



Race Report –Equinox24 and Equinox 10k – Belvoir Castle – 21st/22nd September 2013

Only one word can describe this event – epic. We couldn't have wished for better weather and a better backdrop. The campers began to arrive on Friday afternoon and there was a definite air of anticipation and excitement that evening as teams and solo's geared themselves up, had a drink and some food and began to get to know their fellow competitors. On Saturday morning the rest of the campers arrived at the site and came to register and browse the trade stalls. Clubs set up their camping areas, flags were raised, photos were taken, trainers were put on and everyone headed over for the briefing and the start. The atmosphere at the start line was fantastic with 10k runners and 24 hour runners all there for a mass start. Teams cheered off their first runners and the support from the crowd was fantastic.

The varied course took runners around the beautiful Belvoir Castle estate over mixed terrain. It was challenging in parts with a hill leading to the halfway point and undulating ground through some of the fields. The views from the course were amazing: the surrounding countryside, lake and of course Belvoir Castle, kept spirits up throughout the 24 hours especially with the clear skies, full moon and the castle lit up at night. Those runners lucky enough to run the sunset and sunrise laps were given a real treat!

The first over the line was 10k runner Josh Gilbert-Weavers who, at only 15 years of age, managed an amazing time of 34:25. Second place in the 10k went to Samuel Listers from West Leake Runners with a time of 37:58 and 3rd was Colin Arden in 38:57. The 10k runners really enjoyed the race and many of them wishing they could continue running the 24 hour race!

The 24 hour runners had only just begun their race. Those not running the first few laps had time to browse the trade stalls and sample the amazing food from Pop Top Kitchen (an absolute highlight of the event for many people!). There was a really friendly atmosphere in the finish area with teams cheering each other on for the hand overs, and everyone getting behind the solo runners. The marshals were fantastic: genuinely supportive, friendly and encouraging and many competitors commented on what a difference the marshals made to their experience. The volunteers working the massage tent (in between racing!) did an amazing job and kept many competitors who would have pulled out due to pain, in the race with their massage and taping. As well as this they raised over £400 for Hope for Cancer. As night fell the course transformed and gave the runners a totally

different experience with glow sticks helping to light the way and every runner with a torch and/or head torch. The supportive atmosphere continued through the night when many runners found motivation hard with lack of sleep but enjoyed the challenge night time running brings. And as sunrise came it brought with it renewed energy and enthusiasm along with a gloriously hot and sunny day.

The competition, like the weather, heated up over the morning and lots of eager runners headed straight to the timing tent after their laps to check on their team's progress and position. As the end of the race drew near there was a growing sense of pride and achievement as so many competitors had reached or broken their own personal targets and challenges. Many people had run further than they had ever run before. We were all in awe of the solo runners – some were practically staggering around their final laps while other were reaching 200k and looked as good as they did at the start. Inspirational performances from so many people helped marshals, supporters and competitors forget they had had little sleep and the atmosphere at the end of the race was simply fantastic. As teams completed their final laps they came to get their medals and team photos with tears (of joy, relief and pain!) and smiles. The solos continued to amaze us as many crossed the finish with minutes to go to the 24 hour mark and headed out for one last lap. By about 1.30 all competitors had finished and the results were announced.

At this year's event prizes were awarded for large team (6-8 people), Small team (3-5 people), Pair and Male and Female Solo. All winners received a trophy, Sketchers Performance trainers and Greepers laces with other prizes including head torches and lights from Magic Shine, running hats and socks from Ashmei and running workshops from Kinetic Revolution. The large team prize went to Wigston Phoenix RC who completed 32 laps in a time of 23:43:27. They were followed by Stilton Striders who also completed 32 laps in a time of 24:43:57 and Barrow Runners 1, a mixed team, came in third with 31 laps. Small team winners were Lost Soles with a total of 27 laps in 24:05:25. Second place went to Holme Pierpont Running club team The Owls And The Pussycats also with 27 laps in 24:10:18 and in third place another HPRC team: HP Hares with 27 laps in 24:44:28.

Pairs winners were Pint of Stella and a Whisky Chaser – runners Jonathan Strong and Shaun Wilebore - with 22 laps, 2nd was Tri-Harder with 21 laps and 3rd Training Starts Tomorrow with 15 laps.

The Solo competitions were very close and the winners and runners up provided real inspiration to everyone on the course, with many questioning whether they were actually machines! The male solo winner was Mark Dodgson who completed an amazing 20 laps (200K!) in a time of 22:57:37 closely followed Mark House who also completed 20 laps in a time of 23:25:24. 3rd place went to Colin Searle who completed 19 laps. Female solo winner was Carmen Byrne who completed 16 laps, 2nd was Maria Lawton-Spence with 15 laps and 3rd was Cassie Escott also with 15 laps. Amazing performances!

This was a weekend that both the competitors and organisers, Racetime Events, will never forget. The feedback on this event has been fantastic and it will be bigger and better next year. Entries for next year's event will be open soon and almost everyone who raced this year has said they will be back. Bring on Equinox24 2014!

www.equinox24.co.uk - A race of two halves



Pictures by Core Commercial Photography