

ATHLETICS WEEKLY

DECEMBER 13, 2018 | £3.95

EURO CROSS TRIUMPH

Ingebrigtsens dominate

TOP GEAR

Best products of 2018

GOLDEN GIRLS

British athletes race to under-20 glory

FESTIVE PERIOD TRAINING

How you can tackle Christmas

DOMESTIC POLITICS

Nine-page focus on the structure of athletics in the UK



SAFARI SO GOOD



TILBURG has hosted the European Cross Country Championships before, back in 2005, but it wasn't anything quite like this.

The 2018 edition, which was also the silver anniversary of this event, not only had three more races than its

previous incarnation but took place in the grounds of a resort which lies right next to a Safari Park.

While the athletes might not have been quite so close as to have to be wary of the lions, zebras and camels, they were still confronted by a course which would prove a difficult beast to tame.

There were twists and turns at almost every opportunity and though the thick, hefty rain showers which poured down throughout the afternoon brought the kind of mud which the European Cross has not been quite so accustomed to in the past, the racing was still fast and furious.

The going seemed nothing but smooth, however, for Filip and Jakob Ingebrigtsen whose calm and mature performances in winning senior and under-20 men's gold respectively will only enhance their growing reputations.

It was Filip's first individual European Cross title while

A CHALLENGING BEEKSE BERGEN COURSE, THE ELEMENTS AND SOME FINE PERFORMANCES COMBINE TO PRODUCE MEMORABLE EUROPEAN CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

REPORT: EUAN CRUMLEY PICTURES: MARK SHEARMAN

Winners in Tilburg

Men

Seniors: Filip Ingebrigtsen (NOR) 28:49

Under-23: Jimmy Gressier (FRA) 23:37

Under-20: Jakob Ingebrigtsen (NOR) 18:00

Women

Seniors: Yasemin Can (TUR) 26:05

Under-23: Anna Emilie Møller (DEN) 20:34

Under-20: Nadia Battocletti (ITA) 13:46

Senior mixed relay

Spain: 16:10

The silver anniversary of the European Cross Country Championships produced plenty of excitement



EUROPEAN CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Tilburg 2018

START

Jakob completed a hat-trick of junior titles.

The Kenyan-born Yasemin Can also made it three in a row when it came to the senior women's race but it was noticeable, compared with the championships of recent years, that the African athletes who have created so much attention and

discussion under the transfer of allegiance rules, were not quite so dominant.

From the British perspective, there was the customary success, though perhaps not quite to the level that had been expected as the team finished fourth in the medals table, albeit first in the points table.

Every GB age group side took home a team medal, the only nation to do so.

The under-20 women successfully defended their team title, while both senior men and women landed team silver, as did the under-23 and under-20 men's line-ups. The under-23 women collected bronze.

There were no individual British medals, while there was disappointment at the end of an eventful day when the mixed relay side finished fourth in defence of the crown they won in Samorin 12 months ago.

The baton now passes to the Portuguese capital of Lisbon for 2019.

FILIP ON FIRE

INGEBRIGTSEN CREATES HISTORY AS HE JOINS HIS BROTHERS IN TAKING EUROPEAN CROSS GOLD

Senior men

SIBLING rivalry is a huge part of what drives the Ingebrigtsens to excel. It stands to reason, then, that Filip would also want something that elder and younger brothers Henrik and Jakob already had.

The 25-year-old had been the only one of the trio not to have laid his hands on an individual European Cross gold medal – Henrik having won the under-23 title in 2012 and Jakob completing a hat-trick of under-20 titles earlier in the day in Tilburg – but he set about rectifying that situation in what proved to be a compelling senior men’s race which ebbed and flowed.

It was no surprise to see Turkey’s African-born trio of Kaan Kigen Ozbilen, 2016

champion Aras Kaya and Polat Kemboi Arikan, runner-up two years ago, featuring heavily once again and certainly no-one was surprised they won team gold.

Yet perhaps not quite so readily expected was Ingebrigtsen’s controlled performance in holding them off, as well as the challenge of Kenyan-born Belgian Isaac Kimeli.

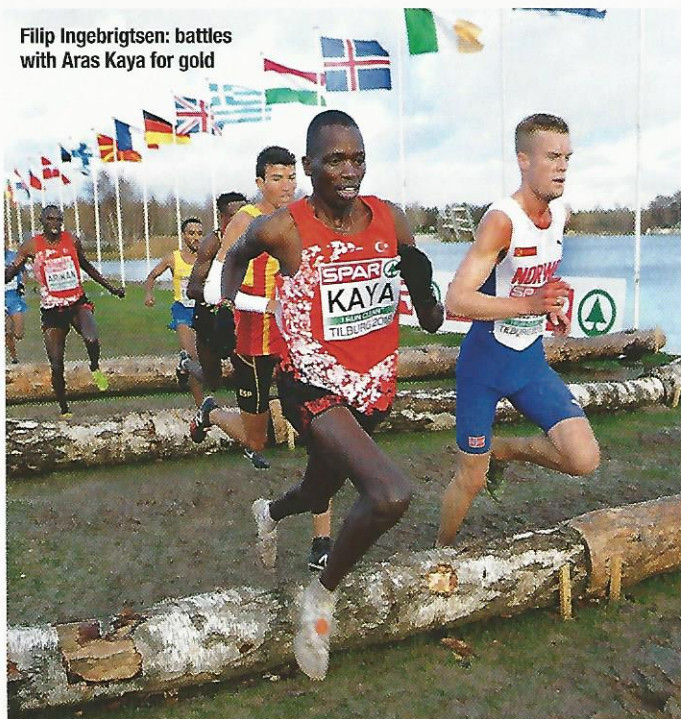
The Norwegian had been content to sit at the back of a large lead pack in the early stages and calmly waited until around the 3000m mark to move to the front of that group, ahead of Kaya and Spanish silver medallist last year, Adel Mechaal.

A number of athletes began to attempt to stake a claim but, as the race hurtled along and



Ross Millington (above) gets to grips with the greasy Tilburg course

Filip Ingebrigtsen: battles with Aras Kaya for gold



the field started to stretch, it eventually became evident that the individual medal fight would come down to a bout between Ingebrigtsen, Kaya, Arikan, Ozbilen and Kimeli, who would simply not be shaken off.

Mechaal had been dropped and with Ozbilen, who had slipped earlier during the race but recovered, starting to tire, Kaya, Kimeli and Ingebrigtsen edged away as they took the bell.

The 2016 European 1500m champion, also a world bronze medallist over the distance last year, knows a thing or two about a strong finish however and made what would be a decisive move as he edged ahead in the tight wooded section of the course which is negotiated before the closing few hundred metres.

He came back out into the

open ahead of Kimeli and, as the line approached and with a glance behind to check his work was done, afforded himself a smile and a kiss of each bicep as he became the first Norwegian ever to win the senior men’s European Cross title.

Ingebrigtsen finished in 28:29,



Dewi Griffiths: back in form after injury

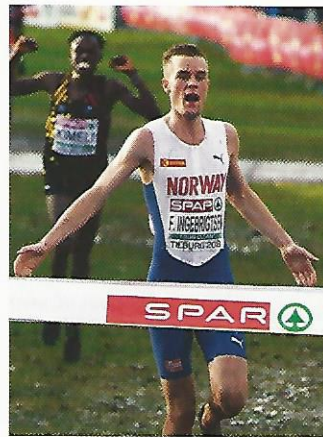


three seconds ahead of the Belgian and seven clear of third-placed Kaya.

Ingebrigtsen, who made it to the 1500m European final won by his brother in Berlin this summer despite cracking a rib during his heat, was understandably thrilled with

his victory. "I wanted to run a decent race. I competed a couple of times at under-23 and under-20 and I never finished in the top 20.

"Every year you have to be well prepared and to have some luck. Unfortunately I didn't have any luck in Berlin," he said.



Filip Ingebrigtsen: too strong for rivals

"I wanted to run a decent race (in Tilburg). I competed a couple of times at under-23 and under-20 and I never finished in the top 20.

"To come here and win the senior race with this level of athletes, is something I didn't dream of before. I stayed with the first group and one after one they started to drop."

As for his opposition, he added: "My mindset is to be the best in the world and to be that you have to beat a lot of Kenyans!"

Marc Scott produced a sprint finish to come home as leading Briton in ninth in 29:21, while

Kristian Jones impressed as he adapted to his late call-up in place of the injured Andy Vernon to finish 12th in 29:28.

Dewi Griffiths didn't finish last year's senior men's race after tearing his hamstring and fared rather better this time around, providing a target for his teammates to catch with his hard running.

With three to score in the team standings, his 13th spot in 29:31 secured the team silver. Cardiff Cross Challenge winner Charlie Hulson was 17th, one place ahead of Henrik Ingebrigtsen, while trials winner Ross Millington was 30th and Nick Goolab – fifth in the early stages – finished 47th.

