



Photo by Patricia Mead

Above: Having competed for St. Lucia in the Melbourne Commonwealth Games back in March, 19 year-old Darvin Edwards came to England and with high jump maestro Trevor Llewellyn, set about totally rebuilding his technique. He had planned to go to the United States this winter but Darvin is staying in Britain and should be a huge asset to our British League teams in 2007.

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## Track & Field

Golden Jubilee Cup Semi-Final, TVAC Eton, 30 July 2006

### Bels ease into the Cup Final

A hiccough in 2005 kept us out of the final – and therefore left us un-seeded for 2006. That made for an interesting pre-match draw to see which clubs would face each other. Belgrave's token was one of the last to be drawn from the bag – and there was a muted groan from some of the assembled team managers as Windsor's Dennis Daly announced: "Team 6 – Belgrave Harriers – will be in match 1." At least the opposition thought we were certain to make it through to the final this time.

#### *Un-seeded - but still the team to beat*

The men's line-up was hit by the withdrawal of Phil Wicks – suffering from shin splints – while the women missed Eva

Massey – a competitor in the Throwsfest the previous day where her car had been broken into and items stolen.

It was an early start for the field eventers. Long jumper Richard Danso was making big efforts but that plasticene strip was acting like a magnet for his take-off foot, while Diana Holden, short on training, was giving a solid start in the hammer. Vertical take-off men Cameron Johnston and Darvin Edwards were meanwhile sitting out the early heights in pole vault and high jump.

Track events kicked off with the 10,000m and Simon Jones, deep into half marathon training, sat in the bunch for the first lap before it was obvious that nobody else was going to take up the pace. He moved ahead and 37 minute pace became 33 ... and then 31 as he wound it up and went further and further away.

Matt Douglas and Hannah Stares wrapped up the long hurdles events, the 800s were good with a 2nd from Chrissie Foster and a blistering last lap from Shugri Omar, and when news came from the field that Richard had got it together in the long jump and Cameron was equal first in the pole vault, suddenly the Bels were a dozen points clear.

Mick Jones arrived just as the hammer started and with no warm-up throws, his first effort went wide of the sector. But that one sighting shot was all that he needed and his next

effort took him into the lead. As usual at TVAC, the discus throwers were relegated to the outside of the arena where Scot Thompson's 47.30m was good for 2nd.

In his first big competition for the Bels, Darvin Edwards was talking about coming into the high jump at 2.05; that got talked down to 2.00m by "management" but he was comfortably over and up to 2.15 before he had any problems.

A third attempt was necessary but then minutes later, in his first try at the height, he soared over 2.20m to take the lead. Two of his trials at 2.25m were oh! so close. Not yet 20, Darvin competed for St. Lucia in the Commonwealth Games but is now living in London and benefiting from the coaching of Trevor Llewellyn.

### **Multi-eventer Julie had a busy schedule**

Julie Hollman had a busy schedule, winning the long jump by getting on for a metre, taking 2nd in both shot and javelin which were held simultaneously, and then moving on to the sprint hurdles. Fiercely competitive, Julie really went for it over the barriers and was streets ahead until she hit the last one a corker and so nearly fell. Somehow our ace multi-eventer kept upright and had enough momentum to cover the final stretch and stay ahead, crossing the line with her ankle buckling beneath her. It was a brave finish – but there was no way she could be put at risk with further action so the relays would have to do without her.

Also in plenty of action, Jennifer Culley was 2nd in the 100m and 3rd in the 400m, both with good times – but in each case our blue and yellow vested rivals from Windsor took maximum points. Darren Chin also suffered at the hands of the local club as youngster Rion Pierre ran an extraordinary 10.39 with the wind speed being variously reported as 0.0 and 1.2mps; in truth there was no wind reading at all but it was probably around 3.0mps. Ryan Thomas wasn't having anyone in front of him, however; he romped away from the men's 400m field and was stronger than anyone in the home straight.

The scorers had us around 25 points clear but this was no runaway victory as Windsor kept nicking a few back and with Pete Willis (preferring something longer) and Sarah Gailey (preferring something shorter) giving their all but running at unfavoured distances the gap came down to less than 20 – and we still hadn't got a male 1500m competitor sorted out. But we worried needlessly: already winners of earlier events, Matt Douglas was untroubled in the high hurdles and Shugri Omar stepped into the vacant 1500m slot – two more maximums. And as if it was expected that we might be in trouble, the cavalry arrived in the form of Tim Benjamin and Mark Lewis Francis, roaring into the car park on quad bikes – and expecting to train. Ok, we couldn't offer anything to Birchfield's MLF but Jason Hussain very graciously accepted a non-scoring role in the 200 to allow Tim to have a workout instead; some workout – 20.93, albeit windy.

