

— and intends to go quicker

ATHLETICS

By **MATT PANTER**
Sports editor

JAKE Porter stormed to 110m hurdles gold at the England Under-23s Championships in Bedford last weekend.

And the Birchfield Harrier, who claimed a new personal best in securing first, has now set his sights on going even quicker between now and the end of the summer.

Erdington's Porter secured first place with a new best of 14.09secs in a race which also included James Gladman, ranked fourth in the UK.

Jack Meredith was second in 14.20secs, Blade Ashby was third in 14.28secs and Birch-



Jake Porter was in fine form in the 110m hurdles last weekend

field team-mate Onajite Okoro fifth in a personal best of 14.35secs.

Porter said: "I am delighted with it.

"This season was always going to be about learning for me so to go out and win the English title is a huge bonus.

"I have been trying to put this kind of race together for few weeks now and it was nice to deliver when I needed to.

"I wasn't the favourite going into the weekend at Bedford.

There was no pressure on me to win.

"I was in lane two for the final, a bit out of the way but that played into my hands a bit to be fair.

"I just concentrated on my own race and things went well for me.

"My coach Andy Paul said to me before the race, if you run a personal best, you will get on the podium.

"He was right, and for it to be gold, made it even sweeter."

Porter has been working hard on several aspects of his race in recent months.

And he believes that helped him in terms of delivering a personal best in Bedford.

He said: "We decided to ad-

just my block settings, moving them back.

"It gave me more room and I was able to accelerate a lot harder into the first hurdle.

"I got out strongly and maintained it. I had a clear run for the first half of the race and only hit the last hurdle.

"But I had a good metre on the field at that point and claimed the victory.

"As I say, I was delighted. I was waiting for a race to click although, on saying that, when I broke down each element of the race afterwards, there were things I could have done better.

"I think it could have been even cleaner and, if it had, I could have dipped under 14 seconds."

Porter is now preparing for the UK Championships at the Alexander Stadium.

He said: "I'm looking forward to Birmingham.

"There will be guys with ten years' experience on me but it doesn't scare me.

"I just focus on myself and I'll be going out to perform well.

"It's always good to compete at the Trials and if you make the final you find yourself on the BBC. But first you have to make the final and focus on each round of qualifying.

"I just have to make sure that, by the time they arrive, I am feeling good and feeling strong. I'm looking forward to going out and performing well."

there, in a way I prefer to get through via qualifying - it almost feels more like The Open if you've qualified."

There are expected to be nine spots on offer at the Berkshire course for the 96-strong field which includes former Ryder Cup ace Thomas Bjorn and Sutton-born Sam Walker.

But Rock says he is focusing on his scorecard, rather than his rival competitors, adding: "The scoring is pretty predictable at the qualifiers - if you shoot five-under over two rounds, you are pretty much in."

Several Sutton golfers will be aiming to make it through Regional qualifying at Little Aston on Monday, including Ben Russell, Thomas Luke and Mark Chamberlain (Aston Wood), Myles Pearson (Little Aston), Tom Whitehouse (The Belfry) and Patrick Ruff (Sutton).

Chris Evans (Wishaw) is in action at Luffenham Heath, Andrew Cheese (Sutton) is at Mere and the Belfry's Gareth Roberts at Moortown.

Streetly ski star Bell is handed boost in her bid for Winter Olympic spot

SKIING

STREETLY skier Victoria Bell has been rewarded with an Olympic scholarship as she bids to make the Winter Games next year, *writes Gez Mulholland*.

The scholarship, awarded by the International Olympic Committee, is intended to support the costs of training, equipment and travel up to the games in February 2014, which take place in Sochi, Russia.

Bell represents Ireland in

Alpine skiing and Robert Norwood, President of the Snowsports Association of Ireland has welcomed the news.

He said: "This will enable Victoria to progress to an even higher level, to be best prepared for Olympic selection.

"She competed for Ireland at the World Alpine Ski Championships in Schladming, Austria, in February this year, and this was a major stepping stone for the Winter Olympic Games.

"It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Victoria and Ire-

land to have athletes who are prepared to work to a high level."

Bell, who has just finished her A levels at King Edward VI Handsworth School, was allowed to study for her A levels over three years rather than two, to allow for extra time training in the mountains.

She said: "I have worked really hard over the last few years to improve my performance.

"It is so rewarding to have that hard work acknowledged by the International Olympic

Committee and it has given me a big boost psychologically to have that kind of recognition.

"I will be going to New Zealand again next month to spend my summer training and racing there.

"I will do my absolute best over the summer, autumn and winter in order to be selected to go to Sochi.

"I have been to the European Youth Olympics but it is my goal to compete at the main Winter Olympics which would be such a great experience," added Bell (pictured).



Published by Central Independent News and Media, Tamworth. Printed by Trinity Mirror Birmingham.

ISSN 1369-0809



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