

CLEAN SWEEP: Keighley girls filled the top three places in the U-14s race. From left, third placed Chelsey Holder, winner Rosie Hellowell and 2nd placed Charlotte Cox.



Records shattered during gala contest

FELL RUNNING

IT WAS a record day at the 39th annual Hellifield Gala, the sun shone brightly as the competitors took part in the 13th Yorkshire Junior Fell Running Championships which were incorporated in the races.

Ten new course records were set, from youngster Jack Hardacre in the U-10s all the way up to the oldest competitor Peter Duffy, 73.

GB international orienteer Joe Mercer, 21, who is studying medicine at Oxford University, won the event ahead of 2006 winner Harry Coates, to also claim the U-23 Yorkshire Championship.

He also recorded the third fastest ever time, behind World Triathlon Champion Alistair Brownlee and GB International Jonathan Hare set last year.

Mercer broke away from Coates just before the turn at Newton Moor Top trig point. 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.

Third U-23 was Malham

Falconer Matthew Hurst who finished ten seconds behind the 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.

The 27-year-old international has a long association with this race having first competed in 1993 as an U-14, then finishing second to Sarah Dugdale.

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

Second lady was Scunthorpe's Emma Clayton, the British U-23 champion and now newly crowned U-23 Yorkshire champion.

Keighley & Craven's Thomas Sessford, the current English uphill champion, and a junior winner at Ambleside Sports, showed his growing potential by retaining the U-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.

Keighley & Craven's Rosie Hellowell took her Yorkshire title tally to three, retaining the U-14 championship, having won the U-12s in 2006. Keighley made it a clean sweep with Charlotte Cox collecting silver and Chelsey Holder the bronze.

Another to retain her trophy was Emma Wilkinson, and guess what she 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 left her in last position.

But the 12-year-old showed true Yorkshire grit and was rewarded with a bronze medal, although who knows what she could have achieved had she stayed on her feet.

It was a marvellous day of athletics, and thanks must go to Stephen Moor and his girlfriend Jo for their tireless efforts in organising such a successful and enjoyable days racing.



WINNER: Tom Sessford kept hold of his U-16 Yorkshire title