

## Golden boy is Fid as a fiddle

THERE'S no doubting who had the wickedest smile at the Northern Athletics Championships in Manchester at the weekend.

It wasn't because of the fact that Gateshead Harriers filled the top three places in the triple jump and that Craig Fiddes had just won the gold medal, but that the newly-crowned champion came through the competition unscathed after a year out through injury, not to mention that he had to get over the recent death of his father.

Many a lesser athlete would have buckled and walked away from the sport, but 20-year-old Fiddes has been eased back gently under the guidance of Peter Stanley, and the pair were ecstatic at Sport City.

After receiving his gold medal, Fiddes couldn't hide his elation to be back after overcoming a serious knee injury and painful bereavement.

"I'm absolutely over the moon today, though I have to admit it was hard at times to concentrate after what I've been through in the last 12 months," said Fiddes, who only competed a few times all last year before being hit by the injury which required surgery - and left scars to prove it.

"I was down when I realised how bad the injury was, but when my dad died that was put into perspective. So it's been a real battle to get going again.

"Against the surgeon's wishes, I eventually got into the gym. It's been a gradual build-up since then and it certainly paid off today.

"I was jumping under a cloud for some of the rounds today but somehow managed to get six valid jumps in which, even before my injury, was very rare.

"To win is unbelievable and to jump just 24cm short of my best is amazing. It gives me a superb platform at a time when I didn't even think of getting a season in."

As well as receiving a gold medal, all the senior winners of the Northern Championships were given a free entry into the inaugural English Championships, which are being held at Gateshead International Stadium on the weekend of July 17-18.

However, Fiddes was quick to point out that that could be a problem, even though most of his training is done at the Tyneside venue.

"I think the Scottish Championships are on the same weekend in Pitreavie and, as my dad was Scottish, then I'll be heading North which means, unfortunately, I'll have to give the English Championships a miss.

"I'm not complaining, though. It's the least I can do for my dad."

Meanwhile, Stanley, who was trackside encouraging all three Gateshead jumpers, was thrilled to see his charge come through after such a traumatic year.

"I'm so pleased for Craig. He's had so many problems it's unbelievable," said Stanley, who helped guide Jonathan Edwards to triple jump stardom.

"Craig is such a nice lad, he deserves to succeed. And now that he has got his first competition out of the way, we can look ahead very positively."

# INSIDE TRACK

ATHLETICS BY BILL MCGUIRK



## National talent-spotter Harry now wearing two hats

THE track season is hardly in full swing but already Harry Matthews is looking ahead to the winter and cross-country in particular.

In his role as England Masters cross-country team manager, the Elswick Harrier is on the look-out for candidates for the England team for the Five-Nations International at Perry Barr, Birmingham on November 14.

Matthews, who has been in

charge of the England team for a number of years, has also stepped into the role of England Athletics Masters Association Cross-Country secretary, hence the early announcement of the team selection process.

"The North East has always been well represented at the international, and I'm confident the tradition will continue this year," said Matthews.

"The Veterans AA - North East (VAA-NE) has been one of

the strongest regions represented, and in the past we have had athletes not only running for England, but for every one of the competing countries.

"The England team selection meeting will be held on October 10.

"Interested athletes are asked to give details on an application form of results from national BMAF events, especially cross-country, 5k

road and 10k road championships, plus decent local or regional results over the same distances.

"Current form is also important, but results from races earlier in the year will be considered."

Teams for the international will be selected in all five-year age categories: W35 up to W65-plus and M35 up to M70-plus.

Athletes interested in being considered for selection should

contact Matthews by phone (01661) 835145 or by e-mail: Harryrun@talktalk.net to get the necessary form, which must be returned by September 30.

Those who have the good fortune to be selected will unfortunately have to miss out on competing in the Gateshead Cross-Country meeting at the International Stadium, which once again falls on the same day.

# Ivan takes on a major challenge

## TRACK SHORTS

■ **NEWTON** Aycliffe AC's annual 10km road race, once again supported by 3M, takes place on Sunday, June 20 with a 10am start.

Late entries will be accepted on the day at Greenfield Community and Arts College, Newton Aycliffe.

■ **ELSWICK** Harriers' Newburn River Run, run in memory of Jimmy Bell and supported for the first time by Howdens Joinery, takes place on Wednesday, June 23 with a 7.30pm start.

