

Ilkley take top honours

West Yorkshire trio gain surprise win in women's blue riband event as Swansea selection is decided

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THE British Masters moved their winter relays this year to Mansfield's Berryhill Park, the heart of British cross-country relay running, and competitors knew it was their last chance to impress with the England selectors deliberating immediately after the event to choose their team for the British and Ireland Veterans' International in Swansea next month.

Women

CLARE ELMS headed the W40 rankings at both 5000m on the track and 5km on the road and ran the quickest leg in the national road relays but felt she needed to prove her ability on the country too. She was content to follow senior international Kate Ramsey around the first lap. Ramsey beat her by 90 seconds last year in the international in Northern Ireland, but Elms emphasised her improvement in 2008 by taking the lead on the second lap and accelerating away to head Ramsey by 21 seconds. Ramsey was running as an individual to gain selection, but was overlooked even as a reserve. However, in the relay itself, Elms' 14:52 gave Dulwich a minute-plus



Dulwich's Clare Elms (left) battled with Charnwood's Kate Ramsey before pulling away for the day's fastest leg

lead in the W35 event from Redhill's Carolyn Hay, who clocked 15:53. Sharon Smith matched her team-mate Hay's time to the second and she closed the gap significantly on BMAF W35 10,000m champion Teresa Gaillard de Laubenque on the second leg. But as the last leg started, Dulwich had a 15-second lead over Redhill. Ilkley moved into third

after a strong run from Amanda Oddie (15:56) built on Alison Bennett's opener, but they were more than a minute behind Redhill and seemingly running for third.

However, Sarah Jarvis, who won the Middlesex 10km last month, was kept up to date on her progress around the course and started to reduce the gap considerably. Ola Balme of Dulwich went the wrong way on the first lap through the woods and also lost more ground at the end of the lap. She almost went through the finish funnel rather than heading towards the second lap. Redhill's Toni Minniti closed the gap slightly, but Balme held the lead until Jarvis shot past both Minniti and Balme in the last kilometre.

The new vet thus ensured Ilkley had one of their greatest wins. Her time of 15:00 was easily the second fastest time of the day after Elms and means she will be making her international debut next month. A late run from Minniti relegated Dulwich to bronze.

Redhill went one better in the W45 race with Helen Burrell (15:52) giving them a huge lead, which Bev Barnes (19:04) and Anne Ford (18:05) extended to six minutes by the finish. Mansfield B team were second as their A team were fourth.

The W55 race was a walkover for Cannock & Stafford with multiple international Chris Kilkenny (17:56) the fastest though fellow W55 Ros Tabor, who ran in the main women's race, was slightly quicker with 17:54. A problem with all the results not being available immediately after the event may have led to the selectors' decision to pick Jane Morley for the W55 team after she finished 39 seconds behind Tabor on the same leg, with Tabor only second reserve.

The women's race contained the older men's ages and Rotherham won the M60s. However, Cheltenham's Martin Ford (15:42) was quickest in moving them into silver medals and he earned himself a place in England's M65 team.



Ilkley gold medallists (l-r): Amanda Oddie, Sarah Jarvis and Alison Bennett