

## Middle Fell Race Report – 5<sup>th</sup> April 2008

Disappointingly, only four members toed the start line at the club's first 2008 senior championship race at Middle Fell on Saturday.

And with the Helm Hill elite AWOL, I (rather embarrassingly) took full points and head the early season table.

My prize? To pen a report about my unexpected triumph.

According to vice chairman Russ 'Cragrat' Cannon, each and every championship race winner this season will be requested to follow suit. Our 'top boys' can run, no doubt about that, but can they write? We'll soon find out!

Given this is likely to be my one and only report during the 12-race series, I will now proceed to bore you with details about my moment in the spotlight!

The setting for the season curtain-raiser couldn't have been much better. Voted as possessing Britain's premier view by the public on a prime-time TV show last year, we were, of course, in the mighty Wasdale valley.

Just away from the tourists (and that view down Wastwater), 42 runners gathered in bright spring sunshine outside the Screes Inn, Nether Wasdale, for a 6.6mile blast up and down the 1,908ft Middle Fell.

Having not tackled this one before, and having had a plea for info/tips snubbed by fellow users on the FRA forum, I arrived feeling apprehensive.

This was not helped when I (he who prefers steep walkers with little running involved) discovered there to be at least two mile of flat road and track to cover before reaching the fell proper. Worse still, that two mile would need to be negotiated on the way back as well!

Russ – in his last outing before Sunday's London Marathon – seemed far less concerned at the prospect of all the flat running as we warmed-up down the road.

Making up the Helm Hill green machine quartet was last year's championship series winner Olly Fielden, returning to the fells after a long bout of illness, and Amanda Conner.

As expected the run-out was torture, and by the time I hit the bottom of the climb I was shattered.

I got down to a walk, and was just getting settled when I spotted fell running legend Joss Naylor watching the race up ahead.

Wasdale through and through, these fells have been Joss's training ground for decades, and to pathetically walk past the great man just didn't seem right.

So, I got up and ran with a pretend spring in my step, as if I was Rob Jebb or Ian Holmes. He didn't notice me.

Back into a walk, I started to gain ground on those in front of me as the gradient steepened. A freak hailstone storm came and went, before finally the summit came into sight.

The views across to Scafell Pike and Scafell were magnificent.

Less magnificent was my descent over the rocks. Confidence still low after a bad fall at Ben Nevis last year, I picked my way down the steep fellside, before the nightmare slog back over the flat to the welcome finish line outside the pub door.

Remarkably, nobody passed me on the descent and I came home in 14th place, clocking a time of 62 minutes and 20 seconds.

Russ was next, three places behind in 64.43, with ace hound trailer and dog kennel entrepreneur Olly in 22nd (67.43) and Amanda 40th (91.02).

The race was won by Ricky Lightfoot in 52.35. Natalie White was first lady.

We then retired to the pub, and, while sat underneath a huge painting immortalizing that man Naylor, proceeded to scoff the 'free' hot-pot.

The next championship race is at Dockray-Hartside on Wednesday, May 7 (7pm start).

Let's hope more club members show up, if only so I don't have to write another bloody report!

Lee Procter.