RESULTS

Senior men: 1 F Ingebrigtsen (NOR) 28:49; 2 I Kimeli (BEL) 28:52; 3 A Kaya (TUR) 28:56; 4 K Özbiilen (TUR) 29:04; 5 S Napoleon (SWE) 29:12; 6 Y Crippa (ITA) 29:14; 7 P Arıkan (TUR) 29:14; 8 A Mechaal (ESP) 29:20; 9 MARC SCOTT 29:21; 10 S Tobin (IRL) 29:22; 11 D Meucci (ITA) 29:26; 12 KRISTIAN JONES 29:28; 13 DEWI GRIFFITHS 29:31; 14 A Abadía (ESP) 29:35; 15 R Hendrix (BEL) 29:36; 16 D Mateo (ESP) 29:40; 17 CHARLIE HULSON 29:43; 18 H Ingebrigtsen (NOR) 29:45; 19 O Hesselbjerg (DEN) 29:46; 20 N Crippa (ITA) 29:47; 21 D Tasama (BEL) 29:47; 22 M Somers (BEL) 29:49; 23 F Orth (GER) 29:49; 24 M Tsenov (BUL) 29:51; 25 H Chahdi (FRA) 29:51; 26 K Dooney (IRL) 29:53; 27 A Ulad (DEN) 29:53; 28 M Buter (NED) 29:54; 29 A El Mazoury (ITA) 29:54; 30 ROSS MILLINGTON 29:57; 31 J Guerra (ESP) 30:00; 32 F Bour (FRA) 30:02; 33 A Abrahá (SWE) 30:03; 34 K Maunsell (IRL) 30:11; 35 R Pinto (POR) 30:13; 36 T Kärbo (NOR) 30:16; 37 J Pérez (ESP) 30:17; 38 K Choukoud (NED) 30:18; 39 V Koval (UKR) 30:19; 40 R Fsiha (SWE) 30:21; 41 H Andrésson (ISL) 30:25; 42 S Boch (GER) 30:25; 43 O Gronnevig (NOR) 30:26; 44 T Nijhuis (DEN) 30:27; 45 M Marques (POR) 30:28; 46 P Glans (DEN) 30:30; 47 NICK GOOLAB 30:31; 48 A Sanguinetti (ITA) 30:31; 49 A Pereira (POR) 30:34; 50 S Bertasius (LTU) 30:36; 51 F Carro (ESP) 30:37; 52 Y Nikolayev (ANA) 30:37; 53 M Belhadj (FRA) 30:39; 54 A Sadedine (FRA) 30:39; 55 K Batt (IRL) 30:41; 56 P Reinhardt (GER) 30:44; 57 D Gras (FRA) 30:46; 58 K Kivistik (EST) 30:50; 59 A Aleksyeyev (ANA) 30:51; 60 K Wedel (GER) 30:53; 61 J Homolac (CZE) 30:54; 62 A Silva (POR) 30:58; 63 R Savchuk (UKR) 31:03; 64 M Teferi (ISR) 31:05; 65 R Schröder (NED) 31:06; 66 A Vojta (AUT) 31:09; 67 M Clohisey (IRL) 31:11; 68 O Allase (EST) 31:14; 69 J Simonsen (DEN) 31:20; 70 C Ulus (TUR) 31:26; 71 R Hoornweg (NED) 31:26; 72 M Dahl-Jessen (DEN) 31:32; 73 D Nikolli (ALB) 31:42; 74 B Horodyskyi (UKR) 31:48; 75 T Theuer (AUT) 31:48; 76 M Kern (SUI) 31:54; 77 J Berzanskis (LTU) 31:55; 78 D Landers (IRL) 32:08; 79 T Sahajda (SVK) 32:12; 80 I Hernandez (SUI) 32:17; 81 K Hussar (EST) 32:34; 82 F Lussy (SUI) 32:38; 83 Y Zhukov (UKR) 32:58; 84 I Kellezi (ALB) 34:12; 85 Sonny Folcheri (MON) 36:03

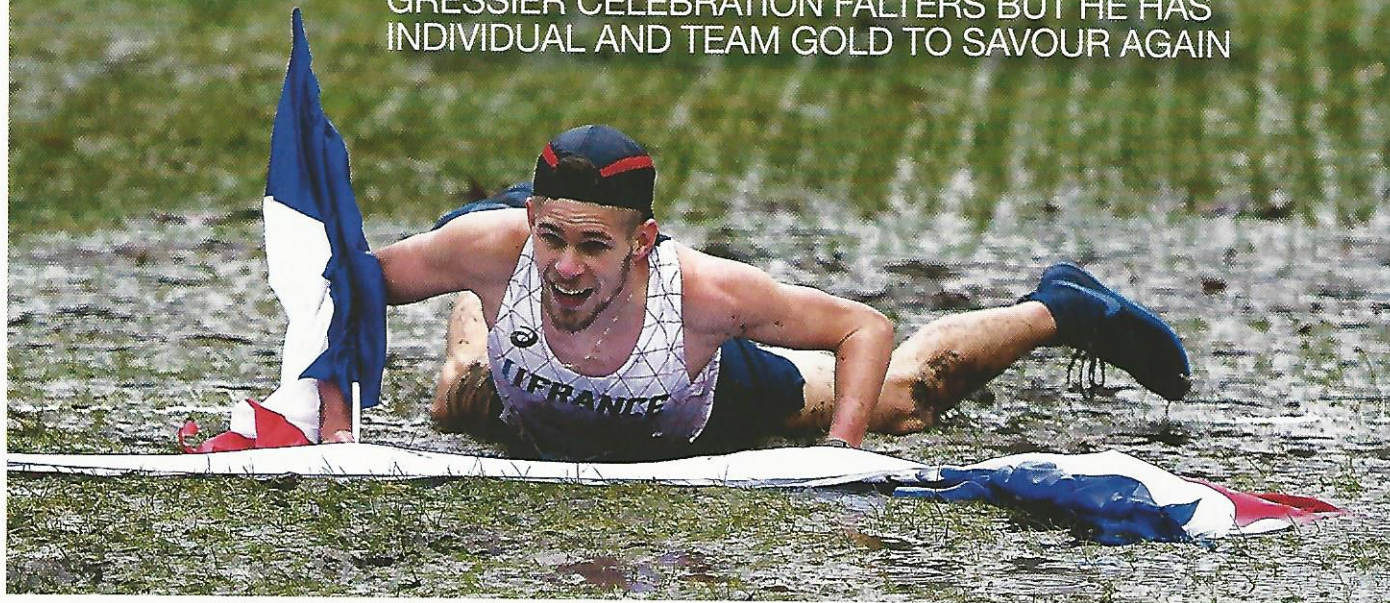
TEAM: 1 Turkey 14; 2 Great Britain & NI 34; 3 Italy 37; 4 Spain 38; 5 Belgium 38; 6 Norway 55; 7 Ireland 70; 8 Sweden 78; 9 Denmark 90; 10 France 110; 11 Germany 121; 12 Portugal 129; 13 Netherlands 131; 14 Ukraine 176; 15 Estonia 207; 16 Switzerland 238



Great Britain team silver (left to right): Nick Goolab, Dewi Griffiths, Charlie Hulson, top-placed Briton Marc Scott, Kristian Jones and Ross Millington

JIMMY'S NO FRENCH FLOP

GRESSIER CELEBRATION FALTERS BUT HE HAS INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM GOLD TO SAVOUR AGAIN



Under-23 men

JIMMY GRESSIER clearly knows what he's doing when it comes to cross country running – after all he became the first man to retain the under-23 title. An area where the Frenchman does need to put in some work, however, is with celebrating.

A resounding front-running display in seeing off the

attentions of Germany's Samuel Fitwi had given him enough of a time cushion to grab two French tricolore flags and begin to enjoy his golden moment as he came down the finishing straight.

Perhaps he had too much time to think but Gressier's plan to slide through the muddy line on his knees came seriously unstuck as his momentum was

quickly halted and he instead confirmed victory with his face planted firmly in the muck.

He emerged from his fall with a wide grin, however, and the satisfaction of a job well done – when it came to the racing, anyway.

Gressier is a colourful character who runs with a baseball cap on back to front.

A sowester might have been more appropriate attire on this occasion, though, as the heavens opened mid-race and the course quickly began to change in character.

However, he barely broke stride at the head of proceedings for much of the 8.3km course and gradually turned the screw on Fitwi, an Eritrean refugee who came to Germany in 2014.

The winning margin was eight seconds in the end, Gressier clocking 23:37 while his fellow countryman Hugo Hay – silver medallist in Samorin last year – was third in 23:48 to ensure the French retained team gold. The 11 points they secured this time is the second-lowest winning European Cross under-23 team score, bettered only by their total of seven in claiming victory in Samorin.

