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ATHLETICS: Club clinch first title after tense finale



Harrow AC celebrate their National League title win

Harrow AC crowned national champions

HARROW Athletics Club become National League champions for the first time on Saturday, after securing a hard-fought victory against local rivals Thames Valley Harriers.

The final match at the Alexander Stadium in Birmingham was a straight shootout for the coveted title, which the Harriers have held for the last four years.

And Harrow got off to sluggish start, with Harriers taking a healthy lead after the opening events.

However, as the results from track and field started to roll in with success after success, Harrow clawed back the deficit to move ahead.

They gradually stretched away to record what, on paper, appears

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a comfortable victory, but in reality was another arm wrestle with a resilient opponent, determined to keep a grasp their crown.

The Harrow team's determination saw them win 49-23 in a competition littered with international athletes.

Nia Wedderburn-Goodson (100m, 4x100), Nick Percy (discus), Poppy Malik, Rachel McCann, Adrien Coulibaly and Ioanna Andrei (400m, 4x400), and Joy Eze (100m) are all hoping to compete at the World Athletics Championships next month in Japan.

The outcome was a just reward for team manager, Tony Bush, after over half a century of commitment to the team, stretching back to the early 1970s when he entered the then Old Gaytonians AC into the basement of British league athletics for the first time.

Great Britain's Keely Hodgkinson set an 800m world lead at the weekend in her first race since winning gold at the Paris Olympics.

The 23-year-old returned to action in Silesia for the first time in 376 days in emphatic fashion.

Hodgkinson, whose return from the hamstring injury she sustained in February has been delayed by setbacks, set a new meeting record of 1:54.74 to finish well clear of Ken-

ya's Lilian Odira and Botswana's Oratile Nowe.

The Briton's time was her second-fastest ever - and the fastest by any runner since her victory in the 800m final at Paris 2024.

Hodgkinson is now setting her sights on the World Championships in Tokyo, which get under way on September 13.

"That was so much fun," she said after victory in a race which took place before Saturday's main Diamond League programme.

"I planned to run a fast time because I do not have five races any more before Tokyo, I only have today and the meeting in Lausanne.

"So it had to be fast and I am happy that it worked."

Stones boss Cox praises super-sub

WEALDSTONE WIN AGAIN TO SIT TOP OF NATIONAL LEAGUE TABLE



Nathan Tshikuna celebrates
Image: Jon Taffel

WEALDSTONE boss Sam Cox praised the impact of Nathan Tshikuna after the forward came off the bench to score the winner in the 2-1 victory at Woking on Tuesday, writes TOM NORTON.

Midfielder Max Kretschmar opened the scoring after 14 minutes from the penalty spot before the hosts drew level in the second half through Harrogate Town loanee Oliver Sanderson.

Cox then turned to Tshikuna, who was introduced in the 76th minute before grabbing a late winner to send the Stones to the top of the National League after three games.

"That's what he's been brought into the team to do. Not only that - he offers such an energy around the group, and he's such a bubbly, positive human being," said Cox.

"I said it from the first day of pre-season - I want good characters, good people in the group, and that's why Nathan's here. Whether he started on Saturday and he's come out the team today, Kretschmar has come in and put an incredible shift in. It doesn't matter who's playing; people are hungry to play.

"Tshikuna's come on, and he's got the winner. It's fully deserved, and I'm buzzing for him."

The visitors started well and took an early lead through Kretschmar's penalty, surviving a late first-half onslaught to go in 1-0 up at the break. Cox added: "They ran their socks off from minute one till the very end and fully deserving of the result.

"I gave them a massive pat on the back. I'm so proud of not just the quality but the grit they've shown. To come away from home off the back of their [Woking's] results, we managed the game so well."

Wealdstone host Carlisle on Saturday (5.30pm) before a Bank Holiday Monday trip to Boston United.