David Wellstead was unable to go with Windsor's international Julian Golley in the "triple" but his 14.66w was a best ever and Michelle Nestor matched his position in the women's competition – this time ahead of our rivals. Still afflicted by knee problems, spear man James Everard was unable to reach out to the 60m arc that he breached several times earlier in the year – but it was another win – and he has an operation scheduled at the conclusion of the season.

Always impressing with her "gutsy" performances Catherine Bryson could do nothing about Hayley Yelling, who ran away from the 1500m field, but there was no way that she'd let anyone else go ahead and fought hard for her 2nd place.

After a long wait shot putter Chris Gearing moved into action in the last field event of the day. He'd set a season's and outdoor best of 17.17m the previous day in the Throwsfest at Birmingham and another improvement would have been nice.

But with the next best thrower over three metres in arrears, 16.97m proved to be a very acceptable winning mark.

Veteran Bruce Barton filled in at steeplechase – his final race before setting off with his family for Australia for a year – and as a result we made more ground on our rivals. Then, not seen in our teams for a while, we welcomed back Caroline Wilson – a solid 200 was followed by two great relay runs.

Tortured by mental arithmetic, the team managers were rescued by the announcer just before the relays, informing that Belgrave were 30 points ahead. We'd have to have several disasters in the relays to lose now. The girls were good! Even with Julie Hollman the sprinters would never have beaten Windsor so were very well pleased with their second place – and in the four lap event they went even better – clearly winning and setting a season's best. Led off by Ian Deeth who gamely came along just to run the relays, the 4x100 men were headed by Windsor – who were then dq'd. But anything Windsor could do, we could do better and celebrations at "winning" the 4 x 400 were cut short by those dreaded and remarkably familiar words: "Would the Belgrave Team Manager please report to the Track Referee." Sure enough an obstruction after a takeover meant "nil points" for the long relay boys – and a winning margin of 38 points came down to 23.

**Men.** 100m: 2 D Chin 10.59/nwi. 200m: 1 T Benjamin 20.93w/4.0. 400m: 1 R Thomas 48.1. 800m: 1 S Omar 1:53.49. 1500m: 1 S Omar 3:57.49. 5000m: 5 P Willis 16:20.60. 10000m: 1 S Jones 31:21.59. 110mH: 1 M Douglas 14.50/1.3. 400mH: 1 M Douglas 50.60. 3000mSC: 5 B Barton 10:50.08. HJ: 1 D Edwards 2.20. LJ: 1 R Danso 7.03/0.4. TJ: 2 D Wellstead 14.66w/3.1. PV: 1= C Johnston 4.40. SP: 1 C Gearing 16.97. DT: 2 S Thompson 47.30. JT: 1 J Everard 56.99. HT: 1 M Jones 64.14. 4x100m: 1 Belgrave 41.75 (I Deeth, J Hussain, D Chin, T Benjamin). 4x400m: dq Belgrave (M Douglas, S Osho, J Hussain, I Deeth).

**Women.** 2 J Culley 12.47/nwi. 200m: 3 C Wilson 25.56. 400m: 3 J Culley 56.9. 800m: 2 C Foster 2:20.63. 1500m: 2 C Bryson 4:38.17. 3000m: 6 S Gailey 11:05.03. 100mH: 1 J Hollman 14.73/1.3. 400mH: 1 H Stares 59.95. HJ: 4 H Stares 1.55. LJ: 1 J Hollman 6.06/-1.3. TJ: 2 M Nestor 10.67/nwi. PV: no competitor. SP: 2 J Hollman 12.23. DT: 4 D Holden 29.23. JT: 2 J Hollman 38.71. HT: 3 D Holden 47.47. 4x100m: 2 Belgrave 49.78 (C Foster, C Wilson, H Stares, J Culley). 4x400m: 1 Belgrave 3:51.80 (C Foster 60.0, H Stares 58.3, C Wilson 56.9, J Culley 56.7).

**Match:** 1 Belgrave 270; 2 Windsor SE&H 243; 3 Woking 175; 4 Epsom & Ewell 153; 5 Exeter 152; 6 Medway & Maidstone 134; 7 Swindon 106; 8 Bournemouth 92

### **George as active as ever**

An extract from a local paper in the Canvey Island area: "Castle Point mayor presented prestigious awards to the Borough's community stars.

George Beecham, who chairs Canvey branch of the RNLI, won the Mayor's Award. During his seven years as chairman he has raised thousands of pounds in lifeboat day collections, at house to house collections and manning stalls at fetes.

