



147th Varsity Match Report

Women's Blues

Our women's blues team were a forced to be reckoned with at Iffley Road for our 47th Varsity Match. Packed full of talent, there were some familiar faces, some new recruits, and BUCS finalists from the week before, all ready to give the tabs some strong competition. And what a high-quality competition it was, with scores that were nail-bitingly tight throughout the whole day.

In the throws, Chimdi and Esther dominated the shot, placing 1st and 2nd in style, both getting PBs, blues standards, and all-time list performances. Chimdi came second in the discus despite only doing standing throws (due to a torn hamstring from her BUCS warmup), with Maya, fresh from the rugby pitch, winning the discus in a blues standard. As expected, Phoebe convincingly won the hammer, throwing almost 20m further than 2nd place, and in the Javelin Eleanor also threw a blues standard to place 2nd.

We impressed in the short sprints, claiming first and second place spots in the 100m, by Adahna, with a PB and blues time, and Zoe, and 200m by Zoe again closely followed by Issy. Adahna also won the 100H in another PB and blues time, and the 200H, with Femke fighting to the line in the 100H to place 2nd, and Charlotte battling in the 400H also coming 2nd.

Cambridge was tough competition in the middle and long distances as expected, but strong second-place finishes were still produced by Catherine in the 800m and Alex S in the mile. We dominated in the steeplechase, with a win for Anna, and OUAC claiming the second, third, and fifth place spots too across the blues and seconds.

Cambridge also performed well in vertical jumps, despite brilliant efforts from our high jumpers and pole vaulters. In the horizontal jumps we claimed 2nd places were

claimed by Maddie in the triple jump and Adahna in the long jump, with her 3rd PB and blues standard of the day.

Heading into the relay neck in neck, the 4x100 quartet of Iris-Mae, Zoe, Sophie, and Adahna ran a strong race and emerged victorious. Everything then rested on our 4x400 BUCS bronze medallists, Charlotte, Alice, Issy, and Catherine. Despite giving it their all (so much so that they dropped the baton) the Cambridge team (perhaps unsurprisingly with an Olympian on the last leg) held us off, ending the match in a draw.

This was a brilliantly contested match, and I am extremely proud of the whole team for their efforts.

Men's Blues

Starting with the Men's track, stellar performances in the 400m hurdles from two giants Maranga Mokaya and Samuel Clarke (currently residing 13th and 15th in the UK rankings respectively) were a spectacle for all to see. In last year's close encounter Maranga's kick was not quite enough to catch Sam in the closing stages, and going into this race only Sam had raced over hurdles already this year, albeit in a rather pedestrian LICC affair by his lofty standards. This was one of the most hotly anticipated encounters of the day. Uncharacteristically, Maranga Mokaya stormed the first half of the race, taking it by the scruff of the neck and creating a noticeable gap ahead of the rest that was somehow bested by a strong surge off of the second turn and into the home straight from Sam, just narrowly missing the Varsity Match record with Maranga closely following. Marco Siniscalchi secured the 2-3 in a solid season opening time of 55.33 and a blues standard.

Not long after, Dark blue teammates Alex Goodall and Maximilian Buckley attempted some ambitious tactics in the 800, that didn't quite pay off. Alex set off at an initially hard pace from the front to bait out 1:48 – man Angus Harrington, with Max casually sitting far (some may say too far) off the pace to conserve energy. Angus made his move on the back straight of the second lap which Max reacted to instantaneously, more than covering the move and beginning his own kick and taking the lead, only for Angus to later relinquish with his knockout blow coming off the turn and into the home straight, to which the man in dark blue could unfortunately not respond.

In the 100m, Pole Vaulters and Men's Captain Jake Watson lined up alongside Orlando Bell. Both athletes ran impressive PBs of 11.05 and 11.23 respectively,

however the other PB run in this race was by a Cambridge man, Chizute Ogbedeh, who just bested Jake by 2 hundredths of a second in a very close race.

Oxford athlete Bradley Burke went one better than his impressive 5th placed BUCS performance in the 3000m steeplechase, where he finished 3 seconds behind Light blue Jamie Edgerton in a rather snug Tab sandwich with Terence Fawden uncomfortably closely following. Surely in a tactical race such as Varsity, the Tabs would have the upper hand with such fine margins separating these three athletes? Brad valiantly sought out to prove that this was not the case, he looked fantastic every stride of the way home to a strong win and a swanky new PB of 9:09.59 (20th on po10 this year) to see off the men in mint green/light blue, Aidan Smith was slightly off the pace but still recording a more than respectable 9:34.12, his best since 2016.

