



Northants Ultra 35 Shires and Spires 5th June 2011

Records tumbled at the Northants Ultra as over 100 runners took on the 35 mile circuit of Northamptonshire's leafy countryside and historical landmarks. Stuart Mills coming home first in a new course record time of 4 hours 20 minutes was made to work hard for the win, whilst Philippa Taylor defended her trophy from last year in an equally impressive 4 hours 58 also lowering her own mark from 2010 in the process.



For 2011 the race formed part of the Run Further Ultra running race championships and we were pleased to welcome some of the UK's leading Ultra runners to Lampport for the first time. We were privileged once again to start the race in the grounds of the majestic Lampport Hall before heading through some fast and flat trails to The first of 5 checkpoints outside the Queen Anne mansion of Cottesbrooke Hall, renowned for its award winning 18th century gardens. By the time the leading runners reached Cottesbrooke Stuart Mills had already opened up a 5 minute lead over the entire field. Well known for his fast starts Stuart usually heads the field at this stage, sometimes getting caught but more usually not seen him again until the finish.



Behind him a constant stream of runners passed through the first checkpoint before heading off to the historical battlefields of Naseby where Charles I troops were defeated in 1645. By the second stop a clear group of five chasers had been established, they remained 5 minutes adrift of Stuart, whose lead had been stabilised and was about to be cut into as the course started to head across open fields with spectacular views of the rolling countryside.

Stuart reached an early lunch at CP3 in front as anticipated. His early lead had been halved, as the chasing group had

shrunk to 3, Dave Jelley, Jim Rogers and Nick White continued to push the pace, and the race was definitely on. In the ladies race two ladies had built a big lead with 2010 winner Philippa Taylor in 8th position overall and Jacqueline Palmer just 7 minutes back in 15th.

By the time the leaders arrived at Althorp the front 3 had established a 20 minute lead. Ignoring the stunning views of Althorp House and the food and drink on offer, they continued through some delightful villages. Stuart was still leading, but had been joined at the head of the race by David Jelley with Jim Rogers now 4 minutes back in third. Our leading ladies continued their impressive form starting to overtake some of the early male pace setters, and both moving into the top 12 overall.



With 10K to go David and Stuart remained locked together, Jim Rogers had dropped off the pace, lying 15 minutes back with Dan Schrimpton on his own in 4th place the only other athlete ahead of Philippa Taylor who by now had extended her lead in the ladies race to 12 minutes.



Over the closing miles Stuart managed to find some extra pace opening up a small gap to win in 4:20:37. With both David Jelley and Jim Rogers bettering the winning time from 2010. For David Jelley this was a 30 minute improvement on his time in 2009 when he also finished second. Philippa finished strongly in 4:58:32 with Jacqueline Palmer in second and Kate Churchill coming through to take third place.

The leading trio :

David Jelley (73), Stuart Mills (25), Jim Rogers

Behind the leaders there were many impressive performances, with many runners posting significant improvement over times from last year. And as always thank you to all the competitors who repeatedly tell us how much they enjoy our races. As I was told yesterday **“It’s all the little things like free drinks and cake at the finish, well stocked checkpoints, enthusiastic support and marshals who actually care that make your races the best out there”**



Finally Thanks to our event sponsors Climbers Shop, Injinji, Elete, Clif and Silva who provided spot prizes on the day, and good luck to all racers who are joining us at one of the next races either at Midsummer Madness on 19th June. (visit www.gobeyondultra.co.uk/Wellingborough_Midsummer_Madness_2011)



Or the next run Further championship race at Osmotherley Pheonix on 2nd July. (www.osmotherleyphoenix.wikidot.com/home)

