

First Senior Win for Tom on Millstone

Race Report by Wingman

Following the cancelation of all 2020 Hill and Dale, Thursday evening series due to Covid restrictions and with 2021 not starting much better, it was not until June rules relaxed sufficiently to allow competition to take place but the calendar was filled quickly. Thursday 12 August was selected as the date for Millstone starting in Donard Forest Park allowing enough time to arrange permits.

Conditions at the start were much better than Loughshannagh the week before, with clear skies and a warm breeze, when 66 runners took to the start line and set off at 19.30 sharp following a blast of head timer Frank Morgan's whistle.

Ballydrain's Jared Martin took the early lead, followed by Newcastle AC Junior Tom Crudginton, as a Junior Jared finished 3rd in the 2019 Millstone race just a few seconds behind last week's winner Jonathan Scott, so was pre-race favourite. Shortly after the start a phone call was received from the Prophet on the lower slopes of Millstone enquiring if the whole field had got lost as Tom had just passed him and no else was in sight. A few minutes later Jared came into view and the Prophet correctly predicted the race was over. Tom took his first Senior win, almost 2 minutes clear of Jared who in turn was almost 4 minutes ahead of Armagh AC's Lorcan Vallely in 3rd place.



Tom Crudginton

In the ladies race Dromore AC's Diane Wilson had a comfortable win, with Jog Lisburn's Karen Wilton runner up, following battle with Newcastle AC's 3rd placed Sam McNeilly.

During the race reports began to come through of runners taking strange lines off Millstones summit, the 3rd placed runner in a Newcastle vest, for no apparent reason, was seen going back up the mountain again. It turned out to be Rory McMullan, even near the finish he again attempted to run back up the hill, despite the large arrows pointing the other way, fortunately Joan Mills was on hand to direct him downhill to the finish and 31st place. Regular advice given to Rory's training group, which also includes Tom, is "Just image it's flat" a technique that worked well for running legend Robbie Bryson, clearly brain washing is working too well, next week's lesson will focus on the difference between up and down!

The race director received feedback from Gillian and Rita who volunteered to help with the entry and finish, regards poor instructions on the location of race entry. A message was sent out on the Newcastle AC WhatsApp group giving the location, which was fortunate for new club signing Alan Ritchie, he thought Millstone was in Rostrevor, as on receipt of the message he still had time to make Donard Forest for the start.

As the race drew to a close Springwell Runner Barry McMullan approached the organisers to enquire if his driver, fellow Springwell Runner Conor Duffy had finished yet as he was hungry and they had a long drive home to Coleraine. On being asked where he expected Barry to finish, "not in the first 25 but he isn't a bad runner". Just then Murlough AC's Liam Smyth strolled across the line 61st place, hands in pocket, apparently having walked the whole course, shortly followed by 70 year H&D regular John Adgey who had to be chased down the road as he finished so quickly his number was

missed. Newcastle's Connell Nugent then appeared and wandered off with a smile, followed by remaining runners and sweeper John Kelly enquiring if there was news on Connell, as he was so far behind at the summit it would be sometime before he would arrive. A quick count followed, 66 runners had finished but no sign of Conor and the lift to Coleraine. Just as the search party was about to be dispatched Conor finished in 67th place. It turned out Newcastle AC's Mickey Flynn ran in last weeks number so wasn't counted at the start, sheep dog mentioned it last weeks report may be needed after all.

Thanks to everyone that helped make the race possible, standing for hours on the mountain, opening gates, marking the course, chasing runners, timing and counting runners, giving encouragement as well as all runners that took part. No need for the First Aider this week which is always a bonus.

Slieve Donard Race takes place at 14.00 on Saturday 28th August for the 77th time since it's start in 1945, runners are reminded that waterproof jacket and other safety gear must be carried regardless of conditions, the route isn't marked so navigation skills will be required.



Conor Duffy and Barry Mullan



William Fleck and Jonathan McCloy