The 110m Hurdles were a wind-assisted affair (not that that matters for blues times) where, once again, Oxford claimed a 2-3 behind the serious hurdling prowess of Sam Clarke. Marco Siniscalchi in second with 15.22s to add another blues standard, and Will Parry was unlucky to just miss out on the blues time (15.7) with a windy PB of 15.78 which he surely will seek to improve upon this summer, all he needs is a race where he doesn't clip any hurdles!

With the 400m featuring 3 out of 4 runners being 800m guys primarily, it was no surprise to see the two men in light blue going off of standing starts. It was additionally no surprise to see Ryan Cherian's blistering start as the sole 400m athlete in the race, getting out hard to set the tone for the others to chase. Angus Harrington unwound the stagger relatively early on into the second bend and looked almost imperious once again until the latter stages where Maximilian Buckley closed strongly just to finish on his shoulder, and Ryan just behind. PBs were achieved by both of our dark blues here, 49.42 a blues standard for Max and 49.53 painfully close for Ryan, that 49.5 barrier will hopefully shift some time soon.

As one might expect a Varsity mile was always going to be tactical – and from the gun it was truly pedestrian as opposing athletes attempted to suss each other out in the opening stages, with Miles Weatherseed and Matthew Fuller for Oxford, and Jeremy Dempsey and Harry Cox for Cambridge respectively. Miles began to pick up the pace at 1km to go, aiming to take control of the race but it was Dempsey taking the lead for Cambridge and really pushing the pace with 700m to go, that set the tone for the closing stages. The light blue lead remained from this point on, but not without contest as Miles and Harry traded blows down the back straight as each tried to make their move before Cox kicked for home past Dempsey into the home straight to secure victory.

After losing by such fine margins in the 100m, Captain Jake Watson sought to score some points in the 200m and prove his speed endurance capabilities, cultivated effectively by his pole vault training. This time the positions were reversed between rivals Jake and Chizute, with Jake taking the win comfortably in a PB of 22.42. Lemuel Crentsil also recorded a PB in finishing 3rd of 22.81.

The 200m Hurdles saw the familiar victory of a certain Samuel Clarke, with Marco Siniscalchi in second in a blues standard of 24.93 to complete his hurdles blues hat-trick. Will Parry was unfortunate in his attempts to claim third in what was a frustrating run for him, finishing off the pace.

The 4x100m was an extremely close affair, the Oxford Blues probably slightly behind on the first changeover but it was pretty much neck and neck between Lemuel and Chizute, before Jake put a bit of a daylight between himself and the rest of the field down the back straight. A strong bend from Orlando meant that Alfie Cicale found himself on the anchor leg, baton in hand and in the lead – only with Sam Clarke for competition who was always going to close strong. By eye, it was impossible to tell the result as Alfie had maintained something of a lead for the majority of the home straight, however photo finish deemed it to be a Cambridge victory by 0.01s, 42.94s to 42.95s.

The last individual track event of the day was the 5000m, which strangely saw a rare false start from Thomas Renshaw who was clearly itching to get going. Seconds runner Milan Campion was perhaps even keener to get going with a start some may describe as “not so gentle” as he decided to take matters into his own hands and go it alone from the get go, with a first lap that “would’ve given the Men’s mile first lap a run for its money”. The rest of the bunch stuck together for the first kilometre, before Joe Massingham of Cambridge finally decided to pick up the pace a bit, stringing out the chasing pack somewhat and eventually dividing the blues race into two separate battles of Tom Wood vs Joe Massingham and Tom Renshaw vs James Rennie. Really pushing the pace at 2km, Joe put a bit of daylight between himself and Tom Wood in an attempt to settle that matter, showing his class and securing Cambridge yet another win after spending the remaining 3km reeling Milan in and eventually leaving him in his periphery with 1200m left to run. Oxford blues runners Tom Wood and Tom Renshaw finished with a 2-3 in respectable times given the heat and slow first km, just outside 15 minutes with 15:02 and 15:08, and seconds man Milan Campion did well to hang on to an impressive 14:52.

