

2018-19 OUCCC Whole Club and Women's Team Report

Helene Greenwood-Club Captain

The 2018-19 cross-country season has been yet another hugely successful one for OUCCC. Focusing on the club as a whole, the two main highlights were without a doubt our overall Varsity Victory and our fantastic results at BUCS. Going into the 2018 Varsity Races, we were optimistic about our prospects, but were also aware that to win the overall Varsity Challenge with the Seconds-Fourths races being held away in Cambridge, was going to be no easy feat. With the Oxford Men's Seconds Team winning their race, our 3-2 victory at St Neots ultimately came down to the superb strength and depth displayed by both of our Mob Match Teams. To win both Mob Matches at an away Seconds-Fourths Match was nothing short of an incredible achievement, and something that had not previously been achieved by the Dark Blues in a considerable length of time. Aside from results, this year saw the introduction of the inter-gender Facebook group chats for coordinating easy runs between members. Currently in use on a daily basis, I feel that they have really helped to foster some great team bonding within the club, as well as to break down any lingering gender divide previously present when most easy runs were organised on the gender-specific group chats. Our OUCCC Cross-Training Facebook group was also launched, as a way to promote cross-training of all forms amongst club members, both injured and non-injured. Whilst it was a good first step towards helping people to avoid and manage any injuries, I think that there is scope to do a lot more with this, perhaps in the way of sharing specific cross-training workouts on the group.

Turning to look at the Women's side of the club, it's in a stronger position now than it ever has been. This may not initially appear to be the case with Oxford having won neither the Women's Blues nor Seconds races at Varsity, but injury struggles hampered the Blues in the final few weeks of the run-up to the race and they were ultimately beaten by a faster Cambridge team. The Cambridge Women's Seconds Team was also incredibly strong, with half of their eight being previous Blues Team runners. Whilst our Seconds athletes packed well, they were that bit adrift of the Cambridge women, with Caroline Shipley being the only Oxford runner to break up their leading group, coming home first in second place overall. The fact that we had more women in our Mob Match team than Cambridge did at an away Varsity was testament to the very high number of women we have participating in distance running at Oxford. With only one member of the current Women's Blues squad leaving at the end of the academic year, the Oxford women should have their sights firmly pinned on regaining both the Blues and Seconds Varsity titles, and defending their Mob Match crown. With February came the 2019 BUCS Cross-Country Championships, where the Oxford Women proved that they are more than capable of competing against some of the country's top sporting universities, improving on their 2018 5th place position to come a brilliant 4th place. Congratulations to our scorers Eleanor Bolton, Charlotte Dannatt and Flo Scrafton, all of whom will still be here next year, and who are undoubtedly capable of challenging for a team medal.

This year's Cross-Country Varsity Match saw the introduction of selected women's teams of eight, with six to score, in both the Blues and Seconds teams, bringing them in line with those of the Men. Considering the high numbers of female members we have, indeed last year the OUCCC membership balance stood at 45% female to 55% male, this is a change that I feel was very much overdue. With gender equality in athletics remaining a topical issue, the question again arose last autumn as to whether or not we should increase the distance of the Women's Blues Varsity race from 4 miles to

5miles. This would be to both bring it in line with the distance run by the Senior Women at the National Championships and to reduce the disparity between the Men's and Women's Blues Varsity course, for which the Men's is almost double that of the Women's at 7.5miles. With this question having come up every year since 2015, it is unlikely to simply go away, and whilst the majority of both Oxford and Cambridge Women's teams were in favour of keeping the distance at 4miles this year, this may not be the case in future years. Should the distance be increased, it has been suggested that the fairest way to implement this would be to set the year for the change to be three years following the decision, so as to avoid any biased views founded on the current women's squads at both universities. There are valid arguments for both increasing the race distance and keeping it as is, meaning that at present it is difficult to see how this issue will be resolved in the future.

