

ATHLETICS

Clarke's delighted with British crown

LAWRENCE Clarke declared himself well pleased with his 60 metres hurdles victory in the Sainsbury's Indoor British Championships at Sheffield on Saturday, writes STUART WEIR

The Oxfordshire athlete, who booked his place in the European Indoor Championships with a winning time of 7.69 secs, said: "This is my first ever senior gold medal and I have been coming to Sheffield since 2009!

"This week was about qualifying for the European rather than fast running. This year has been very focused. The quality of my training has been up so much - I'm almost a tenth ahead of where I was at this stage in the Olympic year.

Clarke, from Christmas Common near Watlington added: "2015 is a really important year and I want to be as consistent as I can so that I know that I will be able to hold it under pressure in the Olympic year."

Clarke's next race is on Saturday in Birmingham, where the field includes reigning Olympic

champion, Aries Merritt.

Oxford City's Hannah England was sixth in the 3,000 metres in 9.16.07, having been with the leading group until the last 500 metres when she could not respond to their injection of pace.

Sara Treacy of Ireland - one of Hannah's training partners - won in 9.06.23.

England, who has just returned from altitude training in Kenya, said "I felt good until the last 500 when the wheels started to come off. I have had quite a bit of illness since I have been back from Kenya."

She explained she had chosen to run the 3000 because it was a different stimulus. "I get to run 1500s all-year round - so good to do something different.

Ramone Smith (Radley) finished sixth in 6.78, after winning his heat and coming second in the semi-final. He said: "It was a really good afternoon and good experience.

"I see it as a great achievement to make the UK indoor final. My best wasn't good enough today, but I will come again next year!"

Kyle Ennis (Banbury) reached

the semi-final of the 200 metres, finishing fifth in 22.24. He was also seventh in his heat in the 60 metres in 7.09.

Ennis said: "It means a great deal to be able to run here. I am just using the indoor to build up my strength for the outdoor season."

Former Radley athlete, Carolyn Plateau failed to make the final, finishing 4th in her heat of the 800 metres in 2.07.55.

She said: "It was a tough heat, but it is always good to come out and race. It is an honour to be invited to run in the UK trials."

In the long jump, 17 year old, Simi Fajemisin (Oxford City), jumped 5.59 for 11th place.

The Headington schoolgirl said afterwards: "It was really exciting to compete here - but scary as well. It was really different from anything I have done before."

The highlight of the weekend was a new British high jump record by Katarina Johnson-Thompson who cleared 1.97m, and made an unsuccessful attempt at two metres.

Chijindu Ujah won the men's 60m in 6.57 secs.



FLYING THE FLAG: Lawrence Clarke celebrates winning gold in the men's 60m final during the Sainsbury's British Indoor Championships at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield