



Oxford University Athletic Club News - Hilary Term 2023

Trinity 2023 Events

148th Varsity Match - *Wilberforce Road, Cambridge* - Sunday 7 May

Iffley Festival of Miles - *Iffley Road, Oxford* - Saturday 3 June

UPenn & Cornell vs Oxford & Cambridge - *Iffley Road, Oxford* - Wednesday 21 June

Harvard & Yale vs Oxford & Cambridge - *Wilberforce Road, Cambridge* - Wednesday 28 June

Iffley Festival of Miles

Restarted post pandemic last summer, the Iffley Festival of Miles, organised by OUCCC will be held on Saturday 3 June. This is a series of graded mile races with two elite invitational races in which the field will be expected to run under 4:00 for men and 4:36 for women. There will also be a visually impaired mile. Only eight people have ever dipped under the four minute barrier at Iffley Road and with a high quality elite field this could well be broken again this year. It would be great to see some alumni present on the day – competing or spectating. More details on signing up are on Open Track.

John De'Ath MBE



Oxford University Athletic Club is saddened to hear of the passing of Air Commodore John De'Ath MBE. John was a long time Senior Treasurer and also the Archivist of OUAC, as well as Vice-President of Achilles Club. His service to the club over the past four decades was immeasurable, and his contribution to the club will continue to live on for many years to come. We are grateful for the support he has given to so many cohorts of OUAC athletes over the years.

FEAR 2023

Lee Valley, 11 February

A team of 85 Oxford athletes headed to Lee Valley Athletics Centre determined to build on our strong start to the 2022-3 season after dark blue domination at Freshers' Varsity. We knew this would not be easy, with Cambridge fresh from winning three medals at BUCS cross country and all to play for.

This year, for the first time, as well as the four individual competitions (women's field, women's track, men's field and men's track)



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an overall winner was announced. This was decided by which side won the majority of the 28 events. In the event of a draw the current holder would retain the trophy. Taking wins in three of the four individual competitions, Oxford dominated the event to win in style. Cambridge is tough competition and a strong performance means the team can look towards Varsity this summer with confidence and momentum on our side.

Overall Result → Oxford 20 - 8 Cambridge

Women's Track → Oxford 6 - 0 Cambridge

Our 60m hurdlers have a long winning streak, kept alive this year with the help of OUCCC Women's Captain, middle distance runner and occasional 400m hurdler Charlotte Buckley at the start of a busy day. Our middle distance women's squad is our strongest ever and did not disappoint, winning the 4x800m by nearly a minute. Our sprinters backed this up with a win in the 60m and a narrow victory in the 4x200m, before joining forces with middle distance to pick up the 4x400m win too. Determined to take the clean sweep the women ended on a high with a record breaking distance medley relay performance.

Women's Field → Oxford 5 - 2 Cambridge

With strength and depth in Coach Lesley Bryant's heavy throws squad the ladies did not disappoint, winning the discus, shot put and hammer throw, where Captain Phoebe Baggott led from the front by rewriting her own meeting record to 54.17m. Our javelin win of 3m was a true team performance with BUCS 1500m medallist Alex Shipley leading the way and coming second overall, her experience as an U15 English Schools javelin thrower once again coming in handy. A loss in the pole vault was the first of the day for our strong women's team along with one more in the high jump. Strong wins in the triple jump and long jump completed the field competition.

Men's Track → Cambridge 4 - 2 Oxford

The track kicked off with the tightest event of the day and a win by just 0.03s for OUAC's 60m hurdlers, backed up by a 4x400m win anchored by President Isaac Rushworth. The next few track events were less successful with a defeat in the 60m and a 4x200m disqualification after a tight win setting us back a couple of points. A recent trip to Armagh International Road Race had proved successful but unfortunately wiped out much of our middle distance team who were sadly absent in the 4x800m and medley relay leading to a Cambridge win overall.

Men's Field → Oxford 5 - 2 Cambridge

Following a solid win in the discus, the high jump squad (including a past English Schools Champion) backed them up with four half blues standards and 180-5cm performances. World Junior Championship finalist and OUAC fresher Michael Allison did not disappoint, throwing 63.88m for a new match record in the javelin and leading the team to another win. Determined to keep the winning streak alive, our throwers followed this up with wins in the shot put and hammer throw. With two closely matched squads facing off, the horizontal jumps ended with a win in the triple jump but a loss in the long jump.



BUCS Indoors 2023

Lee Valley, 24-26 February

The British University Championships is always a highlight of the indoor season. A small but strong OUAC team headed up to Sheffield, gaining two medals, reaching four finals and putting in a host of promising performances.

