

Zak's Coronation

By marathon man

As 303 entrants descended on Carrick Little for registration on Thursday evening some were surprised to see that the organisers were making full body cover mandatory. The lovely May sunny evening at the bottom of the mountain was a world away from the heavy rain and strong winds awaiting the runners at 747 metre summit.

As the runners took up off up the path Zak Hanna made his move early on opening a large gap as he left the road and moved onto the open mountain. With the wind getting stronger as he made his way to the top he finished in a very respectable 22:59 and was crowned King of Binnian for another year. In second place was clubmate Junior Tom Cruddington in a very respectable 24:42. Completing the podium was Joshua McAtee from Mourne Runners in 26:47.

Thirtieth overall and first female finisher was North Belfast's Martsje Hell in a time of 31:12. Sixty-one seconds behind was Charlene Abraham with Ester Dickson completing the top 3. Katie Graham was the first female junior and fourth female finisher.



Runners on the way to the summit - Photos by Richard Cowan

As the runners in the middle of the pack got to the finish the weather started to deteriorate with some runners struggling to put their jackets on when they finished with the wind, rain and cold. Unfortunately, some runners prioritised taking selfies over getting off the mountain. With visibility down to 2 metres as the last runners finished the priority was getting everyone off the mountain safely. Thankfully everyone made it home with 2 vans and a car waiting at the top of the road to provide heat, warm clothes and food.

Sincere thanks are due to Jim Brown and Paddy Mallon from BARF, Francie McAlinden and Butcher Kelly and the Ballymena car for assisting getting runners off the mountain and ensuring that everyone got home safe with no trips to hospital.

Mandatory kit isn't optional. As a bare minimum you must carry a waterproof jacket, waterproof trousers, a hat and gloves. To those who did not carry the full kit despite being told consider yourself lucky this time. With the weather effecting the 3 scanners in use the marshals didn't have the

opportunity to disqualify runners despite some people not carrying any kit. Disqualifications will occur later in the series if runners are found not to be carrying them if requested by the organiser and there will be full kit checks.

Mourne Mountain rescue land rovers have been spotted in Burrenbridge attempting to recruit James King to join their team. They haven't been able to locate him and sources say they might be better searching in Guinness for him. There is no doubt that Jimmy King and Poppy McNeilly are going to be in the forthcoming King's Honours List.

After the race it was off to the newly refurbished Avoca Hotel to celebrate birthday girl Claire Reid's 34th year. Thanks also to the Avoca Hotel for the refreshments and to Oldtown Road Carpark for the use of their fields for parking.



First male Zak Hanna and first female Martsje Hell - Photos by Richard Cowan