

Gaelforce West 2013 Race Report

As predicted the 2013 Gaelforce West race proved to be a close fought one with plenty of top class racing in evidence.

In the men's race the first run was led out at a fairly frantic pace by Kieron Kelly but as has often happened in this event the first run pace setter was soon to fade from contention eventually finishing more than an hour behind the leaders.

Aidan Mc Moreland was next in and was followed by a min later Brendan Gill with a further gap then back to Mc Moreland's fellow race favourite Peter O Farrell, Lonan O Farrell, Dessie Duffy and Tomas O Loughlin.

On the short kayak leg in choppy water conditions Mc Moreland moved ahead of Kelly with the O ' Farrells Peter and Lonan next ahead of Duffy as Gill dropped back to 6th on arrival at Delphi bike transition.

On the bike Mc Moreland held onto his lonely lead until almost half way when caught by the day's fastest biker Duffy and Peter O Farrell who had earlier joined forces on the road. These made up a leading group of 3 for the bulk of the remaining bike leg as Duffy tried valiantly to shake off his rivals on the road toward the Reek.

On arrival at the base of Croagh Patrick after the off road bike section Peter O Farrell held a slim lead over Duffy with Mc Moreland not far away in 3rd with less than min between 1st and 3rd. Tom O Dowd and Kieran Cosgrave moved through the field well on bike leg to be next in over 4 mins behind Mc Moreland with Lonan O Farrell close behind in 6th.

As has been the case in several of his past victories, O Farrell had a strong climb to lead at the summit but Mc Moreland moved into a close second just 38 sec behind with the day's fastest climb and took the lead with the fastest reek descent (9' to pass by O Farrell and take a 39 sec lean onto the final bike stage. Behind the leading duo Duffy had a good ascent to reach the top in 3rd as Lonan O Farrell moved back to 4th and Richard Meaney improved with a good climb to reach the top in 5th ahead of Cosgrove and O Dowd

These positions (3rd to 7th) were maintained on the descent as the leading duo moved ahead of the field with significantly superior mountain descents.

Back on the bike for the final race to the finish O Farrell was not long about taking the lead on the rough Skelp climb section but just as he looked set for victory a puncture on the descent struck. Mc Moreland was able to take full advantage and got through the section safely to take the win in a new course record time of 3h 31' 01". O Farrell's quick puncture changing skills left him in a close second less than 2 mins back and almost 4 mins clear of Duffy who came home in a clear 3rd position.

Meaney finished strongly to take 4th ahead of Lonan O Farrell who held onto 5th after O Dowd crashed when closing fast on the final bike section. O Dowd ended up in 6th and his companion for most of the race Cosgrove took a deserved vets win in 7th overall.

In the ladies expert race there was close battle initially between the pair of pre-race favourites who had finished 1st and 2nd last year.

Kate Cronin took an expected lead on the first run but Emma Donlon worked hard to keep the lead to less than 2 mins with Anne Marie Egan a further 4 mins back in 3rd and Fiona O Riordan in 4th.

The tricky paddling conditions saw Cronin extend her lead dramatically over Donlon as she struggled with the fjord crossing and lost time on all her main category rivals. Egan moved into closer contention in 3rd with O Riordan in 4th and on the run to Delphi O Riordan moved into 3rd ahead of Egan in 4th with Shelia Regan and Alma Murphy some 8 mins further back in 5th and 6th respectively.

On the bike leg to the reek Donlon's recent bike racing speed was in evidence as she cut Cronin's lead to 3 mins but her recent injury was beginning to hinder her progress and behind the leading pair O Riordan moved into a clear 3rd ahead of Egan 4th. Murphy and Meabh Savage were next off the bike but this pair were now some 20 mins adrift of Egan.

On the Reek Cronin had both the fastest climb and decent descent to move into an unassailable 10 min lead with Donlon looking safe in 2nd and Egan moving up into 3rd some 9 mins back with the second fastest ladies climb of the day. This left O Riordan now some 3 mins back in 4th, with Murphy and Savage in 5th and 6th.

Cronin negotiated the tricky final Skelp bike leg safely to take an impressive first Gaelforce West win and 16th overall in a course record time of 4h 05' 15" some 10 mins clear of the visibly injured Donlon in 2nd and Egan in 3rd a further 8 mins back with O Riordan less than 2 mins further back in 4th.

Murphy took the ladies vet title in 5th overall with Savage rounding of the top 6 ladies finishers.