

## 2014 Connemara Adventure Challenge Race Report

The 2014 Connemara Challenge was without the 3 time winner Diarmuid Collins as he make preparations for an imminent departure on Defence Forces duties but former winner and 2013 Expert series winner Chris Caulfield's presence along with the 2013 Sport series winner Martin Nee ensured a competitive battle up front.

With Noel O Leary and consistent podium performer Lonan O Farrell, an unlucky 9<sup>th</sup> here last year after a puncture, also on the start line the pace was hot from the start with O Farrell leading out relative newcomer Alan Kearney as O Leary was an early casualty with an ankle injury.

With no Collins to challenge as happened last year O Farrell held a clear lead over Kearney, Nee, Caulfield and Jimmy Lawlor heading off on the mixed terrain bike stage.

Kearney had a blistering bike leg with a split more than 2 mins quicker than all his rivals and held a good lead over O Farrell, Caulfield and Nee arriving at the kayaks as Lawlor failed to complete the bike stage.

Kearney remained in the lead coming onto the final run but Caulfield had moved into 2<sup>nd</sup> just 18 sec back and O Farrell less than a min behind in 3<sup>rd</sup>, Nee 4<sup>th</sup> and Brian Keogh moving into contention in 5<sup>th</sup> with the day's fastest solo paddle split.

The leading trio had an epic battle on the final run leg with Caulfield proving the strongest on the day taking the win in 2h 19' 16" just 31 sec ahead of Kearney with O Farrell a min back in 3<sup>rd</sup>. Nee held on to 4<sup>th</sup> crossing the line just ahead of Keogh who took top vet prize for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row.

In the ladies contest the strong favourite was Mayo's Mary Daly and so it proved with Daly posting a pillar to post victory on the day.

Mary Finn was 5 mins behind Daly after the hill run with Marie Timoney another 5 mins back.

With Finn failing to complete the bike leg to Killary, Daly took a 17 min lead onto the kayak ahead of Timoney and Fiona Bradish and Julianne Woodcock who paddled together.

The placings predictably remained the same with Daly extending her lead on the final run to take victory and 19<sup>th</sup> place overall in 2h 48' 20" some 22 mins ahead of Timoney with Woodcock and Bradish finishing together in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and Ellen Carville 5<sup>th</sup> and Judith Malcolm taking the vets prize.