

Southlander's at NZSS Athletics Champs 2019

LANCE SMITH

Quinn Hartley was the Southland star at the national secondary school athletic champs last weekend. In fact, he was one of the stars of the whole competition, taking 3 golds and a meet record. This made the Hargest 15-year-old one of the athletes of the meet and earned him selection to the NZSS Paper Team. (selected athletes do not compete anywhere, but selection is an honour and does give financial grants to help travel to competitions).

On Friday Quinn was top qualifier for the long jump final where he took the title with a leap of 6.94m, breaking a record that has stood since 1974. Then it was the triple jump, which he won with 13.34m, a win by nearly half a metre and the only athlete to go over 13m. Quinn's third competition was the high jump, and this was won with 1.94. Second was 1.83m, four height progressions lower which show how dominant he was.

From season performances there was talk of all three records going and while Quinn gained only one, there was no trace of disappointment. Conditions for much of the meeting were atrocious yet that was not given as an excuse. He only did three (of six) triple jumps and passed on two of his long jumps, saving energy for high jump to come. The fact that he didn't make the record height (2.01m) he put down to being not quite good enough on the day.

However, he is eyeing Gideon Barnard's 2.07m Southland senior record and with a recent 2.03m to his name the record height is a definite possibility.

This was Quinn's final year as a Junior, next year he looks forward to joining the senior ranks. "The stiffer competition will only make me go better" he said.

Academy Southland athlete Jessica Senior of SGHS joined Quinn in the NZSS Paper team, thanks to her win in the senior javelin. The 18-year-old won on her sixth throw, leap frogging Savannah Scheen of Hobsonville to take the title with a 43.58m PB to Savannah's 42.85m. When asked about that winning throw, she simply said, "everything came together".

Probably the most exciting event of the weekend was Kennedy Taylor in the junior girls 3000m. (OK, I coach Kennedy so had more than a passing interest, but it was still exciting). The slight year 9 Girls High student was advised not to lead into the strong wind, but advice was not going to change a habit of a lifetime – Kennedy prefers to race from the front. Which she did for 6 of the 7 ½ Laps. With around 800m left to run she has overtaken, and a sizeable gap opened up. Kennedy patiently clawed her way back then put in a devastating kick to hit the front up the home straight to take the gold in 10:23.17, just 0.73 of a second ahead of second, Unfortunately the road race was cancelled because of the weather, unfortunate as this was Kennedy's prime goal and on paper, a certain medal, probably gold.

Sammy Fookes of Wakatipu High rounded out the Southland medallists with a strong run in the junior girls 800m to earn silver. The middle-distance star in the making easily progressed through the heats and semis and in the final tracked eventual winner Ruby Barton to record 2:20,46, an excellent time in the blustery conditions.

While medals are all very well there were many creditable performance by Southland's student athletes including fourth places from Academy Southland's Tegan Ashley (Aparima) in the senior hammer, Tessa Baird (Verdon) in the junior triple jump (plus 5th in the long jump) and Sam Colyer (SBHS) in the senior triple jump.

And take note of the future stars who are sure to play a part in Southland's athletic success in coming years. Hayato Yoneto (Wakatipu) proved to be a sprinter of national standard by making the senior 100m and 200m finals, Corvin O'Rourke (Hargest) was a finalist in the junior boys 800m, Gareth Harcombe (Wakatipu) narrowly missed out on the senior 800m final with a superb semi time of 2:03.92, while Isaiah Putt (Hargest) sprinted his way to the semi-finals and William Robertson (Hargest) the quarters for the junior 100m in their first major competition.