

## **2024 British Athletics Senior Inter-Counties Mountain Race**

**incorporating the trial race for the 'Up-and Down' race at the Senior European Off-Road Running Championships, to be held in Annecy (France) in June 2024**

**21<sup>st</sup> April 2024**

Following the success of last year's Senior Inter-Counties Mountain Race at Sedbergh, when it incorporated a trial for the UK Athletics team for the first time, this year's race was the selection race for the up-and-down event at the European Off-Road Running Championships in Annecy at the beginning of June. The course was significantly different to last year's two laps on the grassy trails of the Howgills above Sedbergh. The race took place on the fells above Keswick taking in the summit of Latrigg, Lonscale Fell and Skiddaw Little Man, before descending to the finish in Fitz Park, a distance of 16.3km, with 900m of climbing.

The previous day at the Newlands Memorial Race, runners were suffering from the heat, but conditions at Keswick were perfect for fast running – cool, cloudy with only a light breeze and good visibility. There were 187 starters, 110 male runners at 1pm, followed fourteen minutes later by 77 females.

After just over an hour's running, only eighteen seconds separated the first three runners at the finish. The winner in 1:05:37 was Kris Jones (Scotland East), an international orienteer who also represented Great Britain at 2021 European 10,000m Cup and had placed third in the 'Uphill Only' trial. Kris finished eleven seconds ahead of Robbie Simpson (Scotland North), a silver medallist at the 2014 European Mountain Running Championships, a bronze medallist at the 2015 World Mountain Running Championships and winner of the bronze medal in the Marathon at the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Joe Steward (Greater Manchester), winner of the 2023 Challenge Stellina Mountain Race and the 'Uphill Only' trial both this year and in 2023, was a further seven seconds adrift, repeating last year's third place finish; this was also Joe's third consecutive Inter-Counties bronze medal. Jacob Adkin (Scotland East), the 2019 European Mountain Running Champion who had placed second in the 'Uphill Only' took fourth place in 1:06:53, thirteen seconds ahead of Yorkshire's Ben Rothery. The leading Under 23, Tom Spencer (Derbyshire), was in sixth place, whilst his team mate, Finlay Grant, bronze medallist in the 2022 European Off-Road Running Championships, finished in tenth place and had to settle for silver, having taken gold for the last two years. Matthew Knowles (Lancashire) was third under 23 in twelfth place.

Scout Adkin (Cumbria), who was second overall in the 2023 WMRA World Cup and won the gold medal for the uphill race series, had a clear victory in the women's race, finishing in 1:15:37, over three minutes ahead of her team mate, Eve Pannone, who had finished fifth in the Uphill. Naomi Lang (Scotland East) took the bronze medal, The first three under 23 women were Alice Crane (Surrey), Alexandra Whitaker (Yorkshire) and Gemma Griffiths (Scotland West). Rosie Woodhams finished ahead of Gemma but was not eligible for the bronze medal as she was not in a county team.

Twenty-two counties/districts fielded complete men's teams, an increase of two over 2023; there were seventeen women's teams, the same number as last year. The leading two women, Scout Adkin and Eve Pannone, together with Catherine Taylor (14<sup>th</sup>) ensured Cumbria took the women's team title with Yorkshire again taking silver through Rose Mather (7<sup>th</sup>), Emily Cowper-Coles (8<sup>th</sup>) and Caroline Lambert (9<sup>th</sup>). Sarah Hodgson (10<sup>th</sup>), Catriona Graves (16<sup>th</sup>) and Jill Stephen (17<sup>th</sup>) were the counters for Scotland North in third place.

Scotland North, led by second-placed Robbie Simpson and ably supported by Ross Gollan (7<sup>th</sup>) and team manager, James Espie (21<sup>st</sup>), won the men's team gold medals. They were eight points ahead of Yorkshire's Ben Rothery (5<sup>th</sup>), Jack Cummings (16<sup>th</sup>) and Doni Clarke (18<sup>th</sup>), who were only two points ahead of the Derbyshire including the leading under 23s, Tom Spencer (6<sup>th</sup>) and Finlay Grant (10<sup>th</sup>), together with third counter, Dan Haworth(25<sup>th</sup>).

Despite having the race winner and runner-up, Scotland East did not take a team medal as they did not field a full team; after a team member dropped out, they wanted to include Eddie Narbett in the team, but it was after team declarations had closed. Eddie from Carnethy Hill Racing Club was the first of the non-county runners, finishing in 14<sup>th</sup> place. With Eddie in the team, Scotland East would have been clear men's team winners. County teams are allowed to nominate two reserves and one of the reasons (but of course not the only one) for the consistent medal winning by the Yorkshire team is the work put in by team managers, Dave and Eileen Woodhead to ensure that they always have a full complement of reserves.

I would like to thank Race Organiser, Angela Mudge and her team of volunteers for staging a great race and hope that all those selected for the European Off-Road Running Championships have a great run. Finally, thank you to all the Team Managers and runners. I look forward to seeing you all at the 2025 race.

**Ian Hartman, UKA Sub-Committee for International Mountain & Trail**