

## **East Kilbride AC: Review of the Year 2011**

**Jan 2011:** The re-scheduled West District Cross Country Championships took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January. 18 EKAC athletes toed the starting line with Beth Duff's 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the U20 Women's event and Luke Kirwan's 9<sup>th</sup> place in the U13 Boy's race being the pick of the performances. The following weekend the re-organised Senior Christmas handicap was won by Niall Walker, over the usual 4.2 mile route around Auldhouse. On the same day, newcomers Chloe Mason (U15, 8.60 secs), Andy Coutts (U17, 7.55 and Alan Barr (U20, 7.45) showed their speed at the Indoor Scottish Open Meeting at the Kelvin Hall. Also doing well at the Open were Ross Maxwell (U17, 7.35), Laura McCracken (U17, 8.17), Shannon McMahon (U15, 8.53) and Nicholas Coupland (U15, 7.63).

**Feb 2011:** Six EKAC sprinters competed at the Scottish Schools Indoor Championships on Feb 10th. Ross Maxwell won the U16 boys' 60m in a time of 7.28s while Andy Coutts ran a PB 7.48s for sixth in the same race. Laura McCracken clocked a PB 8.07s on her way to a sixth place finish in the over-16 girls' 60m. Arlene Barr won her heat to make the semi-finals of the same race - her first competition after a long-term injury. Shannon McMahon did an indoor PB in the under-16 girls' 200m (27.5s semi-final) and Chloe Mason at the age of just 12 narrowly missed a place in the semi-finals of the under-16 girls' 60m with a heat time of 8.61s. Due to the heavy snow in January and fixture congestion, the Club Cross-Country Championships were held in conjunction with the National Cross-country on 19 February. Best performance was a 5<sup>th</sup> place for Beth Duff in the U20 Women's race. Prior to that, the U9 and U11 athletes had their own races on the 15<sup>th</sup> around the track area. Lara Brown and Brendan McCall were the U9 winners, and Rebecca Russell and Ryan Hamilton were the U11 winners. This event went very well, but there are good arguments, weather and fixtures permitting, for having a separate Club Championships on our own course. The list of other club champions is: Becky Ballantyne and Luke Kirwan at U13, Catherine Lambie and Vincent Hastings at U15, Rachel Fairlie and Ben Stafford at U17, Beth Duff and John Fergusson at U20 and Kelly Baillie and Grant Baillie at Senior level. Congratulations to Beth Duff who equalled her indoor pb when winning the Silver Medal for 1500m at the National Indoor Senior Championships on the 26th. In addition young Laura McCracken experienced her first taste of senior competition and equalled her own club record of 8.07s in her heat of the women's 60m.

**Mar 2011:** It was encouraging to see several good performances by club members at the EK Primary Schools XC on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March. First up Rebecca Russell won the P6 girls race and a team gold. Not to be outdone Aidan Brown won the P6 boys race and a team silver. Moving on to the P7 races, Sarah McCusker finished second and both Mark Leadbitter and Matthew Kirwan won team silver medals. Several other young athletes were also competing and enjoying the day. Meanwhile, on the indoor track, Nicholas Coupland won a silver in the U15 200m and a bronze in the U15 60m at the Scottish age group indoor Championships, clocking PBs of 24.22 and 7.59 secs respectively. A further three EK sprinters achieved fourth places: Shannon McMahon in the U15 200m with a PB, Ross Maxwell in the U17 60m and Laura McCracken in the U17 60m with her time of 7.97s breaking her own club record. Chloe Mason (U15 60m) and Andy Coutts (U17 60m) made the semi-finals of their events while Arlene Barr competed in the heats of the U17 60m. At the Young Athletes National Road Races on 20 March Beth Duff once again was a close 2<sup>nd</sup> in the U20 Women's race. Out of a total of 14 EKAC competitors, Luke Kirwan's 15<sup>th</sup> place in the U13 Boy's event was possibly the other highlight.

**Apr 2011:** April was pretty quiet!

**May 2011:** EKAC finished last at the first CSSAL Meeting on 1 May. The competition was very tight with only 50 points separating us from 3<sup>rd</sup> place and is more of a reflection of the other teams filling more places in events to gain points rather than the standard of our athletes' performances. Event winners were Laurie May, Iona Thomson and Emma Fairlie in the Female events, and Callum Field, Kieran Rankin, Ross Maxwell, Kevin Downie, Grant Myles, Aidan Brown, Paul Wilson and Andrew Coutts in the male events. At the Lanarkshire Relays the U11 and U13 boys took 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the 4x100m relays, the U13 Boys and U15 girls took 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 3x800m, and both Senior 3x800m teams took place medals.

