-time list for U20 women indoors. Not to be outdone, her brother Hamish also set a PB at the same event. Moving outdoors, to the Stirling Cross Challenge, we had 6 representatives selected for the District events. On her Scottish debut, Hannah Anderson came 10th in the home countries and 5th in the Celtic cross country championships. The U20 Scottish women's team also won the team competition in both championships. Aimee Anderson, Hamish Anderson, Grant Baillie, John Fergusson and Daryl Reid all had great runs in the inter district races, finishing well up in their district teams. In the open races the best results were from Euan Thorpe and Ben Baillie who finished an impressive 3rd and 4th respectively in the under 11 boy's event. Over December and into mid-January we had a number of indoor events at the Emirates Arena, including the Scottish Athletics Indoor League. Our athletes acquitted themselves very well and we should note a trio of indoor 60m hurdles Club records set at these events by Millie Aitken, Hannah Kelly and Calum Charters. Looks like good work by the hurdles Coaches! On 26 January the club competed at the Scottish Masters Road relays and we saw a great 1<sup>st</sup> leg by Grant Baillie who brought the club home with a 26s lead. It would have been difficult to hold that to the finish and the depleted team eventually dropped to 15<sup>th</sup> place, while the Over 50s team finished 10<sup>th</sup> in their event. On the same day, at the Scottish Indoor Senior & U17 champs, Amit Kumar jumped a personal best 1.94m for 4<sup>th</sup> place – tied on height with 3<sup>rd</sup> but losing bronze on countback. Hannah Anderson also placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the Senior Women's 1500m.

### **February 2020**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> February the traditional wet and windy weather greeted our Club XC Champs at Kirkland Park in Strathaven. 59 runners completed the races and we also had 6 in the sprint handicap. Our 2020 Club Champions were Matilda Frew and Euan Thorpe at U11, Aimee Anderson and Jonathan Hunter at U13, Leah Muirhead and Lewis Thorpe at U15, Hannah Anderson and Chris Cairns at U17, Rachael Thomson and David Ross at Senior and Kelly Baillie and Vincent Glennon at Masters. Meanwhile Jenna McNab won the sprint handicap, managing to avoid being blown sideways by the strong winds. The very next day, at the Emirates Arena, Calum Charters finished 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Scot at the National U15 Combined events pentathlon, setting PBs in ALL of his events. The following week we had the Scottish Masters XC Championships. Grant Baillie had another excellent run for 2<sup>nd</sup> M40 position. Kelly Baillie, Kay Conneff & Vivien Thorpe formed an EKAC Ladies team for the first time ever and finished in a great 6<sup>th</sup> place. Moving back indoors we had the U12 Superteams event on 12 February. There were superb performances all round, with all the athletes competing in all the events - Shot Put, Long Jump, 60m and 4x200m relay. Well done to Kara Lindsay, Carrie Charters, Olivia Baxter, Matilda Frew, Alex Nicol, Rory Charters, Christopher Paton and Zac Graham. The very next day, 5 EKAC athletes travelled over to Antrim for the prestigious International Road Races. Hannah Anderson placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the Junior Women's 3k in a PB while fastest of the men was Daryl Reid with a massive PB in the 5K. A total of 33 EKAC athletes contested the National cross-country on 22 February at Falkirk, braving some truly horrific conditions. The day's highlight was Hannah Anderson's 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the

U17 race, after a race-long tussle with the winner. The senior men delivered a great 10th place in the team standings, their best result since 1992, led home yet again by Grant Baillie in 42nd place and first M40 master. Hats off to Martyn Lynas, forced to run the whole 12k race in sodden, baggy, mud-caked trackie-bottoms because the draw-cord knot got inextricably tangled with the cord on his shorts. It was either run with both on or both off! The photos of everyone wading into the monster puddle in front of the club tent also brought smiles to faces.