On Friday, our day began with the 60m, where Jake Watson cruised through the heats and later just missed out on the final, equalling his speedy PB of 6.92s which puts him joint first on OUAC's all time rankings. In the ambulant 60m, Ewan Richardson had a strong run, just shy of his PB with 9.88s. The 800m heats followed, where Vice Captain Catherine Gallagher and speedy fresher Ella Fryer breezed through their heats, with the semis to come on Saturday. In the field, Chimdi Okpalauko just missed out on the shot put final, whilst Iris-Mae Morse hopped, skipped and jumped to an indoor PB.



The following morning Miles Weatherseed and Alex Shipley cruised through their respective 1500m heats, whilst Tom Barrett came up just short. In the long jump Dan Hooker's jumpers were again out in force, with Vice Captain Adam Coates and Ollie Bazin missing out on the final but OUAC's own Brookes athlete Toby Hiller securing himself a spot. Just adjacent to this, Ayman El Amrani leapt to a massive 7cm PB in the high jump with 1.88m, just outside the 12 qualification spots.

Christiana Agustin made her BUCS debut in the 3000m and Charlotte Buckley ran strongly to make the 400m semi-final. Alex demonstrated another front running masterclass to comfortably make the 1500m final, whilst Miles cut it a bit finer, getting through with just 0.01s to spare.

The highlight of the day however came in the pole vault, where former Captain Jake Watson was back in action and successfully defended his BUCS title with a vault of 5.03m, capping off his strong indoor season after fully returning from injury.

The final events of OUAC interest were the 1500m finals, with Alex up first. With a gutsy performance, Alex took the opening laps out hard, quickly distancing herself and one another athlete from the rest of the pack. The bold strategy paid off, allowing her to cling on in the final few laps to achieve a terrific BUCS silver. Miles followed in the men's final and ran a formidable race, finishing just shy of the medals in 5th place.

All in all, it was an extremely successful weekend for OUAC and promise of a tremendous outdoor season to come.

Adam Coates
Men's Vice Captain 2022-3



Para-Athletics at Oxford

In an alumni mailout in 2020 where we announced OUAC's para-blues standards, we declared our aim to make Varsity an inclusive event. We are delighted to have an update on progress here from Polly Maton who has been instrumental in this effort. Polly competed on an equal footing in the Achilles US Tour this Easter using the new equivalency points system – which will also be used for the first time at Varsity next weekend.



My name is Polly Maton and I am a para-athlete specialising in the T46 long jump, as well as an Oxford graduate of 2022. During my degree, OUAC and, more broadly, Achilles, have done some incredible work to ensure para-athletes of the future are included in the incredible traditions of Oxbridge athletics.

In 2019, para-blues standards were brought in by OUAC, enabling those from any para-classification to have equivalent standards to aim for. This was a fantastic first step, enabling equal recognition for disabled and non-disabled peers alike for their sporting achievements on an objective basis. OUAC was the first to do it and indeed inspired other clubs, most notably OUSC, to bring in para-standards themselves.

There was, however, still the issue of Varsity. Anyone who has had anything to do with the match knows what a special experience the day is for student-athletes, many treasuring it even after a long athletics careers outside of university. The opportunity to compete is – of course – hard fought, but there was a need to allow disabled athletes to have an equal shot. The system enabled para-athletes to compete only if beating the times or distances of their non-disabled fellow athletes – while not officially disallowed, they were put in an undeniably unfair position.

However, while the issue was clear, the solution was not. The conventional means of para-inclusion would have followed a BUCS format, where disabled athletes had their separate para-events. However, with an inconsistent number of disabled competitors year on year, such events at Varsity stood to be uncompetitive and, crucially, could not count towards the official points total. A new approach was hence taken: an equivalency table, which, following the principles of the 'Raza points' table used for disabled competitors, enabled a way to calculate equivalent performance between para-athletes and their peers. The importance of this cannot be understated. As far as I am aware, this marks the first attempt to completely integrate para and non-disabled athletics events, potentially paving the way for inclusion nationally and internationally.

Indeed, the 2023 Achilles US Transatlantic Series tour was the first in its history to include para-athletes on an equal footing using such a system and, moreover, the first international competition of its kind. Varsity this summer will mark the first use of the table on a national basis.



I would like to give my upmost thanks to everyone who supported the para-blues and equivalency system. OUAC and Achilles have been the first to do many things, and I am so personally proud they can now be said to spearhead a new path to ensure para-athletes get equal opportunities and recognition. Myself and many para-athletes of the future are utterly indebted to you. Thank you.

Polly Maton