

Nail-biting times for some at Round Rotherham

Wow! Another UK Ultra-running Championships is over. Now in its' 6th year we have seen full races, record times, epic performances, tears and elation.

Whether you are new to the series, new to ultra-running or a seasoned campaigner, we hope you enjoyed the mix of races and terrain. Of course whilst we choose the races that make up the championships, we can't control the weather but it's fair to say that all types were on offer this year as usual.

Now, it's not just about the elite. Although you may admire the talent of those who are finished, showered, fed and rested before you are even two-thirds around the course, we recognise that the effort, commitment and energy expended of those mid and back of pack is every bit as much, if not more, than those at the front. You are out in the weather for longer, often have to cope with a few darkness hours and sometimes find that all the magic "energy" pills they give away to the leaders at checkpoints have gone by the time you get there. That's why we are so keen on giving everyone the chance to win – spot prizes given away at races and through www.runfurther.com are an essential part of the series.

What of those fleet footed, speedy racers though? Who won this year and how did they do it. Read on.....



Male Winner, Andrew James, enjoys the Brecon Hills

Saturday 15th October was a tense day for many of the runners at the **Round Rotherham 50 miler**. For the second year running, this was the final event of the Championships and there was much to play for. Going into this final event it was clear that a few of the top contenders still did not have a "long" category race to their name – a high risk strategy meaning that they would have to settle for whatever points they got on the day – good race or bad race.

So it was that a large and strong field of around 260 runners that set off on an uncharacteristically warm and dry day for a tour of Rotherham. Many will recall that the event used to be held as a very worthy alternative to Christmas shopping about a week before the presentfest. In its' new October slot it has seen significantly better weather and less mud – this year some were even complaining of overheating!!

Macclesfield Harrier **Ian Symington** was first home in 6 hours and 47 minutes – an excellent performance from a young runner who clearly has talent and may well be a contender for the top spot in the 2012 Championships. In just a few seconds over 8 hours, **Helen Skelton** joined **Andrew James** as the only people to win more than one championships race this year. That's pretty amazing given that, in most years, the overall top 3 have usually each won at least 2 races.



David Jelley, M50 winner, at RRR

Jumping to the overall championship results then.....In the Men's 60 category, **Tony Wimbush** built an early lead that was unassailable, turning his 3rd spot and 2799 points from 2010 into 1st with 3156 points. **Dick Scroop** completed the Slam of all 12 races last year but turned quantity into quality for 2011 with 2nd place and **Phillip Howells**, not far behind Dick at Round Rotherham, secured 3rd place.

In Men's 50 and over, **David Jelley** was the clear winner and 5th highest scoring man overall. The power behind Jelleylegs clearly has some secret formula! He was winner of the category in 2010 with 3255 points but excelled in 2011 with no fewer than 3777. Impressive scores were also notched up by 2nd and 3rd places. In 2nd, **Kevin Perry** – the "old" part of team "young and old" but actually the much higher scoring and reliable part....and in 3rd spot, **Martin Dietrich** who was helped by a blinder of a run at the **Osmotherley Phoenix**.

In the L50 category everyone seems to have decided that the positions were settled as none of the top 3 was competing. **Shirley Colqhoun** took top honours with **Alison Brind** 2nd and **Anne Wade** 3rd.



Narrowly pipped into 4th place, Vicci Mousley seen here at HP40

Perhaps the big surprise this year was that **Wendy Dodds** was not in the top spot. Why? Because she just turned 60!! So Wendy became clear winner of the L60 category and for the first time we had two L60s completing the requisite 4 races – Wendy and **Sandra Scott**. **Eleanor Robinson** rounded out the L60 category with 3 races completed.

In the overall ladies category, **Karen Nash** had been leading the board for most of the year. She was part of the winning Kryptonettes team in 2010 and posted some solid

early scores. There were 3 ladies, however, who had left it until the final race to post their long category scores and this turned the leaderboard on its head. Karen improved her long score from 901 to 940 but it wasn't enough to hold off the challenge of **Helen Skelton** who took the win at **Round Rotherham** and, with it, took the series win for 2011. Helen recently transferred from Newport to Mercia and is relatively new to long distance. She completed Osmotherley Phoenix as her first Ultra-champs race in 2010 despite saying:

"I found the daunting prospect of running further than a marathon off road terrifying, especially as I had only been running competitively for 18 months at the time and never having raced or trained over 21 miles."



