

Sport Extra

New records are set at junior fell championships

It was a record day out at Hellifield Gala on Saturday as competitors took part in the 13th Yorkshire Junior Fell Running Championships.

GB international orienteer Joe Mercer, 21, who is studying medicine at Oxford University, won from 2006 winner Harry Coates, and also took the under 23 Yorkshire Championship.

In the process, he recorded the third-fastest ever time behind world triathlon champion Alistair Brownlee and GB international Jonathan Hare set by them last year.

Joe showed no signs of fatigue from his Thursday win at the nine-mile 3,000ft Rydal Round race in the Lake District and is probably in the best form of his life.

He broke away from Harry Coates just before the turn at Newton Moor Top trig point and, although he was worried climbing back over Haw Hill as Coates is a renowned climber, he crossed the finish line with nearly a minute in hand.

In third came James Mountain who carried off the under 18 title, having won the under 14 title in 2004. This gave Skipton AC a clean sweep in the race and made it a record 18 Yorkshire titles for the club.

Third under 23 was Malham Falconer Matthew Hurst who finished ten seconds behind much-acclaimed Long Preston athlete Mary Wilkinson, who took nearly one minute off her own course record to finish sixth overall in a time of 26.39. She has a long association with this race, having first competed in 1993 as an under 14, then finishing second to Sarah Dugdale.

Mary, too, had competed at the Ambleside Sports on Thursday, winning the prestigious Guides race, and even though her legs were sore the three times Snowdon winner and three times Yorkshire senior champion displayed her prowess on the fells.

Second was Scunthorpe's Emma Clayton, the British under 23 champion and now newly crowned under 23 Yorkshire champion. Only 23 seconds behind, in third, was Ilkley's Jenny Dybeck, the new under 18 champion who in 2006 won the under 16 title.

Second in the under 23 champs this time was Lucy Griffiths, a previous twice winner, and second in the under 18s was 2007 champion Claire Lilley, of Skipton.

Keighley & Craven's Thomas Sessford, the current English uphill champion and a junior winner at Ambleside Sports,



showed his growing potential by retaining the under 16 Yorkshire title, taking 29 seconds off his own record, but he was made to work hard by Wharfedale's Jonathan Bradshaw and Cowling junior winner Billy Pinder, of Skipton, who took silver and bronze as all three bettered the record.

Preston's Lancashire bronze medallist Nichola Jackson won the girls in a new record, taking nearly two minutes off Holly Craig's previous time, as did new Yorkshire champion Roberta Jenkinson

in second, whilst Cowling Gala ladies winner Fiona Jordan won the silver medal.

Yorkshire-born Richard Powell, of Leigh Harriers, won the under 14 championship with a runaway victory and, not surprisingly, set a new record, with Jack Paige and Hellifield local Ben Dakin collecting silver and bronze medals.

Keighley & Craven's Rosie Hellawell took her Yorkshire title tally to three, retaining the under 14 championship

having won the un- Impressively, Rosie overall and Keighley sweep with Charlott silver and Chelsey Hol

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RACING AHEAD: the start of the under 12s race left, and, above from left to right, Billy Pinder, Harry Coates, Joe Mercer and Mary Wilkinson

Pictures by Stephen Garnett

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having won the under 12s in 2006. Impressively, Rosie finished second overall and Keighley made it a clean sweep with Charlotte Cox collecting silver and Chelsey Holder the bronze.

All the championship perpetual trophies have been donated by Yorkshire international athletes and, in the under 12s, James Hall retained probably the most poignant of these, the John Taylor stained glass window award. It was donated by John's parents after he died at the age of 32. He was a young Bingley

athlete who progressed through all the age categories to attain international honours.

James also broke his own record by 26 seconds as did Wharfedale's William Smith, the new silver medalist, and Rossendale's Callum Davidson. Fourth and bronze medallist in the Yorkshires was Keighley's Josh Ferguson.

Another to retain her trophy was Emma Wilkinson who also broke her old course record. Silver went to swimming sensation and triathlete Abby-Mae

Parkinson, of Bradford Grammar School.

One of the performances of the day has to go to Rotherham's Georgina Spencer, who gallantly picked herself up off the gala field after a tumble on the start line which left her in last position heading out towards the fell. The 12-year-old showed true Yorkshire grit and determination and was rewarded with a bronze medal, although who knows what she could have achieved had she stayed on her feet.