Gressier said: "The biggest difference compared to last year is that I was the one chasing then and this year I was the one getting chased. I am just very

Mahamed Mahamed (right): gets stuck into the twisty, testing course





Six of the best: Britain's under-23 men's squad take silver

RESULTS

U23 men: 1 J Gressier (FRA) 23:37; 2 S Fitwi (GER) 23:45; 3 H Hay (FRA) 23:48; 4 R Forsyth (IRL) 23:49; 5 PATRICK DEVER 24:05; 6 T Novales (ESP) 24:05; 7 F Palcau (FRA) 24:06; 8 EMILE CAIRESS 24:07; 9 L Gilavert (FRA) 24:11; 10 A Ben (ESP) 24:12; 11 S Niesten (NED) 24:13; 12 S Colombini (ITA) 24:13; 13 M Görger (GER) 24:17; 14 D Boulvain (BEL) 24:19; 15 A Gergis (SWE) 24:20; 16 T Getahon (ISR) 24:23; 17 MAHAMED MAHAMED 24:24; 18 Y Schrub (FRA) 24:25; 19 OLIVER FOX 24:25; 20 M Foppen (NED) 24:29; 21 D Kersten (BEL) 24:31; 22 J Gertsen (DEN) 24:36; 23 S Debognies (BEL) 24:41; 24 T Raitanen (FIN) 24:42; 25 C Deflandre (BEL) 24:43; 26 A Houkmi (ESP) 24:43; 27 PAULOS SURAFEL 24:46; 28 JOHN MILLAR 24:47; 29 B Fay (IRL) 24:47; 30 I Balabanov (BUL) 24:52; 31 E Danielsson (SWE) 24:54; 32 G Ayale (ISR) 24:55; 33 DBienenfeld (GER) 24:56; 34 J Seelhöfer (GER) 24:57; 35 V Šinajl (CZE) 24:58; 36 P O'Donnell (IRL) 24:58; 37 P Sanchez (ESP) 25:00; 38 L Eisele (GER) 25:01; 39 Y Abuhay (ISR) 25:02; 40 A Giacobazzi (ITA) 25:03; 41 J Mortier (BEL) 25:06; 42 L Sinn (AUT) 25:07; 43 O Aras (TUR) 25:08; 44 G Belachew (ISR) 25:08; 45 R Mugnosso (ITA) 25:10; 46 F Bozkurt (TUR) 25:10; 47 T Hendrikse (NED) 25:10; 48 J Pereira (POR) 25:11; 49 S Krauchenia (BLR) 25:14; 50 S Sundström (SWE) 25:16; 51 C Doyle (IRL) 25:17; 52 G Steffensen (SWE) 25:21; 53 B Malede (ISR) 25:23; 54 D Boratynski (POL) 25:27; 55 I Fontes (ESP) 25:29; 56 J O'Leary (IRL) 25:31; 57 R Ferreira (POR) 25:31; 58 A Ouhda (ITA) 25:33; 59 A Sushchenia (BLR) 25:34; 60 F Fialho (POR) 25:34; 61 W Sowik (POL) 25:36; 62 A Jimenez (ESP) 25:38; 63 M de Backer (NED) 25:45; 64 P Silva (POR) 25:45; 65 M Kaczmarek (POL) 25:46; 66 A Alifimov (UKR) 25:47; 67 V Skudny (BLR) 25:48; 68 J Kovar (CZE) 25:50; 69 J De Marchi (ITA) 25:55; 70 S Shevchenko (UKR) 25:55; 71 N Dworczak (POL) 25:59; 72 M Debski (POL) 26:00; 73 S Zeliankowski (BLR) 26:00; 74 O Günen (TUR) 26:03; 75 P Nebyt (BLR) 26:04; 76 K Stamouilis (GRE) 26:04; 77 Y Khelaf (FRA) 26:04; 78 N Coman (ROU) 26:09; 79 A Ailksiychuk (UKR) 26:14; 80 G Campbell (IRL) 26:14; 81 K Jensen (DEN) 26:15; 82 D Ivanovski (MKD) 26:16; 83 T Chukan (UKR) 26:18; 84 R Karagöz (TUR) 26:19; 85 P Bratulic (CRO) 26:25; 86 L Latsepov (EST) 26:31; 87 M Abner (EST) 26:42; 88 L Chis (ROU) 26:49; 89 I Dragusin (ROU) 26:52; 90 J Kreutzer (AUT) 26:59; 91 A Amelchanka (BLR) 27:09; 92 Y Tassis (GRE) 27:15

TEAM: 1 France 11; 2 Great Britain & NI 30; 3 Spain 42; 4 Germany 48; 5 Belgium 58; 6 Ireland 69; 7 Netherlands 78; 8 Israel 87; 9 Sweden 96; 10 Italy 97; 11 Turkey 163; 12 Portugal 165; 13 Belarus 175; 14 Poland 180; 15 Ukraine 215; 16 Romania 255

happy to win for the second time. The conditions were difficult but the course was still really nice despite the weather."

Team silver went to Britain, Patrick Dever's growing European Cross experience proving to be beneficial as he came home in fifth (24:05), two seconds ahead of a frustrated Emile Cairess in eighth.

Mahamed Mahamed completed the scoring trio with 24:24 for 17th.

"I'm over the moon to get team silver," said Dever. "I have done these Championships for the last two years and each time I have gradually improved;

two bronzes and now a silver. They are top guys, so it is so hard. It spread out so much and everything was running as individuals or in small groups."

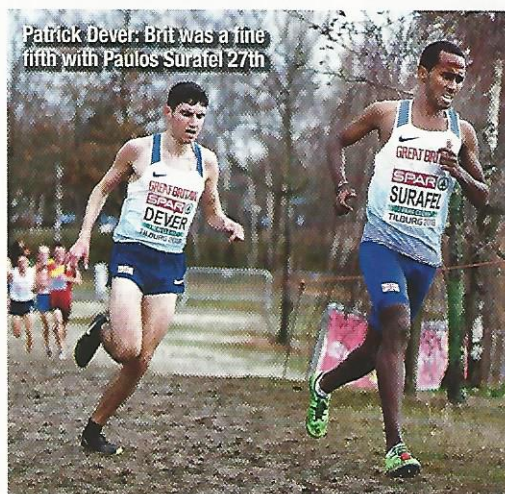
Cairess added: "I fell over at the beginning on the first turn so I was way back and I think I could have maybe got a medal so it is disappointing. I still managed to get into the top 10, but, after falling over on a course like this, it was basically impossible for me to get back to where I needed to be."

It's doubtful Oliver Fox has ever enjoyed a 19th-place finish so much. Being diagnosed with Crohn's disease since his last

European Cross appearance in 2015 has not been easy, but his health struggles meant this medal-winning moment was savoured all the more.

"Two years ago, when I was diagnosed, I didn't think I would be able to run again at all," he said. "It is one of those diseases which is unpredictable and very difficult to treat. You have got to have a lot of hospital treatment, infusions in hospital to keep it under control and they also suppress your immune system, so you can't fight infections.

"It was really nice to be able to come and actually just be on the start line. It has completely



Patrick Dever: Brit was a fine fifth with Paulos Surafel 27th



Jimmy Gressier: Frenchman pushed the pace relentlessly

changed my perspective on the sport. It is one of the best feelings to go from hardly moving further than a mile to running in this again."

Paulos Surafel was 27th, following immediately by debutant John Millar, to complete the British line-up.



JUBILANT JAKOB

Jake Heyward (centre): leads the GB challenge in the under-20 men's race.



TEENAGE STAR FINISHES YEAR TO REMEMBER WITH THIRD JUNIOR MEN'S GOLD

Under-20 men

GIVEN half a chance, Jakob Ingebrigtsen would have been lining up with his brothers in the senior men's race in Tilburg. For now, however, this remarkable 18-year-old is content to continue his total domination of the junior European Cross event.

As the man himself puts it: "I can do that (run with the seniors) in a couple of years' time. I'm not in a hurry."



Jakob Ingebrigtsen: Norwegian took every barrier in his stride as he stormed to a hat-trick of titles

Indeed, for an athlete who is so quick over the ground, the Norwegian rarely looks rushed. As with most top sportspeople, he creates the impression of having extra time to play with and a way of making the difficult and testing appear rather easy.

This has of course been the year when Ingebrigtsen, a man accustomed to breaking records, has really made the athletics world sit up and take notice – his memorable 1500m and 5000m double in Berlin in the summer saw him become the youngest ever senior male European champion.

When it comes to the European Cross, top spot on the



Silver lining: Britain's under-20 men's team with their medals (from left to right) Tom Mortimer, Rory Leonard, Jack Meijer, Matt Willis, Isaac Akers, Jake Heyward

podium is usually reserved for him, too. Following his victories in Chia two years ago and then Samorin last year, this was his third men's under-20 title in a row, a feat which has not been achieved by anyone else.