Female Winner, Helen Skelton, racing in the Clwyddian Hills

Helen describes her 2011 season like this:

"my first experience at Osmotherley was a real eye opener to the world of ultra running – everyone was so very supportive, the atmosphere was relaxed, and everyone was there to enjoy running for what it really is"

*"So 2011 had to include some of the Run Further Series. I dutifully completed the **Wuthering Hike** as my 'birthday present race' in March with intentions of doing a lot more this year, only to be dogged by injury for most of the summer. The hills of the **Long Tour of Bradwell** lured me back to the series, so it only seemed right to have a go at the **High Peak 40** and the **Round Rotherham 50** afterwards. The series meant that I've tried some ultra distance races I would usually dismiss for being too flat, too urban, or having too much tarmac, but I've thoroughly enjoyed trying something new, and been pleasantly surprised as they have appealed to me as a fell runner. The organisation of all events I've taken part in has been second to none, with each event being well established and reputed in their own right, but the series giving the events a very subtle competitive edge."*

Well done Helen!

Karen held on to post a solid 2nd place but the fight for 3rd was tense to say the least. **Vicci Mousley** was the 2nd lady home at Round Rotherham and had to do some frantic mental calculations as each of **Karen Nash** came in 3rd, **Cat Lawson** 4th and **Rachel Hill** in 5th. Vicci is another relatively new talent



in the sport and has, as we all do, gone through the rapid learning curve of tears, excitement, learning and great days out that deeply etch the soul. We asked her to describe her season...this is what she said (and no, we didn't pay for the nice comments!).

"I never intended doing the Runfurther series - I entered Osmotherley which was my 3rd Ultra ever - all started in March when I did my first 50miler - up until then my longest race had been the Holme Moss Fell race in 2010 - where I had cried on the way into the finish and said I was never doing a long race again!

My attitude changed and I found that I was really starting to enjoy the long ones so planned on doing just Osmotherley and Bradwell with a friend - LOVED both of them (Despite not really being able to run them how I wanted to because my friend struggled on both of them and I didn't leave her as we had planned to run them together - but watch out next year!) The atmosphere and the jolly friendly atmosphere at Osmotherley really captivated me and the whole event was a really happy memory - the route was great, the checkpoints and the marshalls were wonderful and when i did zoom off in the last two miles and left my friend I was delighted to find out that I was 3rd lady.

This set an idea rolling and I started to look at if i did have enough time to fit 4 races in and i could just about - although I had left it very late in the year to do this. The Long Tour of Bradwell came next and again another cracking route, super weather and how many Cliff bars did i eat! Oh my word i am so surprised i wasn't sick -I swear i get heavier during ultras! The amount of people i spoke to on the way round and the support and encouragement from others in this sort of race is very similar to longer fell races - although you are racing there is time for a word of encouragement or a "well done" and similarly to fell races if anyone takes a tumble or is in difficulty (or in need of a jelly baby!) there are people there who will help you. (as i found out at RR yesterday when I gashed my head running into a stile!)

HP40 next - wow - what a route - not as Hilly as I was expecting but again a very well organised and challenging race. (don't want to write too much in case you are now bored of my ramblings!) I actually ran part of this with my friend and then when she pulled out i was able to get into race mode and run my own race - this proved fruitful as i came 2nd. Now this of course left me with no choice but to do RR50 just to compete in the series.

RR - aaargh! Not nearly as bad as everyone said it was but 50miles is a long long way for me! I need more training on races of this distance and doing Nottingham 50k on Saturday was not the best preparation! But again a wonderful day out.

I never really knew about Runfurther until a few months ago and I am delighted that I have found out about you! I can't wait for next year and I am DESPERATE to know the races that will be in the series so i can arrange my calendar around them as I want to do as many as I can next year and give the series a real shot!

You are a cracking bunch of people - really friendly, super organisation, excellent prizes and as someone new to the series I have been really impressed with what you do."

You can also read about her exploits at hviccimo.blogspot.com. As it turned out, Vicci remained in 4th spot overall, by 1 point, with Rachel Hill securing 3rd.