**Jun 2011:** At the second CSSAL meeting on 5 June EKAC event winners were Shannon McMahon, Chloe Mason, Laura McCracken, Arlene Barr, Rachael Thomson, Christopher McCall, Ross Malloch, Nick Coupland, Ross Maxwell, Andy Coutts, Derek Leitch, Grant Myles, Keith Garrow and Billy Muir. The team finished 5<sup>th</sup> at this meeting and one of the highlights was the U17 4x100m team of Shannon McMahon, Laura McCracken, Arlene Barr and Chloe Mason breaking a 26 year-old Senior club record by setting a time of 52.4s. Several EKAC athletes were at the Scottish Schools Track and Field Championships and medallists were Shannon McMahon with silver and Laura McCracken with bronze, both in the 100m. The inauguration of a new track at Carluke was marked by an event which included a series of relay races on 15<sup>th</sup> June. The opportunity was taken by EKAC and Whitemoss AAC to put forward combined teams with 12 athletes from each club contesting the 6 relays. Facing strong competition the U14 girls and boys were second in the 4x100m, the U16 girls were 3<sup>rd</sup> the U16 boys won their race, the U18 girls were 4<sup>th</sup> and the U18 boys were 3<sup>rd</sup>. These results showed the potential strength of a combined club and represented the first step in a programme of closer cooperation between both clubs instigated by the respective Committees.

**Jul 2011:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> CSSAL Meeting was on 3<sup>rd</sup> July at Wishaw and sadly the team finished last and will now be relegated to Division 3. On a brighter note, EKAC event winners were Willie Taylor, Grant Myles, Christopher McCall, Keith Garrow, Billy Muir, Laura McCracken, Arlene Barr, and Rachael Thomson. In what is becoming a recurring story, there were great performances from the athletes who were there, but there were too many athletes unavailable or simply missing for the Club to register a good team performance. Having said this, the aim has always been to use this League to give an appropriate level of competition to our developing athletes and not to just shoehorn athletes into events to get points for the Club. However, the League does highlight our areas of weakness both in age group and in events. Laura McCracken competed for Scotland in the Schools International at Cardiff on 16<sup>th</sup> July, finishing 8<sup>th</sup> in the 100m and leading off the team to a third place in the 4x100m. Our under-16 boys' relay team of Andy Coutts, Nick Coupland, Matt Ashelby and Ross Maxwell won a silver medal at the Scottish Age Groups sprint relay championships at Scotstoun the following day. At the end of the month there were medals at the Scottish Age Group Championships, with gold for Ross Maxwell in the long jump and bronze for Laura McCracken in the 100m.

**Aug 2011:** The beginning of the month saw the International Children's Games come to Scotland, with the athletics events being held in East Kilbride. Both Shannon McMahon and Andy Coutts represented Team Lanarkshire, with Andy winning a gold medal in the 4x100m. The U13s Superteams event was held mid-month at Grangemouth. We were represented by the girls team of Chloe Mason, Alisha Montgomery, Becky Ballantyne and Sarah McCusker who finished 9<sup>th</sup> in this mini-decathlon event. In the Lanarkshire Track Championships on the 27<sup>th</sup> on our home track, EKAC athletes won 10 Lanarkshire titles, 6 x 2<sup>nd</sup> places, and 3 x 3<sup>rd</sup> places. The champions were Arlene Barr, Alan Barr, Callum Field, Rachael Thomson, Beth Duff, Kevin Downie, Kieran Rankin, Laurie May, Billy Muir and Keith Garrow. Silvers went to Callum Field (100 & long jump), Chloe Mason (100 & 200), Rachael Thomson, Jamie Clements and Bronze medals to Rachel Fairlie, Chloe Mason and Billy Muir. At this point it's appropriate to provide a roundup of EKAC athletes' wins on the Highland Games circuit. Blackford, youths' 90m handicap, Andy Coutts; youths' 200m handicap, Nick Coupland. Markinch, open 90m handicap, Gregor Thorpe. Hawick, youths' 90m championship, Ross Maxwell. Inverkeithing, open 90m handicap, Laura McCracken. Bridge of Allan, youths 90m handicap, Nick Coupland; youths' 200m handicap, Chloe Mason; youths' 400m handicap, Kieran Rankin. Oban: women's 100m and 150m scratch races, Laura McCracken.

