

Three Peaks Race Report for 2022

The 2018 UK Skyrunning Champion, Brennan Townshend, who has worked as an endurance coach for seven years, won Yorkshire's Three Peaks Race for the second time on Saturday only nine minutes outside Andy Peace's record of 2hrs 46 mins 3secs, which dates from 1996.

The 28-year-old Keswick Athletics Club member, who used to be a professional road racing cyclist, finished in 2hrs 55mins 34secs, which was five minutes slower than his 2019 time, but he had six months out of running after an injury last July.

He beat Billy Cartwright, 30, an ambassador for the race sponsors, Inov-8, one of the world's leading sports footwear, clothing and equipment brands, by 3 mins and 9 secs in near perfect conditions.

Third place went to Cumbrian firefighter Ricky Lightfoot, 37, who set 3hrs 51secs. He won the race in 2014 and 2015, although his best time was in 2016 when he was second to Marc Lauenstein, a Salomon International runner from Switzerland, who finished in 2hrs 48mins 58secs. Lightfoot's time in 2016 was 2hrs 49mins 7secs.

The Irish flag featured at the prize giving to honour a first time Three Peaks runner, Sarah McCormack, 35, who claimed the woman's title just 14 minutes outside the record achieved by Victoria Wilkson, of Bingley Harriers, in 2017. Victoria knocked five minutes off Anna Pichrtova's (Strakova) record set at the World Long Distance Mountain Running Championships in 2008.

Sarah, who finished in 3hrs 23mins 21secs, broke a 35-year-old record at the 5.2k Rivington Pike Race in Horwich on Easter Saturday. She watched Victoria set the Three Peaks women's record in 2017, which inspired her to enter this race. Victoria, who was unable to race through injury, thought Sarah was a potential winner of the iconic race.

Sarah, an Inov-8 ambassador of Ambleside Athletic Club, who has represented Ireland more than 25 times, won the Mountain Running World Cup in 2019. She is an ecologist and running coach. Originally a shorter distance runner, she has been entering longer races in the last year or two to become comfortable with running for three to four hours.

Second female was Sharon Taylor, 42, of Helm Hill Runners, Kendal, in 3hrs 30mins 40secs. She joined Bingley Harriers at the aged of 12 and ran her first fell race when she was 16. Nichola Jackson, 29, another Inov-8 ambassador, who was second in the English Championships in 2019, finished in 3hrs 31mins 56secs. She ran the Three Peaks in 2018 in 3hrs 26mins.

Although the Three Peaks did not have to pay out the £500 on offer to a new male or female record breaker, CSH Transport, of Blackburn, donated £100 cash to the fastest male and female runners to the top of Pen-y-Ghent, which is 694 metres. This year's winners were Billy Cartwright in 28mins 19 secs and Sarah McCormack in 32mins 27secs.

The Three Peaks, which accepts up to 1,000 entries, had 600 this year with 447 starters on the day.

This was due to a variety of reasons, including Covid and other major race clashes, notably the English Championships Race at Guisborough, North Yorkshire. The oldest finisher was Jim Maxfield, 72, of Newburgh Nomads, Skelmersdale who was 381st in 5hrs 28mins 7secs out of the 416 finishers.

The first Over-40 Veteran winner was Andy Symonds who was 6th overall in a time of 3hrs 4mins 20secs. Andy now lives in France and his father Hugh won the race in 1984, 1985 and 1987 with a best time of 2hrs 49mins 13secs. Andy's brother, Joe, also won in 2012 and 2013, but failed to beat his father's best time.

Ross Bibby suffered a serious leg laceration while competing in the race in October 2021, which took Cave Rescue Organisation more than 3 hours to recover him from Ingleborough summit. He was back competing on Saturday to raise funds for CRO in appreciation of their mountain rescue work.

ENDS

Brian Dooks

Three Peaks Race Association Committee

Pictures, including winners, available from Dave Woodhead on 01535 669100