For many years he has run The London Marathon in aid of the RNLI and the National Asthma Campaign and devotes much of his time to coaching young athletes at Waterside Farm Sports Centre."

George was a stalwart member of our walking teams of the 1950s and 60s specialising in long distance events despite suffering periodic bouts of asthma which affected his performance. He captained the team to many triumphs and still turns out on occasion - including an annual trip to Holland where he thinks nothing of completing 50kms on each of 4 successive days!

## Golden Jubilee Cup Final - a fist full of aces ... but no winning hand



Photo by Patricia Mead

Above: Overlooked for international duty, Matt Douglas stormed the ten barriers as if they personally had slighted him.

Having achieved our targets for the season – winning the men’s BAL Premiership and gaining UKWAL promotion – Team Management were not overly optimistic about pulling off a Golden Jubilee Cup win. At one to score the men’s half of the team was looking powerful, even after James Ellington was lost at the last minute to “the international” up the M1 and in spite of the fact that we just seem incapable of unearthing a steeplechaser, but the women’s section was looking very fragile. Birchfield’s well-balanced team made all the early running – but against the odds the Bels were closely shadowing them until, with the end of the match not so far away, we leapt to a nine-point advantage. But we had some poor results to come in, slipped back down the order with only the relays to come – and finally, as the cause was lost and sore tendons were about to be put under duress for no purpose, pulled our men out of the 4 x 400m. We thus ended up 6th in a very tight match but had the consolation of knowing that the men’s team was by far the strongest on the day.

Maybe we need to face up to the fact that offering HCA competition is all very well for the leagues but it does nothing to strengthen the basic team – and when we have to do without “a little help from our friends” we are in trouble.

So, a slightly downbeat end to the season then, but don’t get things wrong – there was some fine competition ...

### *Like an old-time international*

First in action was long jumper Richard Danso. A regular with our Young Athletes teams a decade ago, Richard dropped out of the sport for a while, only returning last season. And what progress he’s made. Here he out-jumped Sale’s Darren Ritchie with a wind-legal personal record of 7.32m – a win and nine lovely points in the bag.

Birchfield played their “ace” on Kenyan Zac Kihara in the opening track event – the 10,000 metres. True to form, he burst away after a kilometre or so and then steadied down to maintain a 150 metre advantage; but this was just a preamble to one of the most entertaining track distance races we’ve seen in years – like one of those old-time internationals at only two per side. By half way our own Simon Jones had had enough of leading “the rest” and set out after Kihara with a

vengeance. At the rate of four seconds per lap he pulled the Kenyan back until, surprised at having company, Kihara waved Simon on through. Si was having none of that and tucked in behind. Another Kenyan burst came but this time the lead only went up to 30 metres or so – again the Belgrave man reeled him in and again was encouraged to go ahead by the Birchfield man who was beginning to look distinctly uncomfortable. Fifteen hundred metres remained ... and suddenly it was Simon making the running, prising open a small gap, then a larger one, until the elastic snapped and he was away. His effort caught the judges off guard as they failed to ring the bell for his last lap but the Belgrave faithful knew what was going on – and enjoyed their club mate’s triumphant final circuit.

Meanwhile, our “ace” was warming up for the one-lap hurdles, more than a little fired up by the fact that he’d been overlooked for international duty. Matt Douglas stormed the ten barriers as if they personally had slighted him. The electric timing failed and the wind was buffeting – forget that 50.7 – this was worth something more; and suddenly our score stood at 36 with only four events gone.

The irrepressible Diana Holden had started the ball rolling for the women while multi-eventer Hannah Stares began her busy afternoon on high jump duty before heading for the 400 hurdles where her second place was our highest individual female position of the afternoon – later equalled by others. The discus throwers were again relegated to the “outside” area where Eva Massey was 6th – a position that cropped up with regularity throughout the afternoon. Andrea Abrams had been hauled out of retirement once more for the long jump – 6th again – and she was rewarded with a place in the triple jump in spite of protestations: “I’ve never done it before!”

### *Keeping the TM happy*

Joe Ive was disappointed not to gain selection for the World Junior Championships in Beijing and had “packed his season in” a couple of weeks earlier. But a week in sunny foreign climes resulted in a renewed appetite for competition and in spite of the holiday and no training, he had enough in hand to win the pole vault. He’d planned to come in at 4.60m but seeing the doubt on Bill Laws’ face, kept the TM happy by entering at 4.40m – and going clear on his third attempt!