For all that Serbian former 3000m European Youth Champion Elzan Bibic applied some pressure and Spain's Ouassim Oumaiz made much of the running during the race, as well as playing to the crowd, urging them to roar him on and at one stage even exchanging a high five with Ingebrigtsen, the Norwegian's quiet assurance came to the surface again and there was an inevitability about him finishing the day as champion once more.

In the end, it was clear who was pulling the strings and Ingebrigtsen ultimately secured a nine-second winning margin from Oumaiz, with 6.3km covered in 18:00 while Bibic was third in 18:11.

"It was a really tough race, but it was fun," said the champion. "Myself and the other competitors had a really good fight so all in all it was a good race to be involved in."

Norway took the team gold, just two points ahead of a British

side which was led home by GB trials winner and European under-20 1500m champion Jake Heyward. The Welshman clocked 18:16 for fourth spot as he narrowly missed out on an individual medal.

Isaac Akers also had a podium spot in mind until a slip proved costly. He had looked to be running well despite some pre-race illness and his 12th place, with Matt Willis following in 14th, meant silver.

Jack Meijer was next Brit to finish in 28th, while fast-starting Tom Mortimer was 32nd and Rory Leonard had, by his own admission, a 'shocker' as both his shoes came off in the Tilburg mud on his way to 71st place.

Heyward, fourth behind Ingebrigtsen in the 1500m at the world under-20 championships earlier this year, said: "Obviously it is really difficult missing out yet again, but, at the same time, I am a track runner. It was a proper cross country course this time – the European Champs in the past have been fast and suited to long distance runners.

"It was good to be able to come to the European Cross Country and show I've got that strength. It wasn't quite enough, but I dug in deep for the team and I am glad we could come away with the team silver."

Akers added: "I had what felt like a fever and then I was sick just before the race. It was more nerves than anything. I was happy to come through and score for the team and happy to be out here with the boys after missing two years with injury."

RESULTS

U20 men: 1 J Ingebrigtsen (NOR) 18:00; 2 O Oumaiz (ESP) 18:09; 3 E Bibic (SRB) 18:11; 4 JAKE HEYWARD 18:16; 5 A Haugen (NOR) 18:18; 6 M Mohumed (GER) 18:27; 7 M Kodad (FRA) 18:28; 8 A Aslanhan (TUR) 18:45; 9 N Jäger (GER) 18:47; 10 V Bresc (FRA) 18:47; 11 B Anderiessen (NED) 18:47; 12 ISAAC AKERS 18:48; 13 R Bastug (TUR) 18:48; 14 MATTHEW WILLIS 18:49; 15 T van de Velde (BEL) 18:53; 16 D McElhinney (IRL) 18:53; 17 M Anagnóstou (GRE) 18:54; 18 S O'Leary (IRL) 19:01; 19 R Oosting (NED) 19:02; 20 O Ismail (SWE) 19:02; 21 J Battle (IRL) 19:03; 22 H Stavik (NOR) 19:05; 23 D Müller (GER) 19:06; 24 A Gervais (FRA) 19:07; 25 A Garcea (ROU) 19:08; 26 T Verbaandert (NED) 19:09; 27 L Da Silva (BEL) 19:09; 28 JACK MEIJER 19:09; 29 M García (ESP) 19:12; 30 P Selvarolo (ITA) 19:12; 31 M Peris (ESP) 19:12; 32 TOM MORTIMER 19:13; 33 A Krakovetsky (UKR) 19:13; 34 E Vecchi (ITA) 19:14; 35 M Gouyette (FRA) 19:14; 36 I Palkovits (HUN) 19:15; 37 J Weiss (GER) 19:15; 38 D Gomes (POR) 19:15; 39 P Arese (ITA) 19:15; 40 R Van Riel (NED) 19:17; 41 L Alfieri (ITA) 19:18; 42 E Schreml (GER) 19:19; 43 I Martens (NED) 19:19; 44 A Özdemir (TUR) 19:19; 45 L Keronen (FIN) 19:19; 46 M Kotiranta (FIN) 19:21; 47 E Herreros (ESP) 19:22; 48 A Rodriguez (ESP) 19:22; 49 A Cavagna (ITA) 19:23; 50 A Shustsik (BLR) 19:24; 51 T Lapouge (FRA) 19:24;

52 N Carabaña (AND) 19:26; 53 M Kjeldsen (DEN) 19:27; 54 A Ostdal (DEN) 19:27; 55 O Millan De La (SWE) 19:29; 56 L Maas (NED) 19:30; 57 J Stalhandske (SUI) 19:30; 58 M Czeronek (POL) 19:30; 59 J Vedvik (NOR) 19:31; 60 M Power (IRL) 19:32; 61 M Panteleyev (UKR) 19:33; 62 I Nader (POR) 19:35; 63 A Kokaly (AUT) 19:35; 64 G Valincius (LTU) 19:37; 65 A Mutlu (TUR) 19:37; 66 J Tapias (ESP) 19:39; 67 N Pereira (POR) 19:39; 68 B Kölle (SUI) 19:40; 69 B Jarczok (POL) 19:40; 70 M Hall (DEN) 19:41; 71 RORY LEONARD 19:46; 72 L Pellaz (SUI) 19:48; 73 K Cibán (CRO) 19:50; 74 S Steinshamn (NOR) 19:50; 75 F Stewart (IRL) 19:50; 76 I Balouma (FRA) 19:52; 77 N Amsellek (ITA) 19:52; 78 R Sasyn (CZE) 19:53; 79 A Medveds (LAT) 19:54; 80 M Christen (SUI) 19:56; 81 N Sakis (GRE) 19:59; 82 M Cimermancic (SLO) 20:02; 83 N Hagger (SUI) 20:04; 84 T Vanoppen (BEL) 20:05; 85 V Lonskyy (UKR) 20:06; 86 D Finn (IRL) 20:08; 87 M Ribeiro (POR) 20:09; 88 E Shifris (DEN) 20:11; 89 I Sosnytsky (UKR) 20:11; 90 M Muuse (FIN) 20:17; 91 M Rizmal (SLO) 20:17; 92 Y Cornillie (SUI) 20:22; 93 Z Kozuhar (CRO) 20:57; 94 A Renko (SLO) 21:11; 95 L Nedeljkovic (CRO) 22:52
TEAM: 1 Norway 28; 2 Great Britain & NI 30; 3 Germany 38; 4 France 41; 5 Ireland 55; 6 Netherlands 56; 7 Spain 62; 8 Turkey 65; 9 Italy 103; 10 Belgium 126; 11 Portugal 167; 12 Denmark 177; 13 Ukraine 179; 14 Finland 181; 15 Switzerland 197; 16 Croatia 261; 17 Slovenia 267

CAN COMES THROUGH

KENYAN-BORN TURK IS PUSHED ALL THE WAY TO COMPLETE HER HISTORIC TITLE HAT-TRICK

Senior women

IN 2016 and 2017, Yasemin Can had set a template for how she wanted the European Cross senior women's race to unfold. She would hit the front early before gradually upping the pace, moving away from the rest of the field and recording an emphatic win.

However, all has not necessarily been going to plan this year for the Kenyan-born Turk who could only manage third and fifth as she defended her European 5000m and 10,000m titles respectively on the track this summer.

In Tilburg, it soon became apparent that things would be different when it came to cross country in 2018, too.

As expected Can, wearing



Flanked by sizeable crowds, the senior women's race gets underway

a tracksuit top against the elements, moved to the head of affairs and was pursued by Norway's European steeplechase bronze medallist Karoline Grovdal, European steeplechase silver medallist Fabienne Schlumpf of Switzerland, Britain's Melissa Courtney and home favourite Susan Krumins, who had come

second in that 5000m in Berlin ahead of Can and was receiving the full backing of the Dutch fans on 'Holland Hill'.

When the Turkish athlete began to establish a gap, there was the feeling that normal service was about to be resumed. Her pursuers would not be deterred, though, and Schlumpf began to narrow the gap, moving to within a second as the pair came through the 5.5km mark on the 8.3km course.

Showing vastly different running styles and with Schlumpf carefully picking her way through the mud to great effect, the duo were now locked into the race for gold, while Krumins and Grovdal followed in pursuit of the bronze medal.

Can is more used to a procession down the finishing straight, having won by 10 and 15 seconds on her previous victories, but there was still little to split the leaders as they entered the closing metres.

Can ultimately had just enough to outkick her opponent,

winning by a second in 26:05 and making history by becoming the first woman to win this title three times. Grovdal, meanwhile, had managed to add to the drama by closing right in on the leading duo but simply ran out of course, finishing in 26:07.

