

In the spotlight...

Alex Rowe

'A much more natural steeplechaser than most'

A move to the steeplechase has brought more opportunities to compete at a national level for Alex Rowe.

Matt Lihou reports

ALTHOUGH he has been involved in athletics for a number of years, 2016 has been hailed as Alex Rowe's breakthrough season as he has excelled in the steeplechase.

Formerly an athlete who focused on the flat middle-distance events, the 16-year-old Guernsey Island Amateur Athletics Club member made the switch to the steeplechase in time for this season.

And after impressing on those occasions, he enjoyed a busy few weeks where he not only excelled at county level but went on to do well at the recent English Schools' Championships in Gateshead.

Although not his day-to-day coach, GIAAC development officer Tom Druce has seen Rowe at close quarters and has praised his outstanding 2016 season.

'Alex has always been a flat runner in the middle distances and has always been a good runner, but he has really kicked on since moving to the steeplechase,' said Druce.

'It doesn't surprise me how well he has done because when you look at Alex in the gym, he has excellent control of his legs and is very flexible, so is a very good hurdler.

'Many steeplechasers literally clamber over the hurdles and rely on their flat speed to make up for it, but Alex isn't like that and is a much more natural steeplechaser than many people he will be up against.

'Like I say, he has been a good athlete for a while, but this year has really been the one where he has broken through and excelled in some major championships. 'To finish fifth in the English Schools' Championships is a superb achievement and isn't something that you see done all of the time.'

As Druce refers to, Rowe finished fifth in Gateshead recently and did so by clocking a new personal best time of 4min.35.15sec. for the 1,500m steeplechase.

Prior to that, he had produced another strong performance – clocking 4:45.01 – to win the same event at the Hampshire County Championships in Portsmouth.

Throw in some other strong performances over the 1,500m flat and it has clearly been a season to remember for Rowe, who now has different options.

'It is up to him what he wants to do next, really,' admitted Druce.

'He can continue with the steeplechase and he will work his way up through 2,000m when he is 20 and then the full 3,000m for seniors, or he can focus on flat middle-distance again.'



ALEX ROWE

Age: 16

Sport: Athletics

Events: Middle distances/
steeplechase

Club: Guernsey Island Amateur
Athletics Club

Alex Rowe leads for the first two laps of the 1,500m at last weekend's Intertrust Challenge meeting at Footes Lane.

(Picture by Tom Tardif, 16025230)