

3 Peaks Race Report for 2013

Report on the 2013 Three Peaks Race held on Saturday, April 27th

A runner, who has been concentrating on marathons to secure a place in the Scottish team for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, won Yorkshire's Three Peaks Race at the weekend.

For Joe Symonds, 29, who runs for Salomon, the international sportswear company which is the main sponsor of the event, it was his second Three Peaks victory in succession.

The win increased the pressure on him to beat the achievement of his father, Hugh Symonds, of Kendal Athletic Club, who won in 1984, 1985 and 1987.

Joe's time of 2hrs 54mins 39secs – just over a minute quicker than last year but well outside the race record of 2hrs 46mins 3sec – was 5mins 5secs ahead of second placed Carl Bell, 30, of Keswick Athletic Club, who was only six seconds in front of the third placed runner, Karl Gray, 43, of Calder Valley Fell Runners.

Bell finished second in 2012 – his first attempt at the race – in 2hrs 57mins 29secs. Fourth this year was Rob Jebb, of Bingley Harriers, who won the race in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2009. His time was 3hrs 1min 46secs. A total of 745 runners started the 59th Three Peaks Race.

Joe, who lives in Inverness, but was brought up at Sedbergh in the Yorkshire Dales, now hopes to beat his father by winning three races in succession. He said: "I would love to. It is an addictive race. There is something about it."

Last year Joe's father was in New Zealand using the Internet to following his progress round the 23-mile course which has 5,279ft of ascent over Penyghent, Whernside and Ingleborough. On Saturday Joe's father and mother, who set off in September to cycle to China, were on a boat crossing the Caspian Sea.

Joe said: "They have no Internet access on this boat, which is taking them from Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan. There will be a bit of a delay before I am able to tell them that I have won, but I am sure Dad will be as chuffed as ever."

Asked whether he would return to Horton-in-Ribblesdale for the 2014 Three Peaks Race, Joe said: "Absolutely. I will be back with a clear intent. I love this race. It is very close to what was my home and these are iconic mountains.

"I was brought up in Sedbergh, which is just round the corner, so I know these mountains, especially Whernside. You can run up Whernside from home, through Dent. It is kind of on the edge of the land of my up-bringing, so I will definitely be back."

Two weeks ago Joe was competing in the Rotterdam Marathon and on Saturday he will be running the Stuc a'Chroin Hill Race in Scotland, which used to be part of the British Championships. "I will do a bit of a fell racing season and then I am going to do another road marathon at the end of October.

"I am trying to qualify for the Scottish team for the Commonwealth Games. I have to run sub-2hrs 19mins for that. I did 2hrs 20mins at the Rotterdam Marathon."

Re-running Saturday's race over the Three Peaks, Joe said: "We were quick from the start. I knew we would be because Carl Bell was there and that's his approach to racing. No matter how long the race may be, he will go off hard, so I knew I had to be setting off quickly.

"We shared the lead until about halfway up Penyghent and then Carl and the Spaniard, Tofol Castanyer, dropped back a bit and I found myself on my own. It was a long, lonely run from there on." Castanyer, 40, another member of the Salomon International Team, finished ninth in 3hrs 10mins 35secs.

The Three Peaks was the first major event to use a revised route over Whitber created by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority to avoid a boggy section through Black Dubb Moss. Joe said: "It was a joy to run. It is a really fast track. I know it is probably a little bit longer, but I am sure it is quicker and it is a lot easier underfoot."

The ladies winner was Three Peaks first timer, Jasmin Paris, of Carnethy Hill Running Club in Scotland, in 3hrs 33mins 4secs, who was 42nd overall. She caught and passed her rival Oihana Kortazar Aranzeta, 28, a Spanish member of the Salomon International Team, on the descent from Swine Tail off Ingleborough summit.

Oihana had led the women over Penyghent and Whernside and stayed ahead up the steep face of the last of the Three Peaks. Jasmin said: "When I descended from Whernside to the Hill Inn checkpoint that was when I first saw her.

"From there, as we ascended Ingleborough, I was maybe 30 metres behind her. Everybody kept shouting she is just in front of you, you can catch her, but I said I can't. I have been trying all the way up Ingleborough."

Oihana finished second in the ladies' category, in a time of 3hrs 36mins 29secs, but was later taken to Airedale General Hospital in Keighley, West Yorkshire, with a suspected broken arm after taking a tumble during the race. Third lady was Helen Bonsor, of Carnethy HRC in 3 hrs 39ins 7secs.

After two days of hail and heavy rain, which left the start area deep in mud, the mountain tops had a thin covering of fresh snow early on race day. But by the 10am start the snow was gone. Race Director Paul Dennison said: "It was soft underfoot and there was a cool wind, but conditions were near perfect."

Brian Dooks

Three Peaks Race Committee