

HOORAY FOR THE HIPPIITY, HOPPITY RACES

Now in their 12th year the Bunny Runs are still as popular as ever and regarding the younger element of fell running - it's alive and kicking. On average, out of 200 runners around half of these are juniors in one form or another; so much for the people who keep saying it's an old mans sport - maybe they should attend a Bunny Run, because here the future of the sport is thriving; running harder, faster, stronger and more enthusiastically than ever, these youngsters just love it!

So why are these races so attractive, especially to our younger athletes? Obviously the chocolate prizes and Crème eggs, fun prize giving, chocolate throw out, competitions, all have an influence. But the greatest attraction is that they can mix it with the adults, everyone starts together, so they can race it out with the "big guns". No quarter is given by either side as they attack the three mile route from the beginning to the finish; one of the best sights is to see a race on to the finish line, no matter what age you are or height and size. If we were to separate the young chicks from the old cluckers then the interest would diminish, it's racing in the main field that the kids are after and not primarily against their own age group athletes. Interestingly if not in the under 16's category then at the Bunny's you're classed as a senior, which comes initially as a shock, but they take it in their stride admirably.

"You can't make an omlette without breaking a few eggs" and it seems you can't have a Bunny Run without breaking a few records. This year saw these 'chicks' show no fear as they set no less than nine new records in the four race series which always spans the month of April. Probably the best role model is the diminutive figure of Danielle Walker, still only 14, a Bunny Run regular this Burnley lass rewrote her own under 16 record, along with the newly introduced under 14's, (if you're U14 then you're definitely U16!!). The 'Mighty Atom' broke these records twice at BR3 and BR4; at BR4 she even had the audacity to lead and hound fell running legend Sarah Rowell, before Sarah's experience and stamina carried her to the victor's prize chocolate haul. Danielle's persistence pushed Sarah to a new FV40 record, 21-36, and with Vanessa Peacock pipping her on the line for a new FV50 record, 22-13, Danielle certainly made the oldies work for their chocolate! All record breakers were acknowledged with what else but some more chocolate, and for "not a chocolate lover" like Danielle this means that she's more popular than ever.

Last year Danielle won the under 16's series, but surpassed that with a brilliant ladies' win in BR3, thereby putting her name in the history books as the youngest ever ladies' race winner.

With only one England vest to her name at the moment from the Junior Home Countries International last year, the prospect of more is definitely on the horizon. "Although she's only 14, Danielle is worthy of a full England senior ladies' vest, her commitment and guts make her the type of runner England needs," stated an impressed international runner.

(Editor's note - on the weekend of 9th/10th May Danielle became the Lancashire U15 1500 metre Champion and U17 3000 metre Champion, only being beaten in the 3000 metre race by the Senior Lady winner - quite an achievement!!)

At BR1 however, Danielle ended up suffering the fate of twisting her ankle after falling over twice which allowed Bingley's 13 year old, Alice Fulton to take U14 honours there. With the absence of Danielle at BR2, Alice won again, and with both then having a second each, it was a joint win in the overall, thereby both each receiving a giant Easter egg.

To put it in perspective out of the top 12 overall standings only 2 seniors cut the mustard. Overall joint winners, Helen Glover, 18, and Vanessa Peacock had FU16 winner, Thalia Jones, Victoria Snape, 17, Alice Fulton, Danielle Walker with Laura Livesey, 16,



Danielle Walker and junior colleagues head the field at Bunny Run 4
(Photo Dave Brett)

snapping at their heels before Dawn Atkins. Twenty-seven year old super-model Dawn actually was the star celebrity at BR2. She is Miss November in a raunchy calendar and promptly presented prizes and kisses at the Guide Inn.

The 'old cluckers' did put the youngsters in their place at BR1 with 35 year old, teacher Anne Buckley, twice a winner in the '90's beating Helen Glover by 19 seconds. At 20, Natalie White, clocked the fastest female time of the series, 20-40, in BR2 where 240 runners turned out.

Fastest male in the series was Ian Holmes at BR2, who broke the magical barrier of 17 minutes with 16-55 for his unbelievable 21st Bunny win, remember there's 4 per year. Robert Hope took series honours again, with wins at BR1 and BR3, with a second at BR2, to collect now 6 wins. A new name on the scene, Scotsman Tom Tipping, 37, found his way down to BR4, and victory. Working for English Lakes ice cream, Tom's a regular relay man in his club Inverclyde, who are Scotland's top club, and he's been finding his feet since moving to the Kendal area by winning most of the Kendal Winter League fell races. 'Mr. Consistency' himself, Mark Buckingham, was second again. Mark, 17, did however collect his 7th Egg Stage win, and has set a new Egg Stage record of 3-16 at BR2, taking 4 seconds off his own record.

In the previous years as tribute to Ian Holmes' dominance, 'Holmsies Bobtail Brew' has been awarded in the overall standings, but after last year's FRA magazine article it was decided both men's and ladies' series winners should have the beer named after them, with an appropriate photograph on the label. So this year saw 'Hope Springs Eternal' and 'Pauline's Paralytic Passion', after Robert Hope and Pauline Munro being on offer. 2004 will see 'Hope Springs Eternal' again, and an interesting combination of joint winners Helen Glover and Vanessa Peacock, should be a tippie to remember.

