

## sport

## Basketball

**London Lions will look to make it back-to-back wins on their home court when they welcome Worcester Wolves on Friday evening.**

Vince Macauley's side host the Wolves at the Copper Box Arena (7.30pm tip-off) after a mixed start to the new British Basketball League (BBL) season.

They suffered a 95-88 defeat at Plymouth Raiders on Sunday on the back of a terrific 100-66 victory on the opening day of the season against the Glasgow Rocks on Friday evening.

Brandon Peel put up a double-double (23 points, 16 rebounds) as the Lions got their BBL season underway in style against the Rocks.

It was a good night too for Ladarius Tabb, who proved too hot to handle for Glasgow, and marked his debut with highlight reel slams that energised the crowd and helped net 20 points.

The Lions continued the quality they have shown in pre-season, chalking up a big win despite new signing Jordan Spencer having to sit out the second half after hurting his back in a nasty fall in the dying minutes of the first half.

They couldn't follow up that opening-day win, though, as they lost in Plymouth.

The home side's 4-0 start was halted as the Lions chased back to tie a scrappy first quarter at 16-16.

And as the half drew to a close, Andre Lockhart and Jerrell Okoro combined to put the visitors up 42-36.

Raiders rallied in the third quarter as captain Zak Wells closed to within a point at 45-44, but Lions' Ladarius Tabb hit five points to restore the six-point cushion.

Crucial turnovers allowed Raiders to cut the deficit to four at 68-64 on a Josh Wicher lay-up going into the final quarter and with five minutes remaining on the clock, the game was tied at 76-76.

The Lions had only given up five scores from beyond the arc to that point, however Joonas Jarvalainen suddenly exploded for three in a matter of three minutes, turning the run in on it's head, as suddenly the Lions were down 88-80 with two minutes left.

Peel hit a three out of a time out and Lions pressed and stole the ball, but Justin Robinson missed the triple that would have made it a two-point game.

The Lions had to go into foul mode, but couldn't rescue the game as the Raiders took it 95-88.



London Lions LaDarius Tabb, Jordan Spencer and Brandon Peel celebrate against Glasgow (above), as Justin Robinson attacks against Plymouth (below). Pictures: GRAHAM HODGES



Nick Armstrong was part of the Beagles B team that managed a useful 38th place. Picture: NEB

## Below-par Beagles will look to improve in nationals after 'underwhelming' South East

### Athletics news

#### DAVE EVANS

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**The winter season has started and Newham & Essex Beagles have booked their place at the National six-stage relays.**

A team missing some of their high-fliers battled home in 18th place at the South of England Championships at Crystal Palace on Sunday, but team manager Tony Shiret was not over impressed.

"We are missing some of our top runners at the moment," he said. "It is fair to say that we are in a transition year and we are looking for some fresh legs.

"Lee Merrien retired during the summer and we didn't have the likes of Rory Chesser and John Beattie, while Josh Trigwell had to drop out on the day."

The race itself didn't start too well for the Beagles, who improved as they went along.

Niall Sheehan clocked 18mins 59secs to hand over to Victor Nutakor in 50th and his time of 19.40 on leg two kept the Beagles in the same place.

Luke Conway moved the team up to 46th with a time of 19.41 and from there the trend was upwards with the next two runners.

"Eoin Pearce and Jayme Rossitor both ran really well to move us up the field, which is not



Niall Sheehan had the tricky first leg at the six-stage relays. Picture: NEB

an easy thing to do," said Shiret.

Both Pierce and Rossitor were the seventh fastest on their legs and the Beagles moved up to 33rd and 22nd going into the last leg.

Will Rial brought the team home in 18.40, crossing the line in 18th place as Aldershot took the title.

"The important thing was to qualify for the nationals and we

managed that," said Shiret. "We are not very competitive at the moment, but hopefully we will do better at Sutton Park in the nationals in a couple of weeks."

The Beagles did not perform that well in the South of England Championships last year, but bounced back to be ninth in the nationals.

"Hopefully we can improve like that again," said Shiret. "We should have a stronger team out, so maybe between 10th and 20th is a possibility, but it will be tough."

There was a good run from John Gordon in the B team, which may see him promoted to the A team for the nationals, as they finished in a creditable 38th.

They were led off by Wayne Bell who handed over to Nick Armstrong in 68th place, before he brought them up to 59th.

On leg three, Andre Coggins lifted the team up a further six places, while Josh Snowden continued the climb up the rankings by handing to Francis Turpault in 49th.

He gained another two places, before Gordon brought the team home with a fine time of 18.55.

"I was a bit underwhelmed by it all," confessed Shiret.

"Thus time last year, Bob Smith had just died and we were running in honour of him, now we need to find that enthusiasm again."

The National six-stage relays take place at Sutton Park in Birmingham on Saturday, October 6 and hopefully the Beagles can bounce back.