

2013 Achill ROAR Race Report

The most recent Expert and Sport Series events took place recently in the wild and wonderful setting of Achill Island in Co Mayo.

The winds of Achill were again out in force (50+km/hr during parts of the race) with a result that the water stage had to be cancelled despite all preparations and contingency plans having been made.

In the men's Expert race Noel O Leary and Noel Donohoe, who were 2nd and 4th here respectively in 2012 were last minute absentees through injury so the pre race favourite's mantle was then firmly on Adrian Hennessy shoulders who had several podium placings here previously.

As was evident from last year's first time visit to Achill, the Cavan Kayakrun club sent some strong competitors along and their #1 contender Killian Heery took a lead in the open run stage down the beach and was never headed. Hennessy had closed the gap on Heery by the end of the mountain descent to 20" but the gap had opened up to over a minute again by the bike transition.

Behind the leading pair Chris Caulfield showed good form to come in 3rd some 4 mins adrift of Hennessy with Alan Megaw and Niall Hurley next into transition. On a course which now favoured strong and technically adept bikers Heery was not long stretching his lead with the fastest bike leg of the day and he went on to take his inaugural Series race win in an impressive 2h 35' 06".

Behind him Caulfield produced a strong performance to catch Hennessy in the closing stages and eeked out a lead of just 14" to secure 2nd place ahead of Hennessy in 3rd. With one of the pre race favourites Richard Meaney having an off day and dropping out early with bike trouble it was left to Brendan Costello to take 4th with a good bike leg ahead of Stephen Perry in 5th and David Walshe taking 6th with the 3rd fastest bike split of the day. With Caulfield making the podium James Kane took the vets title in 9th.

In the ladies Expert contest Aideen Keenan, who has been in great running form recently, led off the mountain some 4 mins ahead of triathlete Deirdre Lee and 2012 ROAR and Nat Series winner Marie Boyle who was seen to be limping coming into transition. With one of the pre-race favourites Anne Marie Egan dropping out on the mountain descent with a reoccurrence of an ankle injury, Christina Mackensie was next into transition some 5 mins behind Boyle with Patsy Winters in 5th.

The bike leg however was where the real action unfolded with some riders managing to avail more of some help from other participants on the bike in the windy conditions. Keenan was left somewhat isolated in her high overall position and some 8km from home she was overtaken by a group including Lee and Boyle and was unable to keep pace. The experience of Boyle in previous Series races and as an international cyclist in the past came to the fore as she got clear of Lee to take the win by a margin of 33" with Keenan another min back in 3rd.

Mackensie produced the fastest bike split of the day to finish in 4th and Debbie Meehan took the vets contest in 5th overall ahead of Yasmin Kenny in 6th.

In the men's sport race last year's joint ROAR winner and outright Nat Sports series champion Jerry O Sullivan failed to make the start line with a reoccurrence of a recent injury so in his absence it was

left to Mayo AC's TJ Hall to lead out the opening run leg with Dean Gillespie not far behind and these pair well clear of the chasing bunch led by Aodhan Mc Aleer, Martin Nee and Diarmuid O Briain.

Hall was first out of transition but Gillespie, who had placed here several times previously, looked confident heading out in pursuit. He overtook Hall with about 5km left and took the win ahead of the fast cycling Andy Fay and Martin Nee as Hall unluckily lost valuable seconds on the final section back into the transition to finish a close up 4th. Just behind in 5th, after the day's fastest bike leg, was Tony Gregory who won the men's vet title ahead of Michael Fitzpatrick in 6th.

In the ladies sport race Mayo AC were again to the fore as Catherine Conway held a good lead of almost 90" over a chasing trio comprising of Patricia Mooney, Donna Evans and Rachel Hawker with a gap then of over 4 mins to Nicola Forde in 5th.

On the bike the cycling legs of junior triathlete Hawker were to prove decisive as she held her nerve with the fastest cycle leg of the day to overtake Conway and take the win much to her surprise and delight. Donna Evans was next home in 3rd just ahead of Nicola Forde with Grainne Read taking 5th overall and the vet's title after the 2nd fastest bike split ahead of Deirdre O Connor in 6th.