Focusing on a few individual performances amongst the OUCCC women, Charlotte Dannatt earned her first international vest off the back of her 2017-18 cross-country season, being selected to represent England at the Trofeo Opitergium U20 International Road Race in Oderzo, Italy in May, winning a team silver medal in the process. More recently, Eleanor Bolton has made truly phenomenal progress over the course of this year's cross-country season, coming 6th in the Blues Varsity race as our second Oxford scorer, an impressive 10th place overall at BUCS as first Oxford runner home, and winning the U20 Women's Northern Championships race. Both Charlotte and Eleanor concluded their cross-country seasons with excellent 7th and 8th place finishes respectively at the ECCA English National Championships last weekend. To name a few more individual successes, Anna Sharp has also come on leaps and bounds since last year, earning a silver medal at the U23 England Athletics Championships in the 3000m steeplechase and winning the Le Touquet Baton trophy for the most improved athlete at 2018 Athletics Varsity Match. A special mention must also go to Fresher Alex Shipley who won her first ever race with the club outright when she took the 2018 Women's Cross-Country Cuppers crown. The women's side of the club is in an extremely healthy place at present, and I'm sure that it will continue to go from strength to strength over the coming years. It's been a real pleasure to captain the highly talented, motivated and enthusiastic women of OUCCC for the past year. Full Blues were awarded to Eleanor Bolton, Charlotte Dannatt, Laura John, Hannah Plaschkes, Floren Scrafton, Anna Sharp and Alexandra Shipley. A Half Blue was awarded to Ella Sharrock.

2018-19 OUCCC Men's Team Report 2019

Oliver Paulin-Men's Captain

Firstly, many apologies for not being able to be there this evening, I hope the meeting isn't too long for you all, and am looking forward to hearing who is elected to the new committee.

Overall, we have had a very successful season on the men's side, winning three out of four Varsity matches as well as both team and individual medals at BUCS, and perhaps more pleasingly have seen lots of individuals make huge strides forwards with their running, which bodes well for the future.

With only two of last year's Blues team leaving at the end of last year, and with Tim Lefroy and Luke Cotter returning from injury, our team were always going to be favourites to retain the Varsity title

we won last year. On top of an already strong team, the huge improvements shown by Noah over the Summer and Tim over the course of Michaelmas, coupled with Cambridge unfortunately losing Ollie Fox to GB selection, resulted in a comprehensive victory for our Blues team at Wimbledon Common, with 5 of our runners coming in before Cambridge's second, a mightily impressive performance against a team who have now won successive BUCS silver medals, and the result of everyone fully committing to the Varsity campaign despite other personal targets. A special mention must go of course to Jamie for showing his class once again to secure back-to-back individual victories.

In the second's match, we continued our recent domination to win for the fourth year in a row, and put 5 runners in the top 7 for the third year in four, with our vastly superior experience (with a median age of 23) proving too much for the Cambridge team. Unfortunately, the thirds just missed out on their first win in four years, but there were a number of very strong performances in a close defeat which bodes well for future years. Arguably the highlight of the 2nds-4ths match, however was the victory in the mob match. I don't know when we last won an away mob match, and both the quality and quantity of runners we had out is a great testament to all of the hard work put in by captain PG over the course of the term.

As usual, the highlight of Hilary term was BUCS. Although we did not take as many people as last year, we still performed very strongly, despite a number of injuries reducing the strength of our top end, and thus depleting our depth in the B race. The A team won another bronze medal behind St Mary's and Cambridge (without the need for an admin slip this time), making a mockery of the pre-race predictions of some. Individual highlights in this race were of course Will showing the form that we all know he's capable of with a perfectly paced (of course) 4th place, and Jack recording another top 10 finish. In the B race, Noah showed the benefits that four massages a week can bring to collect a sensational silver medal.

At both the Armagh 5k and the National XC Champs, we had a reasonable number of athletes competing again, with Noah leading the way in both. Highlights of these races were having 6 men under 15 minutes in Armagh, 4 in the top 40 in the Senior National and Tim's 12th place in the U20 race at the National.

Looking forward, with potentially 6 of our Blues team and much of the seconds team leaving this year, we may of course struggle manage to hit some of the heights that we have hit in the past few years next year. In my four years here the standard of our squad has been as strong as it has been in a long time, and the time was always going to come when the core of runners which have served us so well recently were going to leave, but with this sort of 'ending of an era' comes a whole raft of opportunities, and I have every confidence that many of you in this room can seize these opportunities, and lead OUCCC forwards to a very successful few years ahead.

Full Blues were awarded to Jamie Parkinson, Tim Lefroy, Jack Millar, William Christofi, Tim Harrison, Luuk Metselaar, Luke Cotter and Noah Hurton.