Dominator of the new U14 category, Rossendale's Grant Cunliffe, won three races, but had his reign spoilt by Max Jones, Thalia's brother, who set a new record of 20-47 at BR2; although it was Natalie White he really wanted to beat. Jonathon Brownlee, 13, finished second in the series, while brother Alistair, two years his senior, won the U16's for the second year running with 3 wins. Both Brownlees celebrated their birthdays within the series, along with Brian Goodison, 1st April and Ted Platt, 28th April.

It's not all about the youngsters, Andy Clarke won the V40's with Rob Haworth second, while Mario Foschi and Malcolm Coles took clean sweeps in the V50's and V60's.

BR1 on All Fools' Day was one to remember for the 250 runners who attended, a special bottle of beer depicting the Woodentop's wedding 25 years ago on that very day was presented to every single entrant. Mid way into the race a freak hail storm had runners trying to defend themselves against the ice formed bullets which peppered them. This even caused the race video camera to give up the ghost, so only part of the race was filmed that night. Everyone sought safe haven at the Guide Inn, and just as the mountain of chocolate Easter eggs descended on the pool table, Strike Three happened, a power cut!

This resulted, after some quick thinking, in a candlelit prize giving. Luckily the beer still flowed, since the pumps were gas operated, so the party atmosphere managed to keep going. Of course the rivalry never stops, and a large Lancashire contingent taunted us Yorkshire lot that we were so tight-fisted we wouldn't put the lights on or a bob in the meter. There's no truth in the rumour that it was planned as a romantic gesture, it being the Woodentop's 25th wedding anniversary.

We started with the silver theme at BR1, so it seemed only fitting to end with silver batons, raw painted eggs, for the Bunny Relay Run. This is where the fun really begins, for, although some teams are the traditional club trio, generally clubs are put to one side. Friends, past weeks' rivals and even families get together, like the Yeomans - Yo Yo's, Sharples - Super Sloths, Stephenson's - Stephenson's Rockets or the Fulton's - Faster & Furiouser, are amongst the dozen or so who compete in the family category. Winners here were team Three of a Kind, the Haworth family, mum Julie, 17-40, dad Rob, 13-53 and son U16 Peter, 15-24 to finish 10th overall in 46-57. From the 72 teams, as their team name implied, the Strongest Link proved unbeatable, with girls Livesey, 17-09, Snape, 16-34 and Walker, 16-39, taking 20th overall in 50-22 for the ladies' title. The aptly named Bunny Girls, minus bobtails and ears, Lucy Griffiths, 17-13, Katharine Woodhead, 17-27 and Laura Kemp, 17-07 finished 2nd in 51-47, while Blondz Plus One, Natalie Thompson, 17-24 and the Storr sisters, Lauren, 19-17 and Zoe, 17-09 captured 3rd and first FU16.



Eyeballs out at Bunny Run 1
(Photo Dave Brett)

In the men's event youth prevailed again, with Buckingham, 12-46, Doyle, 13-18 and Pierson, 13-29 called West Nab easily beat the Poached Eggs, although their ringer, Tom Tipping, set the fastest leg time of 12-42.

Six years ago Anne Buckley set the fastest ever ladies' leg time of 14-43, the years haven't been kind, due to illness for the last two years, but on this year's anchor leg for the Mixed Bag team she was exactly a minute outside her record, with Gareth Auty and Sharron Smith making up the team.

Family loyalty was uppermost in the Whalley family, as dad Jim ran 20-09, but daughter Rachel suffered at the hands of the bog, as it sucked her shoe into its murky depths. Brotherly love came to the fore with Boff shoulder deep in the bog searching for the lost shoe; triumphantly recovering it she carried on to hand over to him on the anchor leg, the relay baton still intact, but shell shocked!

For all you health fanatics, medical experts are now encouraging people to scoff Easter eggs - because they're good for the heart. Dr. Gwen Kennedy from the University of Dundee said of her findings: "The message this Easter is to go for dark chocolate eggs as they contain antioxidants which help thin the blood, and could prevent strokes or heart disease."

So not only are you getting healthy through the running, but the prizes seem to be beneficial too.

Cad Bury

Wharfedale TTT

Hosted by
Bingley Harriers & A. C.

Three Race Weekend Grand Prix
Kettlewell, Yorkshire Dales

Friday 5th July, 8.00pm
4K uphill Road Race

Saturday 6th July, 11.00am
20K AM Navigational Fell Race

Sunday 7th July 11.00am
3k Fell Race

FRA safety requirements apply and navigational skills are necessary.

Entries £3 each race or £8 all three.
Individual and Grand Prix prizes.
Camping and BBQ. Family weekend

Entries on day or full details from:
David Weatherhead, 16 Birchlands Grove, Wilsden,
Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD15 0HD
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