In the field, first up simultaneously was the Hammer, Pole Vault and Long Jump, all conveniently positioned along the back straight to make for somewhat convenient morning viewing (the livestream might disagree, but multiple camera angles do help) provided you were willing to make the stroll over. The long jump made

arguably the most exciting competition of the bunch, with blows being traded between the heavy hitters. Adam Coates and Sandy MaCaulay for the Dark blues both jumping painfully close to the blues standard (it'll come soon boys), with a PB of 6.80m and a SB of 6.83m for Coates and MaCaulay respectively. These leaps were not enough to defeat Georgios Zaphiris however, who launched himself to within a whisker of 7 metres with a very respectable 6.94m for the light blues, giving them at least something to cheer about in the long jump as none of their other jumpers could break 6m.

The Pole vault required a PB performance from Nick Smart to get the win, unfortunately matching it with 3.50m was not quite enough as the Dark blues succumbed to another 2-3 with Jinsen Lu in third.

The Hammer throw was a similar story as our American duo Stew Humble and Joel Bell couldn't quite find their rhythm, needing their best to make a match for Cambridge's strong throwing talent.

The afternoon saw Maranga Mokaya doing what was needed to dispatch of his opposite numbers in the high jump (one of his many talents) with a best effort of 1.85m. As usual jumping just high enough to secure a win, so as to save himself for his numerous other events.

In the Javelin, Rowan Burford threw close to his PB with 54.68m to see off strong Cambridge competition and James Perriman wasn't quite able to find the same form that saw him break 50m earlier this season.

The Triple Jump was a very similar story to the morning's Long Jump, again with Georgios Zaphiris producing individual brilliance to win with the rest of the field dominated by Oxford athletes. Maranga completing his busy day with 14.23m, a near 20cm PB, to come second with Anthony Akinwale also jumping decently well for third, not quite reaching his recent PB which came at BUCS.

Marley Young and Ikechi Mere again made for tough competition in the Discus, as Joel Bell and Stewart Humble found out. The Shot was more promising, as Alex Fogassy produced his most impressive performance in a dark blue vest to date, throwing 13.14m which was unfortunately only enough to finish second to Marley Young. Joel Bell also threw well to make third place with an impressive throw of 12.82m, another PB.

The day culminated with ultimately the event that matters most, the short sprinter's worst nightmare, yet arguably the most exciting spectacle in track and field: the 4x400m Relay. The Oxford blues team was unfortunately depleted, with Maranga Mokaya's calves not hacking all the jumping clearly, so the final team comprised of

Marco, Max, Sam and Ryan in that order. Each leg was a battle within itself, Sam Clarke putting a lead between himself and Marco only for Max to overturn this lead down the home stretch of the second leg. Sam Nelson got out hard to widen the gap, only to fade badly with 800m runner Harry Cox relinquishing the Cambridge lead with 50m to go into the final changeover. Ryan Cherian on the anchor went eyeballs out to catch Cambridge Captain Angus Harrington, who won the individual 400, and did catch him down the back straight probably running a 200m PB in the process before paying the price for such a gutsy run – as Angus' strength pulled through to retake the lead and secure victory.

Women's 2nds

It was never a question of whether Oxford's seconds would beat Cambridge's, but rather by how much. With a team made up of many fresh young talents who no doubt will mature into seasoned blues athletes in years to come, the millipedes took Varsity by storm, winning an impressive 13 out of 20 events and going 1-2 in 8. That 'varsity magic' took the form of no fewer than 24 personal bests (!) and an impressive 6 match records.

On the track, 7 out of 10 individual races were won by Oxford. Cambridge fought hard in the sprints, but our women showed their composure by producing PBs and putting pressure on them all the way to the line. In the 200m hurdles, Julia darted to a match record, not long after having also won the 100 hurdles in a time a whole two seconds ahead of second place, despite this being her first ever race. Anika left her TikTok career for a whole 70.97 seconds to win the 400m hurdles, an event that she only recently discovered existed. The middle distance and distance events were where this team really shone, producing win after win with a 1-2 sweep in all disciplines. The performance of the day was definitely Emily Carroll's steeplechase, which she finished in a huge PB, second place overall, and a match record, chasing down our own blues athlete while Rebecca grabbed the number two spot for the seconds. Klara produced a new match record in the 800m, with Nancie just behind her in second. Alice jogged her way to first place and match record in the mile, with teammate Olivia also easily ahead of the other team. Lauren and Rhiannon battled it out for first place in the 5k, with Lauren eventually winning by one second in a new match record. The 4x100 was narrowly lost but we came back to win the 4x400 comfortably in - you guessed it - a new match record.