### **March 2020**

Heading into March, Grant Baillie picked up the prize for 1st Male M40 in the Inverness half marathon, setting a new PB time of 69:14. The following week were the Scottish Young Athletes Road Race Championships at Greenock. There were great performances from the 11 young EKAC athletes entered but the pick of these was the dominant victory by Hannah Anderson in the U17 women's race, capping a great winter season for Hannah. That was just about the final competition for anyone in the club for quite some time. With Covid-19 cases rocketing, and anticipating lockdown, we followed Scottish Athletics' guidance and suspended group training from 17 March. For the first 2 or 3 weeks after that everyone was just getting used to the restrictions and waiting for any updates in the guidance. Coaches started providing training sessions that athletes could do on their own, or under parental supervision, as part of their daily allowed exercise. It was also suggested that athletes follow some of the TV or online exercise programmes.

### **April 2020**

Scottish Athletics then responded to the extended competition ban by organising a series of virtual runs, where athletes could upload GPS exercise files for a specified distance or time and compete in a virtual environment with athletes from all over the country. These Virtual Challenges were followed enthusiastically by many of our athletes, and while not the same as actual competition, they did provide something of a welcome focus. The first of these challenges, a 15-minute run, took place over the weekend of 24-27 April. EKAC came 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 68 clubs and Grant Baillie was 1st M40 (and 4<sup>th</sup> overall) with his distance of 4.86km. 2 weeks later we had a mile challenge and again Grant was 1<sup>st</sup> M40 whilst Hannah Anderson was 2<sup>nd</sup> U17 Woman. Grant followed this up at the end of May with another 1<sup>st</sup> place in the M40 category with a 9.25km distance covered in 30 minutes. His standout performance was probably a 15:05 5k clocking at the BMAF virtual relays at the beginning of July, where he was the leading Scot.

### **May – July 2020**

9 of our youngest athletes contested the Virtual Superteams multi-event competition in May. There were many great individual performances but only the boys finished a full team, in 21<sup>st</sup> place out of 75 teams entered. Indeed, many of our younger athletes competed in the virtual runs at the same time as the adults, running around local streets supervised by watching parents. This was exemplified mid-June when Stuart Macdonald organised for his Junior Middle Distance group to attempt the 1,744km Land's End to John O'Groats challenge, which they completed successfully. Not to be outdone by the youngsters, members of the Adult Training Group completed a virtual West Highland Way relay at around the same time. Despite reducing Covid infection rates, by now it was clear that most large-scale events were going to be cancelled for the rest of the summer. Following guidance, we were able to re-start training for some older groups in mid-July, provided group size and social-distancing measures were observed.

### **August 2020**

Moving into August we were able to get the Junior groups re-started from the 20<sup>th</sup>, training one day a week at Brancumhall due to the continued closure of the track. Around the same time we also got some sanctioned track racing courtesy of the National Open Series of events, albeit with limited numbers and

appropriate lane separation. The honour of the first non-virtual race finish went to Andy Coutts of the Sprint Squad who won his 60m heat in a time of 7.44s. A couple of days later, Greg Kelly, who had clearly been raring to go, set a great 150m club record of 16.05s at the same venue. He followed this up with wins in the next couple of weeks over 200m in 21.68 and 100m in 10.99. The 200m time is particularly noteworthy, as it is second only to his own club record. The track opened again on 25 August, but on a limited basis. EKAC got a 2 hour slot on Tuesdays for exclusive access, but subject to a maximum of 50 athletes and 10 Coaches being present at any one time. The Committee and Coaches reviewed this arrangement and assigned a defined training slot to each group to manage these number restrictions in a safe and effective way.

### **September 2020**

September saw a few of our older juniors get ready to move away to University and the Committee took the opportunity to award them with certificates for their services to the Club. In particular we awarded Hannah Anderson a Life Membership of EKAC in recognition of her performances and Scottish titles won throughout the year. Later in the month, in one of the few competitions going ahead, both Calum Charters and Daryl Reid set personal bests in the Monument Mile series. Calum took 6<sup>th</sup> place in his event in 4:55 while Daryl won his race in 4:26.

