

Where Bats do Roam- Lynch and Dickson rock again

By the Brexiter

With the Slieve Donard race done and dusted for another year the Hill and Dale season returned this week at Leitrim Lodge. The course was clockwise this year taking in the four summits of Rocky, Tornamrock, Tiernans Castle and Altataggart respectively. Race directors the McVeigh brothers were surprised by the conditions on arrival at the Bats Wood registration point as although it was dry and clear it was cooler and considerably windier than it was in seaside resort of Newcastle. On leaving Newcastle the veteran McVeigh was taking no chances by applying a coat of factor 50; however on arrival at Bats Wood he soon sensibly put on some extra layers and removed the flip flops. With registration complete a total of 230 keen runners were ready to tackle the course from the Shankey's River start point.

Lynch and Dickson take top spots

Fresh from their wins in the recent annual Slieve Donard race Seamus Lynch (Newcastle AC) and Esther Dickson (Newry AC) both powered to victory. Seamus was 1st overall in 31.36 and Esther claimed her 4th female win of the series an impressive 10th position in 36.29. Newcastle's Colm Murtagh 2nd in 33.43 and Jonathan Scott (Mourne Runners) 3rd in 34.21 completed the male podium. The battle for the fourth male position was one of the highlights of the night with Andrew Tees (Orangegrove AC) prevailing narrowly over Barry Og McConville (Newcastle AC), David Bingham (Heaton Harriers) and Maurice Harte (Newry AC). In fact only 13seconds separated these four runners. Andrew's decision to follow the downhill path over the undulating mountain terrain in the closing stages appeared to pay off as he got a head of speed up to win the hard fought battle for the 4th position.

Local knowledge wins Pete the Man of the Match (MOTM) award

Having a great series to date local man Pete Grant (Newcastle AC) was in his element, especially as from the four summits he was able to cast a close eye over the many townlands of his native Hilltown parish. Pete using his vast local knowledge put in a fantastic run to finish 11th in 36.47 (10th male finisher). The series battle between Sean Russell (Newcastle AC), Gary McEvoy (Newcastle AC) and Richard Bell (Mourne Runners) again proved close fought with Gary (8th overall) finishing just 3 seconds ahead of Richard (9th overall). Sean put in another impressive performance to take 12th place overall on exactly 37minutes. Fresh from his heroics of two sub 3hour marathons in a week (London and Belfast) Newcastle AC's Jonny Crutchley returned to the hills to take 27th position overall.

McCann proves The Prophet knows his stuff

If Pete Grant was awarded the MOTM award the Woman of the Match (WOTM) award certainly went to Aine McCann (Newcastle AC). Aine was the 2nd female finisher and 24th overall in 39.11. At post race registration assistant race director The Prophet in his wisdom did declare Aine would take a female podium finish and he was not far wrong. When The Prophet says something is going to happen then he must be listened too. The finish for the second female spot was equally as exciting as the battle for the 4th male position as Aine and Sarah Graham (Mourne Runners) battled it out in the home straight. Sarah took the 3rd female podium position and 25th overall in 39.16. A special mention must go to Mari Troeng (Newcastle AC) who on her birthday was the 4th female finisher and 35th overall in 40.21. Happy birthday Mari!

Junior category wins for Dalzell and Magee

Jake Dalzell (Orangegrove AC) was first junior home in 87th place taking the MJunior category in an impressive time of 45.40. The FJunior category was taken by Rebecca Magee (Dromore AC) who came home in 103rd place in a time of 47.04.

There is only one Frank Morgan.....or is there?

As usual Newcastle AC legend Frank Morgan preformed his race tasks without any fuss and ensured the race was able to run smoothly. Little did Frank know but he had to perform some extra tasks and step in to rescue 'the veteran McVeigh' race director who after a couple of attempts realised he didn't have enough pea in his whistle to start the race. With Frank's intervention the race got away to time and the veteran McVeigh, who was perhaps more concerned about the refreshments that awaited in the back of The Prophets Ford Transit van, was left wondering will he be selected by the committee as a director for the 2020 Hill and Dale series?

Confusion reigned in the prize-giving at Doran's pub after as Newcastle hotelier Jack O' Hare was left scratching his hair when he was introduced to local sheep farmer, a second Frank Morgan (Hilltown). The Hilltown Frank requested rather than him using a sheep dog and a whistle to round up his sheep that Jack arranges for some seasoned Newcastle AC hill runners to attend his farm and help with the task. Jack confirmed he would raise the query with club chairman McNeilly during their next flat hill training session.

Frank (Hilltown) also provided some clarity on the history of the 'Booley Boot' which sits pride of place in Doran's pub now alongside a 2019 Hill and Dale series mug. It is reported that the 'Booley Boot' is to have once belonged to a famous footballer from a neighbouring parish. Before leaving the remaining Newcastle AC contingent were given a rousing rendition by Frank (Hilltown) of a local song about the Booley Fair "are you going to the Booley, are you going to the fair?"

Thank you's and next up

Novice race directors the McVeigh brothers would like to thank all the volunteers and marshals for their help and assistance for making the race go so smoothly. Also a special thanks to Dorans Pub for their kind hospitality. This Thursday sees the Hill and Dale series move to Luke's Mountain with registration at Meelmore Lodge and the whistle going at 7.30pm sharp. Full body cover will be required for this race and the prize-giving after will be in The Avoca Hotel and Spa, Newcastle. The pre-race talk ahead of Race 6 in the series will certainly be can Lynch and Dickson continue their rich vein of form and clinch the top spots again? Only time will tell.



Photo 1- Aine McCann (Newcastle AC) powering to the line



Photo 2: Local man Pete Grant treats some of the runners to the delights of the local spa



Photo 3: Andrew Tees (Orangegroove AC), Barry Og McConville (Newcastle AC) and David Bingham (Heaton Harriers) battle it out for 4th position



Photo 4: James King (Newcastle AC) finishing in 32nd place