Krumins, under-23 champion when she last competed at the European Cross a decade ago, was nine seconds back in fourth but led the Netherlands to their first ever team gold, an impressive feat given the absence of Dutch star Sifan Hassan from proceedings through injury.

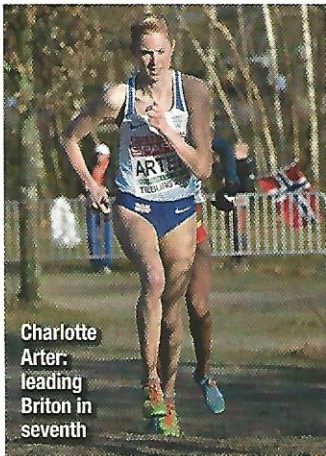
Their winning margin was four points from a British side defending their title and which had packed very well, filling the spots from seventh to 10th.

Charlotte Arter was first in the blanket British finish in 26:57, followed by Commonwealth 1500m bronze medallist Courtney in 26:59, while Pippa Woolven's 27:02 was the last to score in the team standings.

Jess Piasecki was 10th in 27:03, with team captain Kate



Yasemin Can: Turkish runner pushes the pace ahead of home hope Susan Krumins



Charlotte Arter: leading Briton in seventh

Avery – suffering from a very heavy cold but winning the ninth European Cross medal of her career – took 15th and Verity Ockenden, in her first senior appearance at this event, 20th.

“Great Britain has always had great success at these championships as a team, so you always want to get on the podium,” said Liverpool trials winner Arter. “Obviously, we are always striving for that gold medal, but silver as a team, in what I think is a really strong competition, I am really happy with that.”

Can celebrated her 22nd victory earlier this week and acknowledged just how tough a



GB team silver (l to r): Pippa Woolven, Charlotte Arter, Kate Avery, Melissa Courtney, Jess Piasecki, Verity Ockenden

test she had been given.

“It was nice that I had a good battle with Fabienne Schlumpf,” she said. “I wasn’t 100% this season, but now I think I’m coming back. And yes, I felt some kind of pressure as the defending champion.”

For Grovdal it was her fourth consecutive European Cross bronze medal – a cause for celebration, though she couldn’t hide a little frustration after crossing the finishing line.

“I had so much power in the



Yasemin Can: holds off Fabienne Schlumpf

end, so I actually hoped that we would have one more lap,” she said, “I felt I was getting stronger throughout the race, so when the bell rang I was disappointed,

I thought we would have two more laps to go. The course was very heavy, but it is fun because there is always something happening.”



Melissa Courtney: Brit mixes it with Fabienne Schlumpf and Karoline Grovdal

RESULTS

Senior women: 1 Y Can (TUR) 26:05; 2 F Schlumpf (SUI) 26:06; 3 K Grovdal (NOR) 26:07; 4 S Krumins (NED) 26:16; 5 J Vastenburger (NED) 26:45; 6 E Burkard (GER) 26:53; 7 CHARLOTTE ARTER 26:57; 8 MELISSA COURTNEY 26:59; 9 PIPPA WOOLVEN 27:02; 10 JESS PIASECKI 27:03; 11 M Koster (NED) 27:08; 12 T Gebre (ESP) 27:16; 13 C Fougberg (SWE) 27:17; 14 A Gosk (POL) 27:20; 15 KATE AVERY 27:20; 16 L Westphal (FRA) 27:20; 17 M Bouchard (FRA) 27:21; 18 M Alm (DEN) 27:22; 19 F Amrhein (GER) 27:26; 20 VERITY OCKENDEN 27:30; 21 J van Velthoven (NED) 27:30; 22 N Lauwaert (BEL) 27:34; 23 S Mengisteab (SWE) 27:39; 24 Ö Kaya (TUR) 27:41; 25 C Granz (GER) 27:43; 26 S Treacy (IRL) 27:46; 27 D Schöneborn (GER) 27:47; 28 C Rocha (POR) 27:48; 29 M Stewartova (CZE) 27:49; 30 A Bobocel (ROU) 27:50; 31 H Klein (GER) 27:53; 32 V Kalyuzhina (UKR) 27:54; 33 S Fjortoft (NOR) 27:54; 34 R Bärca (ROU) 27:55; 35 N Lugerros (ESP) 27:58; 36 I Truysers (BEL) 27:59; 37 A Guerin (FRA) 28:00; 38 T Carretero (ESP) 28:02; 39 V Roffino

(ITA) 28:02; 40 M Mircheva (BUL) 28:03; 41 I Monteiro (POR) 28:05; 42 P Todoran (ROU) 28:07; 43 C Mageean (IRL) 28:08; 44 L Havell (SWE) 28:10; 45 M Pérez (ESP) 28:11; 46 C Simion (ROU) 28:11; 47 C Santi (ITA) 28:12; 48 S Duarte (FRA) 28:13; 49 G Epis (ITA) 28:15; 50 C Perraux (FRA) 28:19; 51 M Finn (IRL) 28:23; 52 Y Prokofyeva (UKR) 28:23; 53 V Zinenko (UKR) 28:26; 54 H Vandenbussche (BEL) 28:26; 55 S Våg (NOR) 28:32; 56 O Claude-Boxberger (FRA) 28:35; 57 A Moglynn (IRL) 28:40; 58 S Ribeiro (POR) 28:42; 59 Z Fuentes-Pila (ESP) 28:45; 60 A Brzezinska (POL) 28:46; 61 E Loyo (ESP) 28:47; 62 F Ross (IRL) 28:48; 63 T Erdal (TUR) 28:57; 64 K O’Flaherty (IRL) 29:00; 65 C Santos (POR) 29:01; 66 C Priscearu (ROU) 29:10; 67 O Rayta (UKR) 29:23; 68 J Holterman (NED) 29:39; 69 L Kancyte (LTU) 29:48; S Moreira (POR) DNF; JAugusto (POR) DNF
TEAM: 1 Netherlands 20; 2 Great Britain & NI 24; 3 Germany 50; 4 France 70; 5 Sweden 80; 6 Spain 85; 7 Turkey 88; 8 Norway 91; 9 Romania 106; 10 Belgium 112; 11 Ireland 120; 12 Portugal 127; 13 Italy 135; 14 Ukraine 137

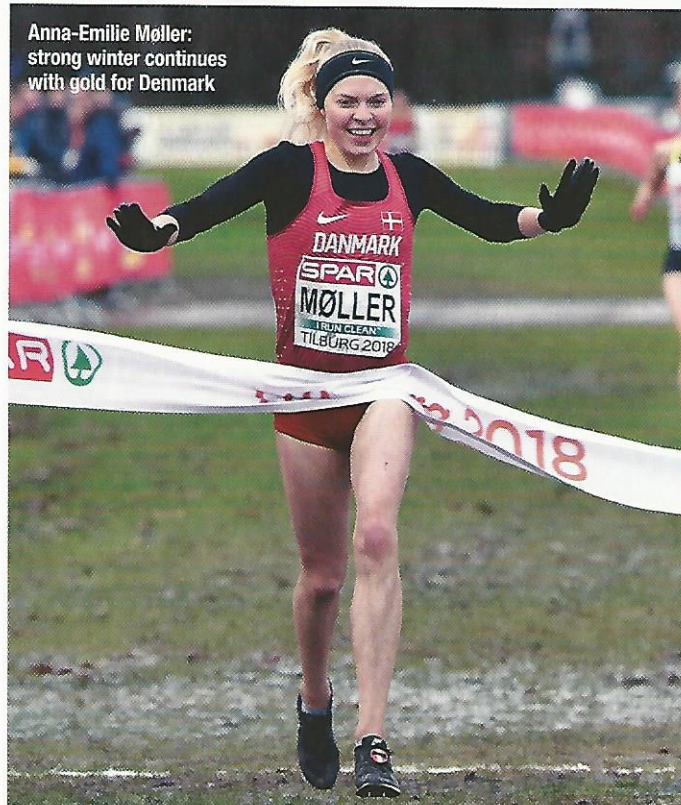
MØLLER MAKES HER MARK

BRITISH-BASED DANE GETS HER TIMING JUST RIGHT ON TILBURG COURSE

Amy Griffiths and Poppy Tank are to the fore in the opening stages as athletes negotiate the logs



Anna-Emilie Møller: strong winter continues with gold for Denmark



Under-23 women

THE promotional machine in Denmark will now begin to crank up in earnest as the IAAF world cross country championships at the end of March edge ever closer.

There will be few better adverts for the sport in the host nation, however, than one of their own clinching a major European title in dramatic style.

Indeed, Anna-Emilie Møller chose the perfect time to become Denmark's first individual gold medallist since Carsten Jorgensen 21 years ago and the first ever to win the under-23 race. To do so the European under-23 steeplechase champion had to come from behind – a long way behind, in fact.

