

Hanna storms to the top!

By Marathon Man

Race 4 of the 2019 series moved deeper into the Mourne's with the only uphill only race of the series. Starting at the Mark's family field, the race runs up the lane, onto the mountain, up past the quarry before following the wall up to the stile, crossing the wall before reaching the summit at 747 metres. At a distance of only 2 miles but a massive 2000ft of climbing, it is definitely the marmite race of the series.

Romping home in a time of 20:12 Zak Hanna improved significantly on his time of 21:24 of last year to seal the win 1 minute and 33 seconds ahead of second place, Aaron McGrady from East Down who was home from England for the bank holiday weekend, whilst Seamus Lynch rounded off the podium.

Was it a course record?

There has been much debate as to whether 20:12 is a new course record. It is certainly the fastest time in the last decade. Hanna's coach Richard Rodgers was quick to state it was definitely beat Robbie Bryon's long standing record. Deon McNeilly on the other hand hasn't been so sure. Showing early stages of dementia, McNeilly has repeatedly kept telling anyone who would listen that he was sure the course record was under 20 minutes. McNeilly spent the whole bank holiday weekend in his attic reading old newspaper cuttings and copies of the fellrunner magazine in an effort to provide clarity. Hopefully we will know for next year's race or if Hanna can take another 93 seconds off his time, that will definitely be a course record.

3 of 3 ain't bad

First lady to the top was Ester Dickson and 26th place overall in a time of 27:29. This was her third victory out of three starts this year and with only four races gone, it looks as though she nearly has the series won. Sarah Graham was second, 25 seconds further back with Shileen O'Kane (first female 50) in a time of 28:39 completing the top three.

In the junior race Jared Martin from Ballydrain was the first Under 18 home in a time of 23:51 and 7th overall. In 9th overall and first male under 16 was Tom Crudgington who had developed a pre-race strategy with the Prophet on Tuesday night. "I don't know the route, I'm just going to follow Colm Murtagh." It certainly paid off with Crudgington producing an exceptional performance and true to his word was only one place or 46 seconds behind the strong climbing Murtagh. Rebecca Magee from Dromore was the winner of the female junior category in 33:25 whilst Ciara Savage from Newcastle AC won the under 16 race in a notable time of 36:32.

Brassnecks and bottlenecks

With a massive 254 runners taking part, there were a few queues to climb over the stile under the careful eye of marshall Barney Cunningham. The eagle eyed Peter McGuckin the evenings Male 65 category saw the sheep hole in the wall, and whilst observing the countryside code climbed under the wall overtaking over a dozen runners in the process. There were numerous shouts from those in

the queue that he should be disqualified with a local lodging an official complaint at the stile on the way down. The complaint was not upheld.

Many thanks the Marks family for the use of the field and sheds, the registration team, marshals and volunteers and to the Avoca for the hospitality. There is no race this Thursday night as the Slieve Donard Race is on Saturday starting at 14:00 from the Newcastle Centre. Please bring your Hill and Dale numbers with you as they will be used for this race.