

2014 Gaelforce North Race Report

Shaun Stewart and Lonan O Farrell served up a thrillingly close contest in the Gaelforce North Expert level course last Saturday as they set off to improve on their 3rd and 4th place finishes of 2013.

From the off Stewart set a fierce pace and by the end of the opening run only O Farrell was close soem 34 secs down with significant gaps then back to improving mountain runner and downhill mountain biker Brian Malone, Barry Cronin and Noel Diver on arrival at the kayaks.

The first 4 positions remained unchanged on the water with Peter Crommie moving up the field and bagging a timeout of over a min in the process which was to prove significant later as Diver fell back in the rankings.

O Farrell caught Stewart but has only a slim 3 second lead starting the run stage up Errigal and at the top the pair were still locked together though on the descent O Farrell again eeked out a small lead of over his main rival.

Behind the leading pair a significant gap of over 6 mins had developed with Cronin now 3rd, Crommie 4th and Malone 5th.

As was the case last year, Stewart managed to hold more in reserve for the final bike and beach sprint stage and took the victory in 3h 13' 29 " just 40 secs clear of O Farrell.

Cronin crossed the line in 3rd after the strong biking Crommie punctured on the final stage but when his kayak timeout was considered Crommie was awarded 3rd with Cronin 4th, Malone 5th and Garreth Bracken first vet in 6th overall.

In the ladies contest the clear favourite in the line up was Derry's Moire O Sullivan and she performed as expected taking an impressive win with a lead that was never threatened throughout.

After the opening run she held a 5 min lead over Noreen Mc Gee who in turn was nearly 10 mins clear of Helen Mc Cready, Marie Timoney and Sinead Boyle and these positions remained unchanged after the kayak stage.

On the short bike section to the foot of Errigal Sinead Bolye moved into 3rd ahead of Mc Cready and Timoney.

On reaching the summit of Errigal O Sullivan held a commanding 12' lead over Mc Gee who was herself 26' clear of 3rd placed Boyle with Mc Cready close behind and Natalie Mc Carron moving into 5th with a good mountain ascent.

On the descent the leader show her mountain running experience to great effect as she stretched her lead to over 23' ahead of Mc Gee, Boyle, Mc Cready with Patsy Winters moving into 5th ahead of Mc Carron.

On the final bike leg O Sullivan had no trouble and came home a clear winner in 3h 44' " and an impressive 12 place overall.

Mc Gee was 2nd some 36' behind O Sullivan but still well clear of Boyle in 3rd, Mc Cready 4th, Winters close behind in 5th, Mc Carron 6th and Grace Bonner the first vet home in 7th place.

In the men's Sport Series Spirit race Peter O Donnell, Jimmy Lawlor and Michael Logue were well ahead of Adrian Farrell and Steve Sweeney at the end of the first stage.

On the bike leg to the start of the Errigal mountain run Lawlor moved clear of O Donnell and Logue with Sweeney moving into 4th ahead of Farrell.

On the mountain run Lawlor held a lead over the improving Sweeney but significantly did not register his timing chip at the top of his climb resulting in his later unfortunate disqualification. Logue was next off the mountain ahead of O Donnell and Farrell.

This order was maintained during the kayak stage with the experienced Aodhan Mc Aleer moving close behind Farrell.

On the final bike leg some punctures scuppered several good placings as Sweeney too the victory in 2h 26' 15" ahead of Logue in 2nd some 4' behind and Mc Aleer 3rd with Mark reed moving up the field to take 4th and the vet prize ahead of Dennis O Donnell in 5th and Jason Moore i 6th.

The ladies Spirit race proved a tight one from the off as Serena O Keeffe led Claire, Quinn, Elise Gillespie, Aisling Diver and Catherine Mc Kinley after the first run stage.

On the bike leg to the foot of Errigal Quinn took the lead ahead of O Keeffe, Gillespie., Laura Moore in 4th and Mc Kinley in 5th.

On the mountain run stage it was Quinn who took control amassing an 8 ' lead over Mc Kinley in 2nd with O Keeffe now 3rd, Gillespie 4th and Moore 5th.

On arrival on bike at the start of the kayak stage Quinn held a good lead as Gillespie moved into 2nd with Mc Kinley 3rd, Moore 4th and early leader O Keeffe now 5th and these positions remained unchanged on the short kayak stage.

On the final bike leg to the finish Quinn was never in any danger as she too victory and 16th position overall in 3h 2' 36" some 7 mins clear of Gillespie in 2nd, Mc Kinley 3rd, O Keeffe 4th, Moore 5th and Noreen Mc Gee in 6th with Leigh Mc Geever first vet home.