In the field, Lesley's army did not disappoint, winning 3 of the 4 throws. There was no losing anything for Viv in the hammer, in which she threw an 8m PB to win the seconds' match by almost five metres. The discus was a 1-2 success, with Caitlin giving a masterclass in channelling aggression and Amy putting her new technique to the test, as they came a respectable 4th and 5th overall. Shona launched the javelin far enough to win the match, while Daisy, jumping in last minute, discovered

her inner spear-throwing warrior. In the pole vault, with a whole one session under her belt and pointed toes to only be admired, Lucy managed to fling herself to a win, Kezia just behind her in second. Julia and Iris-Mae once again showed their versatility, coming 1-2 in the triple jump, with distances well beyond 10 metres. The long jump saw Julia and Polly come second and third respectively – not bad for someone taking a year out. There were further PBs for Lucy and Meggie in the high jump, with higher heights definitely on the cards.

Special mentions must go to Julia and Klara, the millipede queens, who juggled so many events that they made a day in a heptathlon look like a rest day. Without them, this day would have had a very different outcome. But it goes without saying that this whole team did not disappoint and came together to lay down some very impressive performances. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed as the millipedes have been shortlisted for Team of the Year at the upcoming Sports Ball, a category which received over 150 nominations!

Men's 2nds

What a day for the Centipedes! The team from the other place came to Iffley Road and didn't know what was waiting for them. Resting on their laurels after FEAR, that team in minty green had become complacent, with very few of their athletes having competed in the leadup to Varsity. This complacency summarised nicely by one Harry Cox, "these Cambridge athletes have PBs that the Oxford athletes could only dream of". How wrong he was, as we made him look like a complete fool and, in the process, won our 6th Centipedes vs Alverstone match in a row.

The day began with the usual team photo and team talk. The Tabs slowly trickled in, making their way to Oxford by any means possible after their bus company pulled out at the last minute (how unfortunate). First up was the 400mH. Isaac Rushworth and Reuben Leyland put in a good showing finishing 2,3. A solid start for the team but less so for Isaac, who after 10sec with Lesley was told his day was over. He's a hard man to keep away from competing for his beloved Dark Blues but we were confident our replacements would be able to do the job.

Oh and what a job they did! Andrew Shaw and Tom Barrett had the day of their lives and lit up the track for the Centipedes. Starting with the 800m, they were given no chance by the unsurprisingly biased commentary on the livestream. Harry Cox making it abundantly clear he thought they had no chance and were in his eye's complete no bodies, stating, "as someone who know a lot about 800m running, I have never heard of these two Oxford blokes". Fittingly Barrett and Andrew made them eat their words. Barrett maintaining control of the inside rail with the use of a few elbows here and there and a fantastic final lap by both of them saw them come

home 1,2. The disbelief shown on the commentary at the quality of the Centipedes athletes "oh no. Cambridge seem to have miss timed this, the Oxford athletes have more than we thought" followed by complete silence was a sign of things to come. Maybe this was when Cambridge realised, they might have severely underestimated what we had. Both these athletes rounded off their days with a speedy 400m.

Barrett with a win for the Centipedes in the 4x400 while Andrew showed what awesome depth we have in 400m running, running 51.34 to finish 2nd only behind fellow Oxford athlete Sam Nelson. Sam, running in the 2nds team only due to the sheer quantity and quality of 400m athletes above him showed he too was a class above the rest leading out the 400m race from start to finish. Coming home in a 50.70, a season best and fastest time since 2018! He was nearly 2.5sec faster than the next best Cambridge athlete! (We have 10,000m runners who could run faster).

Sam continued his fine form into the 200m later in the day running a PB, finishing miles ahead of the Cambridge athletes and helping complete an Oxford 1,2 with Alfie Cicale. Alfie, new to OUAC having only run since Cuppers is one of the finds of the season. Having played football all year (some say he's the best in OUAFC) he turned up to Cuppers looking very much not like a sprinter. Rocking long baggy shorts, a running top that looked like he'd come straight from a fun run and no idea how to use blocks, he put the rest of us to shame once the gun went off. Winning both the 100m and 200m comfortably for the Centipedes and joining in the Blues 4x100m (we won't talk about that too much) he will be hunting that Full Blue time over the summer. Some say he's going to give up on football next year and join OUAC full time. Watch out Cambridge if he does, who knows what this boy could do. David, also running in the 100m, ran a massive PB and backed it up in the 4x100, where the team, involving himself, Adam, Will and Reuben, showed Cambridge a clean set of heals beating them by over 4sec.