Entries will be accepted on the night, up to 7pm, providing the course limit of 350 has not been reached.

■ **THE** third Heaton Harriers' Jesmond Dene Handicap Race of the season is scheduled for Monday, June 28, with a 7.30pm start.

Entries for the 3.4-mile event, which takes in Armstrong and Heaton Park as well as Jesmond Dene, will be accepted on the night at the People's Theatre.

■ **HEATON** Harriers Anita Nott Women Only Jesmond Dene Run takes place on Monday, July 5, with a 7.30pm start.

Chester-le-Street's Claire Simpson holds the record with 19min 3secs for the 5.4km course which takes in Jesmond Dene and Armstrong and Heaton Parks.

Postal entries, which close on July 1, go to: Race Secretary, Flat 3, 31 Osborne Avenue Jesmond, Newcastle NE2 1JR.

■ **SALTWELL** Harriers' annual fell race takes place on Tuesday, July 6 with a 7.30pm start.

The event takes place two miles north of Stanhope, Co Durham on the B6278 and entries accepted on the night at the Moorcock pub.

Further information from Keith Wood on 0191 4875867.

■ **TYNEDALE** Harriers' 10km road race, supported by Arnold Clark, takes place on Wednesday, July 7 starting at 7.30pm.

Entries are limited to 700 with the maximum being reached well before the closing date in previous years.

Postal entries, which go to: Hugh Bingham, 29 Bishopton Way, Hexham NE46 2LR, close on June 21.

HE may have put his best athletics performances behind him, but Ivan Hollingsworth is packing in the miles in preparation for his biggest challenge yet.

The 35-year-old Morpeth Harrier is in training to run from Whitehaven to Tynemouth (C2C), which entails completing more than a marathon a day for five days!

It's a tall order, but the former North Tyneside 10km champion is in determined mood and committed to succeed, all in the name of charity.

Hollingsworth has a special reason to attempt something which is usually a challenge for cyclists.

His son Sebastian was born with a congenital heart defect in January 2009. His condition deteriorated much earlier than anticipated and he ended up having emergency heart surgery at only 16 weeks old, hence the idea of the run to raise funds for the Children's Heart Unit Fund (CHUF) at Newcastle's Freeman Hospital.

"We've been so lucky to have tremendous support since Sebastian was born that we feel it's the least we can do," said Hollingsworth, who tested himself out in his only competitive outing last year by winning the Tresco Marathon on the Isles of Scilly.

He will be joined on the run from the Irish Sea to the North Sea, by GMTV presenter Ben Shephard and former Chester-le-Street athlete Andrew Roberts, who will be doing his bit for the Cystic Fibrosis charity.

"I'm sure you are well aware how wonderful the Freeman Hospital is, and it consistently



**ALL IN A GOOD CAUSE:** Ivan Hollingsworth with his son Sebastian, who was born with heart problems. Ivan is running the coast-to-coast event for charity

requires the efforts of people of the North East to keep it at the forefront of paediatric care.

"We personally feel indebted to them for saving our son's life and want to repay them by raising over £100,000 for CHUF.

"There are a number of fund-raising events in the

Tynemouth.

"We are hopeful of attracting huge support along the way, both financially and also from our many friends, colleagues and training partners who will join us for a mile or more.

"The aim is to have a massive crowd running on day five into Tynemouth, including Seb's surgeon, Mr Asif Hasan, and perhaps you could attempt a comeback and also join us!

"Obviously, our aim is to raise as much money as possible for CHUF and the CF Trust and, you never know, after all the hours training for the event you might see me back on the roads again competing in a Morpeth vest."

Hollingsworth will be hoping that things go smoothly, as the night after completing the final leg, he will get himself all spruced up before heading off for the Gateshead Hilton Hotel, where a Black Tie Ball has been organised by his wife Nadine just to keep the charity in the limelight.

Among the celebrities attending are North East actors Denise Welch and Tim Healy, who will be acting as auctioneers attempting to squeeze as much money out of the guests' pockets as possible.

"We cannot thank people enough for rallying round," added Hollingsworth. "My big concern is that I don't fall asleep during the speeches or during the dinner.

"These are the first of many ideas we have of helping CHUF. We just want to do as much as we can so that other children can benefit in the future."

Anyone interested in donating to CHUF, or wanting information about the C2C run or the Black Tie Dinner, can check out the website: www.seb4chuf.org.uk.