Back on the track and it was time for the two-lappers. Sarah Gailey had run a pb the previous week and, rewarded with a Cup run, was right up to that form again – but it’s tough running 2:16 when those in front of you are running four seconds faster. Neil Speaight was determined to blow the men’s field away with a front run but somehow it didn’t work, and in windy conditions he made a perfect shield for those tucked in behind. He was very disappointed with his second place but vowed to make amends in the 1500m later in the day.

Jennifer Culley, perfectly at home over one lap, found herself at the start of the 100 metres, wondering how come she’d been talked into this, while equally uncomfortable, for different reasons, was Darren Chin. Darren headed the men’s field until ten metres from the line where the cramp he’d been fighting off since the gun had fired, finally got a grip on his calf. He equalled the winner’s time, but was now very dubious for the later 200m and relay.

Woodford’s Andy Frost put out a big one in the hammer – over 71 metres – but as usual Mick Jones was in there fighting and David Wellstead was 5th in the “triple”. Somehow, with the match half over – we were still in second and only a few points off the lead.

### The high jinks went on

St. Lucian record holder Darvin Edwards enjoyed his high jump. Three men successfully cleared 2.15m but none could go any higher in spite of much audience participation. Darvin had cleared 2.20m in the semi-final at Eton and came so close here - but ended up third on count back. After the competition, the high jinks went on as each jumper continued to attempt to assail the bar. Eventually Darvin had the bar set at 2.25 - and was as close at that height as he had been at the lower one - but was still unsuccessful. He forcefully vowed that he'll be over 2.35 next year.

Jennifer Culley and Ryan Thomas were both solid over 400 metres, with Ryan disappointed not to go under 48 again. Pleased to be back throwing over 50 metres in the Scottish Championships, discus man Scot Thompson had to settle for a few centimetres less at Bedford and uncharacteristically just missed the cut for a further three throws.

Over 5000 metres it was Belgrave against Kenya again – this time in the form of Mark Miles vs. John Nsagnya. No “cat and mouse” this time as Milesy went straight to the front and in spite of the wind pushed on ... and on ... until he broke away. With two laps remaining and 60 metres of clear track before his rival came through, he looked determined to duck under 14 minutes but unsurprisingly, given the conditions, finished a few seconds outside. Now looking after his own training Mark has bounced back to fitness so quickly after his long break from competition and will be targeting a few half marathons in the autumn.

### A nine point lead!

With news coming in that our women's “ace” Eva Massey had placed second in the shot, we were astounded to find that the team had gone into a nine point lead. Dominic Girdler was master of the sprint hurdles and a special word of praise here for the man who ran four out of four BAL races in 2006, and is always ready to drop into a sprint relay squad.

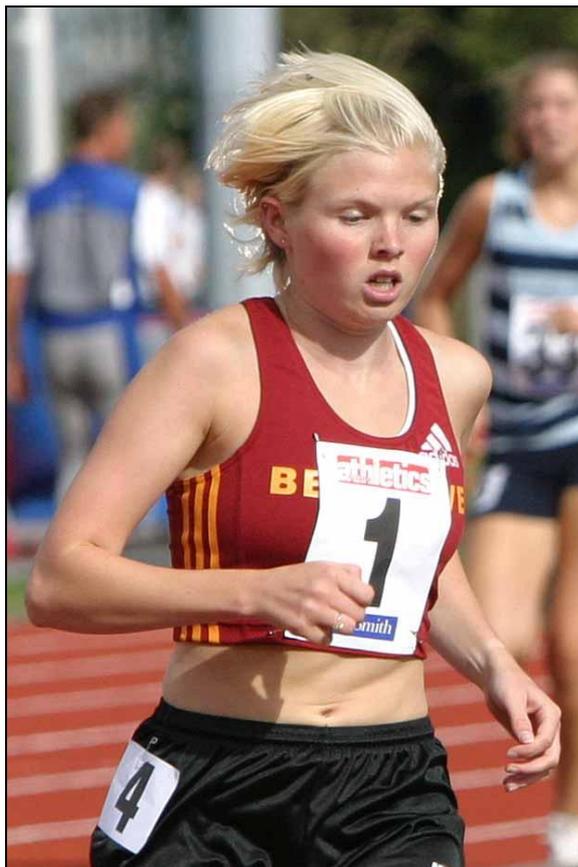


Photo by Patricia Mead

Above: Making a name for herself as one of our toughest competitors, Catherine Bryson seems equally at home on road or track.

Male wins were coming thick and fast now and in spite of being offset by having no female vaulter or 3000 metre runner there was still the faint chance of a win. Suddenly it became important to find someone, anyone, who might run a steeplechase. Veteran 400m hurdler Paul Beaumont, understandably, flatly refused: “I’m injured, I’ve had a bad day, and I don’t want to make it any worse!”