Germany's Anna Gehring, a silver medallist in this race two

years ago, had looked to be on course for the top spot on the podium having stretched clear of Møller and Switzerland's Chiara Scherrer.

Yet the Dane who lives in England has Nordic Cross Country Championships and Cardiff Cross Challenge victories under her belt already this winter and stuck to her task. The 21-year-old refused to panic and began to reel Gehring in.

Safe in the knowledge she had a finishing kick she could count on despite the mounting tiredness Møller used a downslope in the wooded section of the course to take the lead coming into the closing stages of the 6.3km race.

She quickly changed gear and made a move for the line which Gehring could not match and broke the tape in 20:34, two

seconds ahead of her German rival as Poland's Weronika Pyzik came home a further 10 seconds adrift.

Møller, featured in the pages of the December 6 issue of AW, is a student runner at St Mary's University, Twickenham where she trains under the guidance of Mick Woods, so there was a little of her European success which was made in Britain.

"I didn't think I was going to win," admitted the 2016 under-20 silver medallist. "Anna Gehring looked very strong and I thought she would keep on running away from me but in the end I realised she was getting closer and I knew that I have that sprint at the end."

She added: "This was a big goal but now I'm looking forward to the worlds in my own country. It's a big event for Denmark and we are very proud to be hosting the worlds."

For Gehring, there was team gold for Germany to go with her individual silver, with Spain three points behind and Britain picking up the bronze.

At one stage it seemed as if Amy Griffiths was moving into contention for individual honours, looking strong alongside the leaders, until a slip changed everything and she had



Bronze battlers
(l to r): Lydia Turner, Amy Griffiths, Emily Moyes, Poppy Tank, Abbie Donnelly and Dani Chattenton

to settle for seventh place.

University of Utah student Poppy Tank, who had been at the front in the early stages, came ninth on her European Cross debut and Abbie Donnelly's 17th place meant there was at least the consolation of team bronze.

Dani Chattenton (21st), Lydia Turner (30th) and Emily Moyes (45th) completed the GB line-up.

Griffiths, who was distraught at the finish, could not shake the feeling of what might have been.

"I was with the girls at the front for so much of the race and they started to push it on," said Griffiths of her 21:04 run. "I tried to hang on and then push on if I could, but then I was coming down this bank and I just went flying – I slid down the bank and that

was it, they had gone. I picked myself up and I was like 'right, gather my thoughts and then go on again'. I am just really disappointed because coming into this race I was in such good shape."

Tank added: "It was a pleasant surprise to see myself so far up the field being my first time here, but really good fun. I loved it."



Amy Griffiths pursues runner-up Anna Gehring

RESULTS

U23 women: 1 A Møller (DEN) 20:34; 2 A Gehring (GER) 20:36; 3 W Pyzik (POL) 20:46; 4 C Scherrer (SUI) 20:48; 5 C Antón (ESP) 20:57; 6 M Datlike (GER) 20:58; 7 AMY GRIFFITHS 21:04; 8 C Cardama (ESP) 21:04; 9 POPPY TANK 21:05; 10 M Senechal (FRA) 21:06; 11 E Morenaite (LTU) 21:07; 12 M Garcia (ESP) 21:13; 13 Y Kiliç (TUR) 21:13; 14 L Tertsch (GER) 21:13; 15 L Meyer (GER) 21:14; 16 E Flanagan (IRL) 21:17; 17 ABBIE DONNELLY 21:19; 18 K Dvorakova (CZE) 21:22; 19 R Lonedo (ITA) 21:24; 20 F Stutz (SUI) 21:24; 21 DANI CHATTENTON 21:30; 22 L Hadji (FRA) 21:30; 23 F Zanne (ITA) 21:31; 24 E Delanis (FRA) 21:31; 25 A Richardson (IRL) 21:32; 26 B Koku (TUR) 21:34; 27 A Pedersen (DEN) 21:36; 28 J Thestrup (DEN) 21:42; 29 T Piolot-Doco (FRA) 21:42; 30 LYDIA TURNER 21:43; 31 K Radzeyuk (BLR) 21:44; 32 S Pingpank (GER) 21:44; 33 N Cano (ESP) 21:45; 34 V Scaunet (BEL) 21:47; 35 A Mitard (FRA) 21:49; 36 M Ghidini (ITA) 21:49; 37 P Kapala (POL) 21:58; 38 S Erol (TUR) 22:01; 39 B Atalay (TUR) 22:02; 40 T Shabanava

(BLR) 22:02; 41 R Flanagan (IRL) 22:04; 42 L Martins (POR) 22:07; 43 F Sweeney (IRL) 22:08; 44 L Rooms (BEL) 22:09; 45 EMILY MOYES 22:10; 46 M Ahm (DEN) 22:11; 47 V Zrastakova (SVK) 22:11; 48 G Pauzaitė (LTU) 22:11; 49 A Chlebkova (CZE) 22:11; 50 A Zhmurko (UKR) 22:17; 51 B Subatan (TUR) 22:17; 52 Y Moroz (UKR) 22:23; 53 M Larsen (DEN) 22:23; 54 S O'Flaherty (IRL) 22:25; 55 K Vaidziulyte (LTU) 22:27; 56 E van der Kolk (NED) 22:28; 57 L Alemanni (SUI) 22:30; 58 T Hrochova (CZE) 22:31; 59 M Martins (POR) 22:34; 60 P Gonzalez (ESP) 22:41; 61 G Leoz (ESP) 22:47; 62 M Nemchenko (UKR) 22:54; 63 S Kristensen (DEN) 22:55; 64 V Fedchyk (UKR) 22:55; 65 T Korvasova (CZE) 22:56; 66 S Mcallister (IRL) 23:16; 67 H Alves (POR) 23:19; 68 A Butnariu (ROU) 23:23; 69 Z Durcova (SVK) 23:59

TEAM: 1 Germany 22; 2 Spain 25; 3 Great Britain & NI 33; 4 France 56; 5 Denmark 56; 6 Turkey 77; 7 Italy 78; 8 Switzerland 81; 9 Ireland 82; 10 Lithuania 114; 11 Czech Republic 125; 12 Ukraine 164; 13 Portugal 168

BRITAIN'S TOP TEAM

JUNIOR WOMEN TAKE GOLD WHILE BATTOCLETTI MAKES IT A FIRST FOR ITALY

Under-20 women

THE junior women's side had got the day off to a gold medal-winning start for Britain when they successfully defended their team title in the opening race of the championships.

Italy's Nadia Battocletti – the European under-20 3000m bronze medallist – was the individual victor after seeing off Swiss Delia Sclabas to take gold by a second in 13:46, while Turkey's Inci Kalkan was a further second back in third.

Amelia Quirk battled to fifth, but it was perhaps a case of what could have been for the Briton after she tripped over Irish athlete Sarah Healy, who had fallen, on the second lap and was left winded.

The Bracknell athlete recovered her composure but, with the race unfolding at great speed, was simply left with just too much to do to catch up in her attempt to emulate the feat of last year's champion Harriet Knowles Jones.

Eventual winner Nadia Battocletti leads with Britain's Amelia Quirk well placed before her mid-race fall



It says much for Quirk that she still managed to lead the team charge for gold and did cover the 4.3km course in 13:57, followed three seconds later by seventh-placed Khahisa

Mhlanga and Grace Brock in 11th (14:05) on her first appearance.

Trials winner Cari Hughes (13th) and Brock's fellow debutants Anna Macfadyen

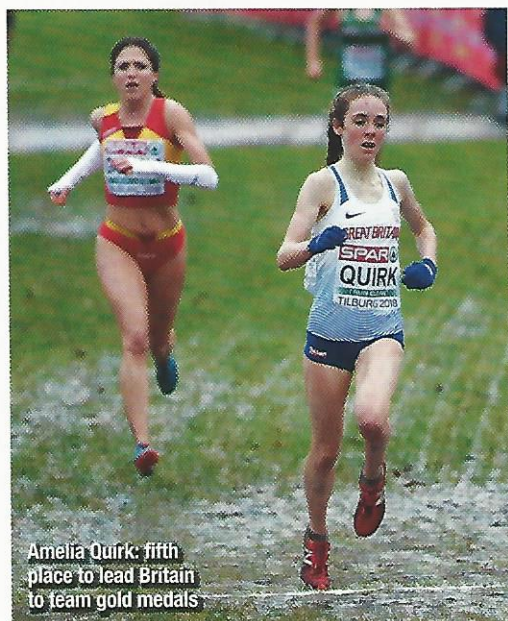
(20th) and Tiffany Penfold (36th) completed the victorious British line-up as the team scored 23 points to beat the Dutch by five with Turkey taking bronze.

