

3 Peaks Race Report for 2014

Report on the 2014 Three Peaks Race held on Saturday, April 26th

Norwegian Thorbjorn Ludvigsen may be the fastest runner to the top of the Empire State Building but his Salomon International team mate Ricky Lightfoot beat him in the 60th Three Peaks Race held in the Yorkshire Dales.

Although a diamond jubilee £500 bonus prize was on offer if the winner broke Andy Peace's 18-year-old race record for the current course of 2hrs 46 mins 3secs, the money was unclaimed when Lightfoot completed the 23 miles over Penyghent, Whernside and Ingleborough in 2hrs 53mins 16secs.

In fact Ludvigsen, 25, who won the Empire State Building Run-up in New York in February - taking 10mins 6secs for the vertical dash up 1,576 steps from the lobby to the 86th floor - came home in sixth place 12 minutes 53 seconds slower than the winner across Yorkshire's slippery limestone.

Lightfoot, who lives in Maryport, Cumbria, got a late entry for the Three Peaks on the Wednesday before the race and started hoping not to aggravate a knee injury, which stopped him running from the end of January to mid-March. Last year was very special. Not only did he become a father to a baby daughter, he finished first in the Borrowdale fell race, won the International Athletics Union Trail World title and the Otter Trail race in South Africa.

Second place went to another Salomon International runner, Tom Owens, 32, from Glasgow, who won the Three Peaks Race in 2011 and finished eighth in 2012. His 29 minutes to the summit of Penyghent was 10 seconds faster than Lightfoot, but he finished three minutes behind in 2hrs 56mins 13secs.

Third was four times winner Rob Jebb, 39, of Bingley Harriers, in 2hrs 59mins 57secs. Jebb, who won in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2009, also holds the record as eight times winner of the Three Peaks Cyclo-Cross Race since 2000. In 2005 he broke Catalan dominance in the Buff Skyrunner World Series when he became champion.

The £500 bonus was also on offer if the ladies' winner broke the record time set by Anna Pichrtova, of the Czech Republic, when the Three Peaks hosted the World Mountain Running Challenge in 2008. Winner of the ladies' trophy was Victoria Wilkinson, whose 17th place overall made her the second highest placed female runner since the race was opened to ladies in 1979.

The highest placed female in the race history is Sarah Rowell, who was running for Leeds City Athletics Club in 1992 when she finished 15th overall. It was her 1996 ladies' race record of 3hrs 16mins 17secs which Pichrtova broke in 2008 when she set 3hrs 14mins 43secs.

Wilkinson, 35, from Bingley Harriers, finished in 3hrs 21mins 32secs – more than 15 minutes ahead of Shona Robertson, 39, of Glasgow's Shettleston Harriers. Her time makes her the fourth fastest lady in the history of the race - behind Sarah Rowell, Angela Mudge and Anna Pichrtova.

Wilkinson said: "I was pleased. I was aiming for a sub-3hrs 30mins so to get 3hrs 21mins, I was quite happy." She never expected to win the £500 bonus. "The record is do-able on the right day, in the right conditions. But today conditions were pretty hard. It was fairly muddy and I have only done it twice. It was pretty 'gloopy' in places and it was windy.

"Going up Whernside was fairly wet and there is that tricky bit coming down. You have walkers about and those steps, so that was probably the bit I did not enjoy. You have just got to get your pacing right and that is hard. It is a hard race because going up Penyghent you are thinking: 'I had better back off and not burn out then you are thinking I had better press on to get a decent time'. I was running with the men and men are good pacemakers, so I was happy. There were a lot of good spectators out there and I had Bingley Harriers shouting me on."

Prizes at the 60th Race – sponsored by Salomon, the mountain equipment company – were presented by Shirley and Dave Hodgson, of Leeds, who have been involved in competing or organising the race for more than 50 years. Both are Life Vice-Presidents of the Three Peaks Race Association. Dave, who competed 21 times between 1958 and 1993, never won the race, but he finished second in 1960, 1961, 1962 and 1964. His 1964 time of 2hrs 53mins 56secs was less than a minute behind the winner.

Race Director and Three Peaks Association Chairman Paul Dennison presented them with a specially commissioned painting showing Penyghent, Whernside and Ingleborough and familiar landmarks including Ribbleshead Viaduct and the Old Hill Inn to mark their commitment to the race and its organisation.

The number of runners who started the race was a record at 782 and the 704 who finished was also a record.

Team Results

Men: 1, Dark Peak Fell Runners Club - Tom Brunt (14), Will Boothman (22), John Hunt (29), Joe Blackett (32); 2, Calder Valley Fell Runners - Karl Gray (9), Alex Whitem (12), Kevin Hoult (36), Graeme Brown (53); 3, Wharfedale Harriers - Nicholas Charlesworth (19), Mark McGoldrick (27), David Haygarth (47), Chris Newman (78).

Women: 1, Ilkley Harriers AC - Jane McCarthy (152), Jann Smith (191), Alison Weston (258); 2, Blackburn Harriers & AC - Helen Leigh (118), Sarah Caskey (242), Beckie Taylor (350); 3, Bingley Harriers & AC - Victoria Wilkinson (17), Ruth Whitehead (279), Denise Wright (619).

Men V40: 1, Dark Peak Fell Runners Club - Tom Brunt (14), John Hunt (29), Mike Nolan (38);
2, Mercia Fell RC - Pete Vale (13), Ian Grindley (34), Tim Werrett (167); 3, Blackburn Harriers
& AC - Matthew Nuttall (40), Shaun Livesey (41), Gary Pearse (138).

Men V50: 1, Bingley Harriers & AC - Dave Stephenson (69), Paul Mitchell (117), Stephen Fry
(349); 2, Rossendale Harriers & AC - Thornton Taylor (148), Ronnie Turner (182), Kenneth
Taylor (228); 3, Clayton-le-Moors Harriers - Brian Horrocks (156), Ivan Whigham (193), Jon
Sharples (302).

Full results at: <http://www.threepeaksrace.org.uk/results2014>

Brian Dooks

Three Peaks Race Committee