



Northants Ultra 35
"Shires and Spires"
2nd June 2013

After the challenges presented by the weather earlier in the year.(see race report for Thames Trot 2013 !) it was a pleasant change to greet runners to the annual shires & spires ultra in near perfect running conditions. Clear skies, light winds, and temperatures hovering around 10 degrees promised fast times for those looking to make a mark.



2012 winner Craig Holgate arrived at Cottersbrooke Hall after 5 miles alone, closely followed by 9 runners all within a minute of the lead. Little did we know at this stage that the pattern for the race had already been set. By the time the leaders entered Northamptonshire's famous civil war site at Naseby the advantage was up to 4 minutes. Behind Craig the group had been whittled down to 5 runners, now 4 minutes adrift and the lead continued to grow as the course headed 'off piste' across rolling countryside with picturesque views..

By 16 miles Jai Saxelby and twice runner up David Jelley had joined the pursuing pack but the lead was continuing to grow. Up to 7 minutes as the leaders headed away from the equestrian centre at Silsworth towards the Spenser family home at Althorpe by which time there had been further changes. Craig remained out front on his own and had by this time created an 11 minute buffer to his closest challengers. Behind him a select group of 3 remained. Philippa Taylor, well known to this race, as ladies winner for all 4 previous years was having another strong showing in Northamptonshire, on this occasion being kept company by Chris Davies and Mike Johnson.

Philippa's private battle in the ladies race was between herself and her own course record having already established a lead of over 30 minutes to a trio of pursuing ladies in the form of Jess Riches, Barbara Clayton, & Emma David.

Over the remaining 12 miles the gaps grew bigger. Craig finishing first in a time of 4:18:20, just outside the course record he set in 2012. Coming home together in second place were Chris Davies & Mike Johnson 25 minutes later in 4:43:40 also picking up the prize for joint first veterans, and joining them in a new course record Philippa Taylor made in a fifth straight victory in the ladies race lowering her own course record by a further 15 minutes.

Behind Philippa, Jess riches eased away from her companions on the climb up into Teeton and stayed clear to come home second in 5 hours 37 with Barbara Clayton pulling away in the final few miles to claim the final podium place.



In all 6 runners came home in under 5 hours as Frazer Hurst and Jai Saxelby also bettered this particular landmark. And on what was turning out to be an increasingly hot day more than 110 runners completed the 35 mile journey, many completing an ultra for the first time. Special mention to Warren Fox-Clinch not only running in his first ever race but completing an ultra after only 8 weeks running !

Local club Wellingborough & District AC retained the team Ultra Running Championships, led home by Colin Harris the team of Roger Bullen, Colin Harris, Julian Blackwell, Stuart Mellow, Martin Newton, Stephen Wilding, Karen Tomkins, Mary Moore and Elaine Dawes lowered the combined team time for 5 runners by over an hour to 33 hours and 48 minutes

2013 Winners



Craig Holgate (Winner)
Chris Davies (2nd)
Mike Johnson (3rd)



Barabara Clayton (3rd)
Philippa Taylor (Winner)
Jess Riches (2nd)

Many thanks to race sponsors The Running Shop, Northampton, Clif, Elete & Silva, to Richer Seas Photography for capturing the day and to the team from B-activ for providing massage services at the end of a hard day, and finally Good luck to all runners in the remainder of the UK Run Further Championships.