"It went off quite fast but I was feeling quite comfortable at that point," said Quirk. "The Irish girl went down right in front of me and I fell on top of her and then someone fell on top of me. I gave it my best shot.

"I actually went down in Liverpool (at the British trials). It was nearer the start, but I know the quicker I get up the fewer places I am going to lose.

"The race was moving so quickly at that point, so I knew it was probably changing as I had fallen and when I got back up there were different people around me.

"It was a shame because I felt if I hadn't have fallen I could have got a medal."



Amelia Quirk: fifth place to lead Britain to team gold medals



Khahisa Mhlanga: fine seventh for the multiple English Schools 800m champion



Gold for Britain: the under-20 women enjoy their podium moment

The race, greeted by torrential rain, had certainly looked set to be an open affair right from the moment the Netherlands' Roos Blokhuis responded to the cheers of the large crowd and sped off into an early lead.

Quirk was firmly in contention until her tangle with Healy, one of the favourites following European under-18 1500m and 3000m victories.

The Irish athlete eventually

came home in ninth place.

Battocletti, who had finished fifth in Samorin 12 months ago, tested out this course at the Warandeloop event last month and clearly made the most of that recce with a well-judged performance.

She looked in command of proceedings when she hit the front in the final kilometre and strode over the line to become the first Italian woman to win a

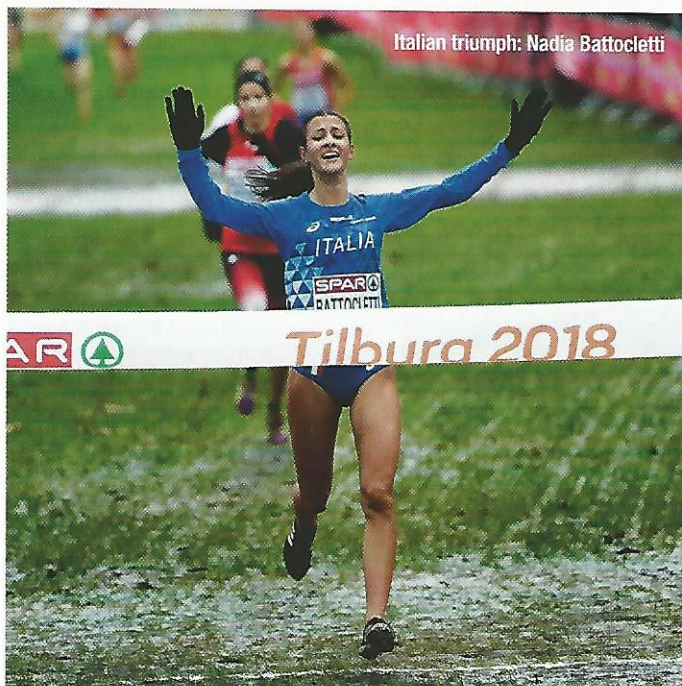
gold medal in European Cross Country Championships history.

"It was a difficult race, not only because of the weather, but also because of the strong opponents; they are all very strong athletes," she said. "I didn't expect to win, but I dreamed about it. My father, who is also my coach, did say I was going to win. For me, it's a surprise."

For self-coached Cornwall

athlete Brock, who clocked 34:24 on her road 10k debut at Worcester in September, there was delight at making a golden start to her European Cross career.

"It's amazing (to win team gold)," she said. "I think we all knew we had a really strong team, but to actually do it is amazing. I am so proud of everyone and so happy with how we all ran."



Italian triumph: Nadia Battocletti

RESULTS

U20 women: 1 N Battocletti (ITA) 13:46; 2 D Sclabas (SUI) 13:47; 3 I Kalkan (TUR) 13:48; 4 J Lau (NED) 13:51; 5 AMELIA QUIRK 13:57; 6 C Gallardo (ESP) 13:58; 7 KHAHISA MHLANGA 14:00; 8 E O'Brien (IRL) 14:01; 9 S Healy (IRL) 14:03; 10 F Heinst (NED) 14:04; 11 GRACE BROCK 14:05; 12 S Häring (SUI) 14:06; 13 CARI HUGHES 14:10; 14 R Blokhuis (NED) 14:11; 15 M Machado (POR) 14:12; 16 C Ruiz (ESP) 14:12; 17 E Akbingöl (TUR) 14:16; 18 E Palmero (ITA) 14:19; 19 D Kunur (TUR) 14:22; 20 ANNA MACFADYEN 14:22; 21 L Casajoana (ESP) 14:23; 22 L Cavalli (ITA) 14:23; 23 L Oed (GER) 14:24; 24 E Saura (ESP) 14:25; 25 S Cotter (IRL) 14:25; 26 C Hernandez-Pita (SUI) 14:27; 27 M Korkealaakso (FIN) 14:27; 28 S Šrut (CRO) 14:28; 29 D van Es (NED) 14:29; 30 I Barreiro (ESP) 14:30; 31 K Lukan (SLO) 14:30; 32 M Julien (FRA) 14:31; 33 M Deswaef (BEL) 14:32; 34 J Wind (SUI) 14:32; 35 J McCann (IRL) 14:33; 36 TIFFANY PENFOLD 14:33; 37 P Schneiders (GER) 14:34; 38 A Vortmeier (GER) 14:34; 39 P Camposana (ESP) 14:36; 40 J Bakker (NED) 14:38; 41 A Snäll (FIN) 14:39; 42 F Marangi Agostino (ITA) 14:40; 43 E Megger (POL) 14:40; 44 A Helwich (DEN) 14:40; 45 K Vukancic (CRO) 14:41; 46 K Sorensen (DEN) 14:41; 47 L Petersen (DEN) 14:41; 48 P

Silva (POR) 14:42; 49 L Lemos (POR) 14:44; 50 M Cornia (ITA) 14:45; 51 A Hightower (NED) 14:47; 52 L Giudice (SUI) 14:47; 53 L Taborda (POR) 14:48; 54 C Reicht (AUT) 14:48; 55 S Benfares (FRA) 14:51; 56 E Morel (FRA) 14:51; 57 G Karinauskaitė (LTU) 14:52; 58 M Trapp (FRA) 14:52; 59 F Triest (BEL) 14:54; 60 S O'Sullivan (IRL) 14:59; 61 L Nicholson (IRL) 15:00; 62 B Semyonova (UKR) 15:00; 63 A Ammann (SUI) 15:01; 64 A Drees (GER) 15:01; 65 K Pawlus (POL) 15:01; 66 J Contois (FRA) 15:02; 67 K Koppe (GER) 15:02; 68 D Lavasa (GRE) 15:02; 69 A Kolackova (CZE) 15:03; 70 E Duškova (SVK) 15:04; 71 S Laukkanen (FIN) 15:10; 72 S Soefeldt (DEN) 15:11; 73 U Zvinklyte (LTU) 15:12; 74 L Farkaš (CRO) 15:13; 75 A Mattevi (ITA) 15:15; 76 I Kukh (UKR) 15:18; 77 A Olenici (ROU) 15:20; 78 S Güzeljurt (TUR) 15:28; 79 P Rakijašić (CRO) 15:28; 80 V Kovba (UKR) 15:33; 81 A Zavadska (SVK) 15:33; 82 M Repsyte (LTU) 15:38; 83 E Flórou (GRE) 15:41; 84 D Petraškaitė (LTU) 15:43; 85 D Vdovychenko (UKR) 16:34; 86 A Petrakova (LAT) 16:44

TEAM: 1 Great Britain & NI 23; 2 Netherlands 28; 3 Turkey 39; 4 Switzerland 40; 5 Italy 41; 6 Ireland 42; 7 Spain 43; 8 Germany 98; 9 Portugal 112; 10 Denmark 137; 11 Finland 139; 12 France 143; 13 Croatia 147; 14 Lithuania 212; 15 Ukraine 218

UNHAPPY ENDING FOR BRITAIN

BELARUS SNATCH BRONZE AS THE DEFENDING CHAMPIONS FALTER IN FINAL

Senior mixed relay

THE finale of the day's proceedings brought with it disappointment and drama for defending champions Britain, who were the only athletes from the squad not to head home with medals after a somewhat cruel fourth-place finish.

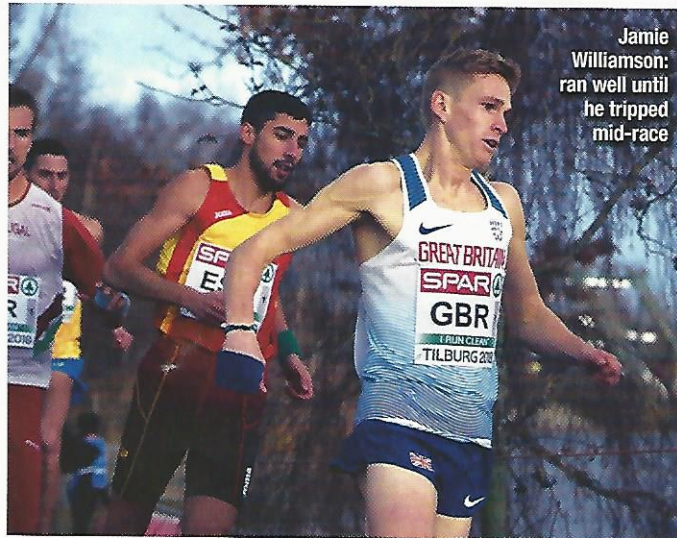
It had all been going so well in the early stages of an event which made its debut in Samorin last year, with Jamie Williamson sitting in second spot and looking assured behind French leader Alexis Miellet.

