

6 & 12 Stage Road Relays Birkenhead Park, Liverpool 25 March 2018

Report by Scott Boardman

After a last minute decision to put forward a men's team (thanks to the fantastic response to the late post) and some minor changes to the ladies team, 18 Barlickers made the trip to Birkenhead Park, Liverpool for the 6 & 12 Stage Road Relays. Compared to previous weeks, the weather on Sunday was fantastic. The lengths of the legs were significantly shorter than in previous years with the long leg around 8km and the short leg being only 3.9km, but with a fast downhill start - you couldn't help but get a little carried away with yourself

Women

Sarah Jarvis got the ladies underway, on the back of some injuries and came home in a very respectable 20th place (30:22), in what was a high calibre line up. Jacqueline Collins then ran the fastest short leg for the ladies team, continuing her strong running at a variety of distances with a time of 15:15 and gaining a place. Jen Hird then gained a further two places to move the ladies up to 17th as she continues to show progress on her return. Rachel Villiers then ran the second and last long leg for the ladies team, finishing in 31:23 and increasing the momentum to move the team up to 15th. Heather Driver and Victoria Peel concluded the ladies race to bring the team home in 18th position and comfortably qualifying for the finals by 5 minutes. In my opinion, this showed the strength of the ladies team, given some of the runners missing and the competition they were up against. Hayley Carruthers ran the fastest long leg for the ladies (Rotherham) in 26:42 as her team gained the silver medal and Claire Duck (Leeds City A) ran the fastest short leg in 12:33 on her way to winning team gold.

Men

Again, as with the ladies, after a few final alterations, Ray Edgar got the men underway in his last run in a Barlick vest, bringing the team home in 33rd position (26:01). He moves back to Lancaster and Morecambe next month. As I stood watching the runners come in, Marc Hartley turned into my own little commentary commenting on the high calibre of the runners and their personal bests along with it. James Tingle then followed up with the joint second fastest short leg for the team (13:12) and passed over to Lee Parrington who continued his form to take the team to 29th on the second long leg. Gary Shaw, a late call up (who explicitly declined my offer for him to run a long leg), showed his speed, matching James' time and taking 3 places in 13 minutes of running. It was great to have Marc back in the team on the third long leg, which he finished in 26:53. Then it was my turn, after "fathering" the team (strange at only 24), I felt I needed to deliver and brought back one place to bring the team close to the top 25 and qualification (13:26), I then passed over to Craig Shearer who after throwing everything down and vaulting the barrier (much to the female marshals disgust) made it in time for the changeover and went on to run the fastest long leg for the club (25:37 – 14th fastest on that leg overall). We stayed in 25th position for the next two legs thanks to strong runs from Lee Edwards, who was hunting my time down (thankfully I was faster!) and Chris Smale, recently returning from injury. James Austin a new character to the club made his relay debut after showing real improvement on the track, to run similar times to other members of the team and was followed up by Dan Balshaw who is returning to training. The strong point from the team was that short and long legs were all within 60-90 seconds of each other, with everybody working hard.

After front loading the team, I asked Ian Livesey to run at the last minute and this paid off. Finishing leg 11 in 27th place and missing out by a matter of a minute, Ian Livesey went on to run the fastest short leg for the club by over a minute and the 8th fastest out of all teams in a staggering 12:09, bringing the team home in 26th place and securing the final qualifying place for the Nationals.

Once again my thanks go to all the people that ran and to the men for coming forward at the last minute. Now my thoughts turn to a team for Nationals in Birmingham on 14 April.