

Fine conditions again welcomed over 400 juniors and their supporters to the annual Junior Fell Running Championships at Bradda Head on Saturday, kindly sponsored by the Isle of Man Bank. This annual event has grown significantly in recent years and now attracts some very large entries from the Island's primary and secondary schools. Many runners return year on year to the event – some for a fun day out and others to better previous years placings or compete for the podium positions – all making for some great competition at all ends of the racing spectrum.

Racing commenced with the year 2 boys and after a typically frantic start it was Finbar McSevney (Bunscoil Ghaelgagh) who showed impressive composure for his age to edge through the field and take the lead by halfway. Finbar hit the turn for home with an unassailable lead and he took a very popular, and poignant, victory. Corrie Brogan produced a late surge to take the runner up spot ahead of Angelos Papaioannou. Next up were the year 2 girls with Poppy Clayton (Laxey) taking the win with Onchan's Erin Morgan just 3 seconds adrift and Tara Nelson rounding off the top 3.

The year 3 races offered runners the first opportunity to retain their titles but it was Kewaigue newcomer, Harley Suwinski, ultimately claiming the win having had a great battle with last year's winner, Noah Patterson. Finlo Dealtry, also making his event debut, managed an excellent third place. Ealee Cubbon (Arbory) retained her 2017 title with a comfortable win over Ezrienne Shaw whilst Onchan's Lacey Jackson was just a second further back to take the final podium spot.

Liam Blake was aiming for a hat-trick of wins at the event and the Ashley Hill pupil delivered in the year 4 boy's race with a 6 second win over Dylan Bullock, himself making a big improvement from his previous 5<sup>th</sup> place. 2017 runner up Aydin Oder was just a couple of seconds back in 3<sup>rd</sup>. It was a newcomer in Zoe Osborne (Bunscoil Rhumsaa) who won the girls race with a 13 second margin over last year's winner Lula Kinnish. Scarlett Callister made a big jump up the field from her only previous effort in taking an excellent 3<sup>rd</sup> spot.

The biggest field of the day was seen in the year 5 boys' race and the impressive all-rounder Alec Sorby (Scoil yn Jubilee) produced yet another fine run to notch up his 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive victory at the event, this time beating Stanley Cubbon by 8 seconds with Noah Campbell a further second behind in 3<sup>rd</sup>. Laxey's Abi Clayton followed up her younger sisters' earlier victory to edge out previous double champion M'kyla Quinn, herself just a second ahead of Zoe Bridson.

Numbers tend to drop from year 6 but the field was not short on quality with the fast descending Nathan Hubbard (Laxey) recording his 4<sup>th</sup> win, this time over Taylor Hodgson by 12 seconds. Freddie Griffin was just a second back in 3<sup>rd</sup>. Lucy Ormsby made it two wins from two, and a year 6 double for Laxey School, with a good win over rival Penny Webster. Ava Duncan finished in 3<sup>rd</sup> to repeat the podium placings of 2017.

The year 7 runners ran in a combined start for both boys and girls and it was to produce the race of the day. Schoolmates and long-term rivals Charlie Teare and Samuel Perry ran in close company throughout with Samuel just in front on the descent to the home straight. Charlie managed to edge slightly ahead on the final approach with Samuel taking a slightly wider line to the finish. After a desperate lunge by Samuel toward the finish the Bunscoil Rhumsaa pair could not be split and it was decided they would share the top step of the podium. Lucas Stennet made it a clean sweep for the school, having improved markedly since his 2014 debut.

In the year 7 girls, Lola Bass (CRHS) made it 3 wins from 4 in retaining her 2017 title ahead of Florence Griffin, who bows out of the event having being ever present since her winning debut in year 2. Abigail Campbell (SNHS) recorded her best ever finish in taking 3<sup>rd</sup> spot.

The event owes its success, and great atmosphere, to the small army of volunteers whose continual support and enthusiasm make the day come together so a big thank you to all the marshals, timekeepers and helpers for giving up their time – particularly the car parking marshals who were not able to witness the event, and Rosy Craine for her boundless energy in encouraging every last runner around the course. Thanks also to DEFA for access, Port Erin Commissioners, the Cooil brothers for use of their land for car parking and all the schools and parents in supporting the event. Finally, a big thank you to all the junior runners who approach the event with such good spirit and sportsmanship.