However, with the opening changeover looming, the Scotsman fell and had slipped to sixth position when he handed over to Alex Bell.

The Pudsey and Bramley athlete did not panic and produced the fastest second leg of the field to bring her side back into third, Phil Sessemann then setting off in pursuit of leaders France and Spain.

The top three remained the same at the final changeover, Jess Judd being left to anchor Britain home with a seven-second gap to bridge on Spain.

While last year's under-23 individual bronze medallist focused her efforts on trying to



Jamie Williamson: ran well until he tripped mid-race

chase down those in front, a surprise late charge from behind was to prove damaging.

Coming down the final straight, Volha Nemehai of Belarus produced the second-fastest final leg to snatch the bronze medal while, up ahead, there had been further drama when France, who had led at every changeover, were denied gold when Spain's Solange Andreia Pereira overtook Johanna Geyer-Carles at the death.

Spain clocked, 16:10 for the 5.8km distance, two seconds ahead of France, while Belarus finished in 16:21 and Britain 16:24.

"I set off with a clear plan in mind," said Williamson, son of Scottish mile record-holder Graham. "It started really well for the first half of the race – I was just running in the pack, doing what I needed to do and then moved up to second about halfway round. I was feeling really strong, but then unfortunately fell over and sort of lost it a bit from there. I got back up, but there is not much you can do at that point.

"It would have been great to get a medal, but it has been a great experience. It has definitely made me want to train even harder and try and come back on even more teams."

An exhausted Judd added: "I knew I had to go off and try and catch them, but it was so hard. The turns were just so hard, I couldn't get going around them, I lost so much ground and my legs were hurting so much at the end. I am just absolutely gutted because I knew we were close. I had nothing left, I gave it absolutely everything."

Bell was more philosophical after the drama, adding:

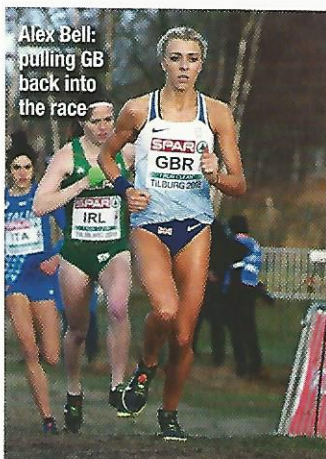


Phil Sessemann: in the hunt

"Regardless of what event it is, it is always going to feel bitter coming fourth but I felt like we all gave 100%. It (mixed relay) is just a fun way to get a lot of track athletes involved in cross country and I think there needs to be more of these events."



Jess Judd: gave everything on anchor



Alex Bell: pulling GB back into the race

RESULTS

Mixed relay: 1 ESP 16:10 ((M) S Ordóñez 3:20 (2), (W) E Guerrero 4:29 (3) 7:48 (2), (M) V Ruiz 3:47 (2) 11:35 (2), (W) S Pereira 4:36 (3) 16:10 (1)); **2 FRA 16:12** ((M) M Miellet 3:17 (1), (W) R Lamote 4:31 (8) 7:48 (1), (M) Mekhissi-B. M 3:47 (1) 11:34 (1), (W) J Geyer-Carles 4:39 (5) 16:12 (2)); **3 BLR 16:21** ((M) A Lohish 3:23 (4) (W) I Ivanau 4:34 (11) 7:57 (7), (M) S Platonau 3:49 (3) 11:46 (4), (W) V Nemehai 4:36 (2) 16:21 (3)); **4 GBR 16:24** ((M) JAMIE WILLIAMSON 3:25 (6), (W) ALEXANDRA BELL 4:24 (1) 7:48 (3), (M) PSESEMANN 3:54 (5) 11:42 (3), (W) JESSICA JUDD 4:42 (6) 16:24 (4)); **5 UKR 16:30** ((M) O Kayafa 3:26 (8), (W) O Demanyuk 4:30 (6) 7:56 (5), (M) V Kyts 3:57 (10) 11:53 (9), (W) I Bubnyak 4:38 (4) 16:30 (5)); **6 SWE 16:32** ((M) E Blomberg 3:26 (7), (W) H Herrmannsson 4:29 (5) 7:55 (4),

(M) E Engholm 3:54 (4) 11:48 (5), (W) A Silvaner 4:45 (7) 16:32 (6)); **7 (BEL) 16:34** ((M) I Debjani 3:29 (11), (W) E Vanderelst 4:29 (4) 7:58 (9), (M) P Hannes 4:02 (12) 11:59 (11), (W) S Van Accom 4:36 (1) 16:34 (7)); **8 LAT 16:40** ((M) A Blajs 3:31 (12), (W) L Velvere 4:26 (2), 7:57 (8), (M) U Jucis 3:54 (6) 11:51 (6), (W) A Strausa 4:50 (9) 16:40 (8)); **9 IRL 16:40** ((M) P Robinson 3:27 (9), (W) B Cleirigh 4:31 (10) 7:58 (11), (M) J Travers 3:55 (7) 11:53 (8), (W) C Tarplee 4:48 (8) 16:40 (9)); **10 POR 16:44** ((M) E Rollim 3:28 (10), (W) S Afonso 4:30 (7) 7:58 (10), (M) P Pinheiro 3:57 (9) 11:54 (10), (W) S Francisco 4:50 (10) 16:44 (10)); **11 ITA 16:51** ((M) S Abdikadar 3:25 (5), (W) E Vandi 4:31 (9) 7:56 (6), (M) A Zoghلامي 3:56 (8) 11:51 (7), (W) G Aprile 5:00 (12) 16:51 (11)); **12 DEN 17:02** ((M) N Jensen 3:21 (3), (W) D Olsen 4:46 (12) 8:07 (12), (M) A Lindgreen 3:59 (11) 12:05 (12), (W) L Moller 4:57 (11) 17:02 (12))

HANSEN IS BACKING CROSS OLYMPIC DREAM

EUROPEAN Athletics president Svein Arne Hansen has given his full backing to the idea of cross-country running being introduced to the Winter Olympics, writes Euan Crumley.

Speaking in Tilburg ahead of what was another successful European Cross Country championships, the former long-time meet director of the Bislett Games admitted there are challenges to such an aspiration, which was discussed at the most recent meeting of the IAAF council in Monaco, being realised.

However, the discipline was included in the recent Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires and, with the IAAF world cross championships set to be staged in Aarhus, Denmark, in March, Hansen believes there is Europe-wide support for the idea.

It is now 10 years since Haile Gebrselassie, Paul Tergat and Kenenisa Bekele wrote a joint letter to the IOC stating the case for cross-country running to be in the Winter Games.

"I support that very, very



Svein Arne Hansen: would love to see cross-country running at the Winter Olympics

much," said Hansen. "I think it would be so good for athletics and to show the importance of the No.1 Olympic sport in the summer to also be part of the winter games.

"I support it fully but it's up to the big bosses at the IOC to take a decision on that.

"We talked about it at

the IAAF council meeting in Monaco."

Hansen believes events like the European and World Cross are vital to strengthening the case for inclusion.

"We have to show the world that we are really worth being a part of it," he added.

"If the big bosses (IOC) are

as daring as we at European Athletics then we could be part of the programme in the future

However, he added: "They have restrictions on number of athletes and the quota, then they would have to take something out of the programme (to fit cross country in), so it's not as easy as it sounds."

FARAH'S TRACK AMBITION FOR DOHA

MO FARAH has confirmed his intention to return to the track for next year's IAAF World Championships in Doha.

The four-time Olympic champion over 5000m and 10,000m had seemingly retired from that side of the sport to concentrate fully on road running and the marathon.

His third place in London

earlier this year, followed by his European record-breaking run of 2:05:11 for a maiden marathon win in Chicago this autumn, looked to be cementing the new direction his career was taking.

However, there were hints from coach Gary Lough in America that Farah may consider a track comeback and

it now seems the 35-year-old will have twin targets for 2019.

He will run the London Marathon again in April but, speaking on the *Jonathan Ross Show* on ITV, Farah was asked: "So you are running the London Marathon but you are returning to track events for Doha?"

He replied: "Yeah, I want to do it."

