

Grey Mountain Summer Solstice Run/Walk June 17, 2008

It's not just the Tour de France that celebrates excellence in hill climbing with the "man of the mountain" distinction. At Tuesday night's annual Grey Mountain Summer Solstice Fun Run & Walk, Scott Westberg powered his way up the steep Grey Mountain road for 6 kilometres to be the first runner to reach the microwave tower near the top of mountain. This made Westberg the man of the mountain for this year's Grey Mountain Solstice run. This was no surprise as he won this event in 2005 in a fantastic time of 48:22.

But a funny thing happened on the way down Grey Mountain. Westberg, who held a commanding lead going up the mountain, stopped just as he was starting his descent, turned around and began running up the mountain again joining his friend Ammon Hoefs. On the ascent, Hoefs, who is a member of the University of Alberta's Golden Bears men's soccer team, developed a painful cramp that caused him to slow down and walk for a while. He fell behind Westberg who he shared the lead with most of the way up.

Westberg's incredible act of sportsmanship put the race up for grabs. It allowed the pack of masters runners behind him to fight it out for first place. In the end, Tom Ullyett crossed the finish line first (51:23), followed by his arch rival Fred Vandenot (53:31), sprint specialist Denis Chabot (55:11) and cyclist Graham Riske (55:30) who held second place during part of the ascent. As a testament to their friendship, Westberg and Hoefs crossed the finish line together at 57:46 claiming 5th place. They were followed by Roger Hulstein (1:05:21), Danny Macdonald (1:11:17) and Danny's father, marathoner Grant Macdonald (1:11:55).

The female participants featured those who have a reputation for running up big hills. Megan Phillips, who participated in the Haeckel Hill run in May, was the first woman to cross the finish line (1:08:11). Former Athletics Yukon president Nicole Hulstein took second place honours (1:13:47). Just 27 seconds later, long distance specialist Ginny Macdonald roared across the finish line in third place (1:14:15). The running sisters, Audrey Mayer and Tracy Taylor, finished less than one second apart with Mayer winning an exciting sprint to the finish line in a time of 1:16:57.

The 12 kilometre up-and-down route started at the Grey Mountain lookout about a kilometre past the biathlon trails. With 16 participants, it followed the single lane Northwestel service road 6 kilometres up to the micro wave towers. Over the last three kilometres runners encountered steep ascents and beautiful vistas of the Whitehorse valley. Most runners find the steep descent almost as challenging as going up because of the pressure placed on their knees, ankles and quadriceps muscles.

Submitted by Tom Ullyett for Athletics Yukon