The distance boys rounded off the track running, well the running that doesn't involve you jumping over stupid barriers, with Joe and Milan in the Mile and Milan and Leon in the 5000m. Milan ran both races the only way Milan knows by going out hard and trying to hang on. Him and Joe came home 2,4 in the Mile respectively, while Milan won the 5000m for the Centipedes. Leon put in an admirable performance for the team, running the 5000m for us even though he wasn't at full fitness. Joe, making a team for OUAC in his final year in Oxford, put in a good performance over the Mile and I am sure will be looking to go even faster at Iffley Festival of Miles in a few weeks' time.

The hurdles events are reserved for a select few runners who have both the skill, speed and bravery to run, jump and hopefully not fall over 110 and 200m. Archie and JBM did the job this year for us, with JBM coming away with the win and a PB

in the 110mH. Archie, having spent nearly every waking hour in the lead up to Varsity practising 200mH got his chance, coming away with 2nd place. 200mH is an interesting event and one that is quite unique to Varsity. It has been a staple in the Varsity programme for many years mainly because Iffley Road, before the tennis courts were built, had a 220y straight. It was only once the tennis courts were built that we had to learn to run around the bend.

James, making his first ever team, along with Charlie were our two men in the steeplechase. Charlie coming back from injury and covid ran well considering and will be a force to be reconed with next year if he returns to the form he was in, in Hilary. James ran a PB and managed to not fall headfirst into the water jump, so that's a positive!

Moving into the field and this is where we really shone. We had 1,2s in Pole Vault, Long Jump, Triple Jump and Hammer, not allowing Cambridge the 1,2 in any event. Jimi coming back from injury and Peter's Ball the night before, jumped a season's best in the Long Jump and comfortably won the Triple Jump. Oliver Bazin also jumped a season's best to win the Long Jump in front of Jimi in 2nd. Tim Chan performed solidly to make sure it was an Oxford 1,2 in the Triple Jump.

Ethan Kidd, a find from our Cuppers recruitment drive, put in a solid performance to finish 2nd only on countback. Oliver Carter made sure it was another point gaining event finishing 3rd for the now rampant Centipedes. At this point it might have been kind to cut Cambridge some slack and let them a good event or two. But no, Jirka and David performed strongly in the Pole Vault finishing 1st and 2nd to heap even more misery on Cambridge, who couldn't beat either of our athletes despite having infinitely more Pole Vault coaches than us.

The heavy throws are a world of their own and to most track athletes are incomprehensible. Apparently, it takes lots of skill and ability but to most it just seems like we pick the biggest and talked students and ask them to throw heavy objects. Either way the Centipedes seemed to be quite good at this too. The "baby of the throws group" Xianming achieved PBs in both hammer and discus, winning the hammer in the process and getting closer to the distances of fellow dark blue thrower who are old enough to be his Dad! There was an impressive performance from Danny to make it a 1,2 in the hammer and Eric in the shot lead the way for Oxford. Arya and Joe also gave strong performances in the Javelin to make sure Cambridge didn't gain anything on us there. Hector having been persuaded to come down to Cuppers for 400m, threw a solid 34.80m in the discus. He had "been extremely busy with rugby this term (Hilary) but as that is coming to a close, I'm going to focus on my athletics (400m) now". Clearly been deadest on running 400m he could not be persuaded before Cuppers to do the discus. Thankfully he decided

to give it a shot and threw the 2nd best throw of any Oxford thrower this season. He is one to look out for next season once he gives up on that stupid sport.

The 4x400 team, consisting of Andrew, Goodall, Adam and Barrett, rounded off a fantastic day for the Centipedes in style. Comfortably beating the Alverstones and cementing our win! Trophies were won and Vice-Captain Renshaw thrown into the water jump. Our win was duly celebrated by all at the Varsity Dinner and a trip to Vinnies followed by a club. A very memorable day all round and one that will live long in the memory. Well done to everyone who competed for the Centipedes you should all be very proud to have performed the way you did and to have represented Oxford with pride.

6 in a row! Let's make it 7 next year. Result: Centipedes 121, Alverstones 90