Things were pretty tense in the overall Men's category too. Macclesfield Harrier, Ian Symingtons win meant that despite an "off" day at the Montane Highland Fling earlier in the year, he secured 5th



spot overall. One person who had a great day at the Fling was Andrew James. In fact he beat Jez Bragg and everyone else that day to secure 1000 points. But then he had a harder time at the Brecon 40 where Mark Palmer dominated. Mark went on to set the 4th fastest Bob Graham time a few weeks later whilst Andrew won at Marlborough and set himself up for the championships. Round Rotherham was not a great day for Andrew, though, and he could only secure 8th place and 897 points. Martin Beale, Jim Rogers and Dan Shrimpton were all ahead of him. When the dust settled and the scores were counted and recounted it became clear that he had the overall men's title – just – by 2 points from Martin Beale. That's less than a minute over hours and hours of racing. Jim Rogers took 3rd place and Dan, leader going into the race, took 4th.

We checked with Andrew and Martin on their thoughts about the season:

Martin Beale:

"Ahhhh! That was so close. I didn't really realise I was in with a shout. I really went to Round Rotherham to make sure I completed the series. In retrospect I think I could easily have run a minute quicker at RRR and at HP40 and that would have won me the series. I was intending on running under 7 hours at RRR and that still seemed on the cards even when I was at Maltby on the RRR. When I got to the finish of RRR, I was totally spanked though. I got to the finish desk and then lay on the finish line for about 15 minutes as I was that tired.

I think what did for me this year was the CCC. I felt I didn't have a very good race there. After that I came back to the UK and seemed to want to punish myself for the CCC result. The two weekends after that, I did 35 mile walks / runs at the weekend. I was then tired for HP40 and didn't have a great run there. After that I was pretty worried that I had picked up a hip injury and so haven't run very much for a month. I was dubious about doing RRR just the week before the race. I went for a run with Tim Laney on the Thursday before RRR and things seemed OK, so I just went for it.

In terms of the series: I was surprised to win Calderdale as I was in about 4th place for the first 20 miles. I haven't won a race from behind before, so that was a real turn up for the books for me. The race that really put me in with a chance for the series though was Osmotherley. I had finished the Three Peaks Yacht Race on the Wednesday, had driven down to Bristol on the Thursday and then back up to Oz on the Friday. Someone tried to break into my car while I was sleeping in a tent next to it on the moors at 2am that night. I then drove to Osmotherley village at 2:30am and slept in the car. This was not the best preparation for a race! I was then really pleased to have such a good run and come in 3rd. It was another race where I ran through the field (from about 14th place at the first checkpoint).

So all in all it was a good season. I did better than I thought I would in a couple of races. If I had focussed more on the series, I could have done better. I shouldn't have let myself get so annoyed about the CCC.

Next year I need to nail the CCC and then see how I get on in the series"

And Andrew James:

"I have really enjoyed running in the Run Further Championships. Rather than having to spend hours reading through different websites for the perfect runs, I was quickly able to pick a few races that fitted in with other commitments and my running goals for the season; with the assurance that each race would be well organised by friendly and competent enthusiasts for the sport.

In the future, I will definitely look to the Run Further Championships as my guide for a race calendar. And because some of the races change each year there is no chance of getting bored with the same old routes. There is definitely something here for everyone as borne out by the huge mix of ages, shapes, sizes and abilities of the runners making up the fields - all driven to experience the ultra "high" of running long distances through glorious landscapes. And along the way, it has been great to see some of the same people from amongst this crowd at more than one race and feel the camaraderie that comes with completing several of these fantastic challenges with others.

In terms of running, I probably had one of my best runs ever at the Highland Fling. Those few occasions when the hours of training are paid back with a wonderful race performance appear like diamonds, shining out from the grit of a lifetime - jewels for the banks of memory. But without the goals of the races to compete in, the efforts and friendliness of the organisers and the competition of the runners, such prizes would never be realised – thanks everyone! So there have been great moments in 2011 and I hope that the Championships will flourish and become recognised as the pre-eminent ultra-running series in the UK."



Andrew James fights gravity at Brecon 40

Of course, the series is about more than just the podium spots – it's about everyone who takes part, the race organisers and all the volunteer marshals. It's about those who take the challenge of the Grand Slam – completing all 12 races – which, this year, Nick Ham did for a second time and Gregory Crowley did for the first time.

It is also about the sponsors who collectively contribute to a prize fund worth around £10,000 and support the necessary expenses of website, banners and so on. We are very grateful to Injinji, Montane, Silva, Climbers Shop, Elete, Clif and Inov-8 who make it all possible.

So – we hope you loved your running and racing this year. Come to the end of season "do", eat cake and find out which will be the 2012 races.