### **October 2020**

As the Winter season started, most competition events were cancelled. There were some glimmers of hope that one or two national events could go ahead in November or December, but with restricted numbers from each club. Accordingly, we began to organise some internal club races, to give all our athletes the chance to compete. The first one was a 4k relay event on 3 October, which attracted 22 Seniors and saw initial course records go to Grant Baillie with 12:42 and Sophie Smith with 15:09. This first event was pronounced a success so we organised another one the following week and opened it up to include young athletes as well, but over a 2km course. This one attracted 41 juniors and 26 seniors and was highly competitive. Fastest times were from Isla Telfer and Lewis Finlayson at U11, Carrie Charters and Ben Baillie at U13, and Aimee Anderson and Calum Charters at U15. In the Senior event Sophie Smith improved her previous time by 13s while Daryl Reid recorded a fabulous 11:52 for the 4k distance. Two weeks later we put on our 3<sup>rd</sup> event, the same 2k for the juniors, but a 4 mile cross country at the Showpark for the seniors. This time the fastest were Isla Telfer and Oisin Carlin at U11, Matilda Frew and Euan Thorpe at U13, and Aimee Anderson and Calum Charters at U15. In the Senior cross country there was a close battle between Daryl and Grant, with Daryl eventually prevailing, while Sophie Smith was a comfortable winner of the ladies race.

### **November 2020**

Our next event was the Scottish virtual 3000 / 1500m challenge, doubling as a qualifying event for the Scottish Short Course XC Championships. Organised by Niall Walker at the track on 10 November, we had 28 athletes in total and 14 of them qualified. Hannah Anderson, running in Edinburgh, came 10<sup>th</sup> in the country, and Aimee Anderson ran a great 3k to qualify in 11<sup>th</sup> place in the U15 category. Daryl Reid ran superbly in the men's race to record 8:34, the fastest 3k by an EKAC runner since 1993. Only a few days later, we held our second XC race of the season, this time extending the invitation to the juniors. Over a demanding muddy course at the Ballerup Recreation Area, we had 30 juniors and 20 seniors competing. Race winners were Sophie Eatherington and Lewis Finlayson at U11, Matilda Frew and Euan Thorpe at U13, Aimee Anderson and Calum Charters at U15 and Hannah Kelly at U17. Meanwhile, the senior mud-bath was won by Sophie Smith and Grant Baillie.

## **December 2020**

The beginning of December was marked by a new intake of young athletes, many of them at the U11 age category. Most events at this point were cancelled and those that did go ahead were subject to major restrictions. At the Scottish Short Course Cross-country Championships at Scone Palace grounds, entry was by invitation only, based on performances at earlier virtual events. Not all our qualified athletes travelled to Scone, but we were represented by Daryl Reid, 22<sup>nd</sup> in the Senior Men's race. In the absence of other events, we held a selection of cross-country races of our own at the Ballerup Recreation Area on 12 December. The conditions experienced by the 44 athletes were even more demanding (muddy) than the same event in November. The winners were Zoe Baillie and Harris Rosling at U11, Matilda Frew and Euan Thorpe at U13, Aimee Anderson and Calum Charters at U15, and Kelly Baillie and Vincent Hastings at Senior. As the track was closed, we held our Junior Christmas Handicaps on 19<sup>th</sup> December on a 1.24km course on the pavements next to the Strathaven Road. This was contested by a total of 40 young athletes. Winners of the U11 race were Erin McGowan and Jay Simpson, with the fastest times being set by Annie MacDonald and Harris Rosling. Emily Buchan and Cameron Martin were winners of the U13 race, while the fastest runs were by Matilda Frew and Rory Charters. Finally, the U15 event was won by Aaron Thomson and Lauren Brown, who also recorded the fastest times. We had 22 entrants in the Senior Christmas handicap, round the Auldhouse course, which was won by Chris Cairns by almost a minute from Luke Kirwan and Daryl Reid. Daryl set the day's fastest time of 20:34, despite, like everyone else, running an extra 150m round the roundabout at the final turn. Pushed on by a tussle with Aidan Gilbride, this performance made a sub-20 minute clocking look possible in future, on the correct course, given the right conditions.