The 1500m was a tactical affair and as we saw in BAL match 4, Neil Speight is a master of such games, playing with the field until the time came to strike. He now gamely volunteered for a leg of the long relay!

We welcomed Tom Dobbie back into the team for the javelin while Chris Gearing, the quiet strong man of the team and another who has supported us so staunchly in the shot throughout the summer, heaved away in the far corner of the arena. More good points in the throws then, but in a close team competition in which long time leaders Birchfield and short time leaders Belgrave had been supplanted by Woodford Green and City of Manchester (Sale) it was now any one of four teams that might carry off the trophy.

With Darren Chin finally deciding not to risk a 200m it was down to Jason Hussain to step into the breach. A 21.51 in an Inter-County match the previous weekend pointed to the possibility of good points here – but an earlier non-scoring 200m had not given Jason a happy run and as he lined up with a sore Achilles tendon, having been put back together by Physio Tony Ganio, we held our breath ... He didn’t do himself justice and was now out of the relays! Caroline Wilson was not far from her season’s best in the women’s 200m, in spite of the strong wind, and Catherine Bryson gave all she could in the 1500m – but it was 6th again.

As the relays approached, so the results of our blank events, hovering overhead like homing pigeons at dusk, were coming home to roost one by one. We were in fourth – or was it fifth? The damaged men’s sprint relay was patched up by 400m Ryan Thomas agreeing to run and they reached a creditable third – but the cost was that Matt’s sore tendon was now worse. A team win was now out of the question. The women’s 4 x 400 metres quartette gave a good account of themselves with their fastest time of the year but our team situation was unchanged. To risk further injury seemed senseless and in spite of a team having been declared, the men’s team was pulled out.

It was time to congratulate Gladys Bird and her Woodford Green outfit – while for Belgrave Harriers, the season was over.

**Men.** 100m: 2 D Chin 10.53/1.1. 200m: 5 J Hussain 22.5. 400m: 3 R Thomas (U20) 48.54. 800m: 2 N Speight 1:53.4. 1500m: 1 N Speight 3:56.7. 5000m: 1 M Miles 14:05.71. 10000m: 1 S Jones 31:00.30. 110mH: 1 D Girdler 14.43/1.0. 400mH: 1 M Douglas 50.7. 3000mSC: no competitor. HJ: 3 D Edwards 2.15. LJ: 1 R Danso 7.32/1.4?. TJ: 5 D Wellstead 13.65. PV: 1 J Ive U20 4.80. SP: 3 C Gearing 16.35. DT: 5 S Thompson 50.71. JT: 3 T Dobbie 60.73. HT: 3 M Jones 62.91. 4x100m: 3 Belgrave 42.2 (D Girdler, M Douglas, R Thomas U20, D Chin). 4x400m: no team.

Men’s scores: 1 Belgrave 133; 2 Sale 124; 3 Woodford Green wEL 121; 4 Birchfield 111; 5 Trafford 104; 6 Shaftesbury B 94; 7 Rugby & Northants 56; 8 Team Southampton 34.

**Women.** 100m: 8 J Culley 12.48/-0.1. 200m: 7 C Wilson 26.1/-0.5. 400m: 4 J Culley 56.42. 800m: 6 S Gailey 2:16.45. 1500m: 6 C Bryson 4:46.8. 3000m: no competitor. 100mH: 4 H Stares 14.8/-1.1. 400mH: 2 H Stares 61.8. HJ: 6 H Stares 1.50. LJ: 6 A Abrams 4.83. TJ: 8 A Abrams 7.97. PV: no competitor. SP: 2 E Massey 14.61. DT: 6 E Massey 33.92. JT: no competitor. HT: 6 D Holden 44.66. 4x100m: 6 Belgrave 49.7 (S Gailey, J Culley, H Stares, C Wilson). 4x400m: 2 Belgrave 3:54.2 (C Wilson 57.9, S Gailey 59.7, H Stares 59.1, J Culley 57.5).

Women’s scores: 1 Woodford Green wEL 118; 2 Birchfield 110; 3 Shaftesbury B 108; 4 Trafford 97; 5 Sale 82; 6 Rugby & Northants 77; 7 Belgrave 64; 8 Team Southampton 63.

**Match:** 1 Woodford Green wEL 239; 2 Birchfield H 221; 3 Sale 206; 4 Shaftesbury B 202; 5 Trafford AC 201; 6 Belgrave H 197; 7 Rugby & Northants 133; 8 Team Southampton 97.