**Sep 2011:** The annual EKAC children's funrun was held on 7<sup>th</sup> September. Finding a suitable date is always difficult and this is the second time it's been after the school holidays. Numbers were down from the previous year and the Committee may review whether to move it back to the original date in June, before the end of the school term. The 2011 Club Track & Field championships were held on 11 September with the same 4 event format as before (3 for the U11 age group). Despite heavy rain throughout most of the afternoon, there were some great performances and close competitions to end the track and field season for most of our athletes. Club champions for 2011 were Owen Selfridge in the U9s, Hannah Turnbull and Grant Myles at U11, Sarah McCusker and Callum Field at U13, Alisha Montgomery and Luke Kirwan at U15, Rachel Fairlie and Jack Kirwan at U17, Rachael Thomson at U20 and Jamie Clements at Senior level.

**Oct 2011:** The club's endurance section was in action from the start of the cross-country season in various relay races. First up was the West District Cross-country Relays at Coatbridge. In the girls race the fastest EK times were recorded by U13 girls Rebecca Russell and Sarah McCusker, beating many of the older girls. In the boys race the top times were by Vincent Hastings and Luke Kirwan. The Under 11s had their first outing of the season at the Lanarkshire Road Relay Championships the following weekend. Laurie May and Lara Brown in the girls race, and Mark Leadbitter and Matthew Kirwan in the boys race all had fine runs, but unfortunately had no 3<sup>rd</sup> leg runners to hand over to. The mixed age group girls team of Rebecca Russell, Sarah McCusker and Catherine Lambie finished 8<sup>th</sup> after a great opening leg run by Rebecca. This was followed by Martin Lynas and Aidan Brown in the under 13 boys event, completing their runs in 4<sup>th</sup> place. The Senior Mens team of Jamie Clements, Derek Leitch, Niall Walker and Grant Baillie also fought their way up to 4<sup>th</sup> place thanks to a storming last leg by Grant, on his return to action after some 'paternity leave'. The early season relays culminated in the Scottish Cross-country Relays over a notoriously hilly and muddy course at Cumbernauld. The girls were represented by Rachel and Sarah McCusker, who both had brave runs over the demanding course. Two EKAC boys teams completed the course with bragging rights for the fastest EK time going to Luke Kirwan. Luke was ably supported by Martin Lynas, Jack Kirwan, Aidan Brown, Ross Malloch and Aidan Gilbride. The Seniors were represented by David Thompson, Niall Walker, Jamie Clements and Grant Baillie, with the fastest time again going to Grant. The Club's annual ceilidh rounded off the month, but at a new venue, the Murray-Owen Centre, which suits our needs and has a better atmosphere than the Ballerup Hall. The event was a success, despite its proximity to Halloween, but the Committee will be looking at alternative dates for next year to make it an even bigger event. Highlight of the evening was the awards presentation. The Scott Walsh Endeavour Award, for the club member showing exemplary commitment, attitude and effort went to young endurance athlete Luke Kirwan. The Athlete of the Year recipient was sprinter Laura McCracken, for her outstanding performances throughout 2011 which included National medals, several Scotland vests and the title of the Scottish Highland Games Association's 'Outstanding Female Athlete of the Year'.

**Nov 2011:** After the October relays, November saw the Club return to the Kilmarnock Cross Country races, which incorporates an enormous hill in the Dean Park course. There was a great turnout from the U11s, especially the boys, with Owen Selfridge leading the squad home in 12<sup>th</sup> place after a race-long tussle with Matthew Kirwan. Medal winners were Rebecca Russell in the U13 Girls race with a fine 2<sup>nd</sup> place and Rachel Fairlie in 3<sup>rd</sup> in the U17 Women's race. The following weekend was the Lanarkshire Cross Country Championships, over the usual course at Drumpelzier park in Coatbridge. Best run of the day was from U13 boy Martin Lynas with a strong run in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. This event saw the U11s turn out in force and they were rewarded with 2 sets of team medals. The U11 girls team of Laurie May, Lara Brown and Maria Mulholland took bronze, as did the U11 boys team of Owen Selfridge, Matthew Kirwan and Mark Leadbitter. The 23rd edition of the Hugh Wilson Memorial Race was held on 26 November and reverted back to the usual course with the start and finish at the track. The day turned out very wet and windy and the conditions, along with fixture congestion and the British Masters Championships being held the same day in Glasgow, may have contributed in the field being under 100 athletes. Those who turned up, and all the officials and marshalls deserve a vote of thanks for their efforts. Indeed the club received many e-mails of thanks from the athletes. The small field, coincidentally exactly the same as the 2010 race, probably justifies the discussions the Committee has had around the selection of an alternative date less subject to the vagaries of the weather, and also perhaps an alternative distance.

**Dec 2011:** To be updated.