

BIG FIELD, BIG RUNS AT BAY RD 5K AS SPARTANS CLAIM NI TEAM TITLES

Wednesday nights Bay Road 5k opened this year's Furey Insurances race series in fine style, with the big field putting on a super show over the spectator friendly, three lap course along the banks of the Foyle. Declan Reed, Scott Rankin and Emmet McGinty battled away upfront before Reed went clear late on to win in 15m 11s, six seconds ahead of Rankin with McGinty a further five seconds behind. North Belfast star Cathy McCourt took the womens honours in 18m 12s, ahead of local duo Marina Campbell, 18m 33s and Anne Paul on 19m 08s. Local clubs dominated the team races with the Spartans claiming both NI championship team titles, Foyle Valley took both team silvers and the red vests second strings took both team bronzes.

On a relative benign night, given the afternoon's heavy rain and hail, the spectators turned out in big numbers and were treated to an enthralling evening's racing. The modified course may also have affected the times but the effort by all concerned was palpable and much appreciated by the thronged ranks of spectators. Following the opening 500metres along the riverside path the leaders emerged onto the Bay Road circuit with all the fancied men and women prominent. In the mens race the big three, Rankin, Reed and McGinty were clear as they went out on the first of three 1400 metre laps with the other top red and purple vests chasing hard as the battle for individual and team supremacy unfolded.

The leading trio maintained their advantage throughout with Reed emerging an impressive winner to add the NI road 5,000metres title to the track version he won last summer. He sprinted home to win by six seconds as Rankin held off a strong McGinty challenge, claiming silver some five seconds ahead of the Spartan. Good strong efforts from all three with Reed especially looking superb as he went away for the win. Noel Logan had another good run for fourth and clinched team gold for the Spartans with his 15m 47s run, holding off a late surge from clubmate Paddy Mhor Doherty by four seconds.

Foyle Valley's Keith Shields was sixth on 15m 58s followed by another pair of red vests, Richard Johnston and Colin Roberts with 16m 07s and 16m 09s respectively. Doherty, Johnston and Roberts combined for the team bronze as ninth placed Chris McGuinness posted 16m 14s to combine with Rankin and Shields for Valley's team silver. Pius McIntyre completed the top ten with a 16m 18s clocking.

Cathy McCourt was a clear womens winner with 18m 12s, the North Belfast athlete once again showing her liking for the Derry air. Marina Campbell ran well for second in 18m 33s, not far off her pb for the distance and led clubmates Anne Paul, third in 19m 08s and fourth placed Catherine Lilburn on 19m 10s, to a facile team championship win. Newcomer Lisa McLaughlin finished alongside Lilburn in fifth, Jackie McGinley ran 19m 41s for sixth, Martina McMullan in seventh led home the Foyle Valley contingent with 20m 04s, Ruth Magill of Lagan Valley was next on 20m 11s, the improving Miriam Bridge was ninth with 20m 24s and another Lagan Valley visitor Fionnuala McCourt rounded off the top ten on 20m 57s.

Martina McMullan was joined by Deirdre Quigg and Trish McClintock to give Foyle Valley team silver one point ahead of the Spartan's B squad of Bridge, Hannah McGowan and Camilla McGranaghan. Camilla also claimed the top F35 prize, Hannah was the leading U 20 and the other female category winners were, Jackie McGinley F40, Bridgeen Byrne F45, Ruth Magill F50 and Kate Montgomery of Lagan Valley was the top F55.

In the mens age groups Connor Doherty ran 17m 06s for the U20 award, Paddy Mhor Doherty M35, Colin Roberts M40, Declan McCarthy M45, Domnic Bonner M50, Sammy McAnaney M55 and Springwell's Jim Platt was the top M65.

A total of 174 finishers were recorded, another excellent turnout, and attention now turns to the next race in the series, the Lusnagelvin 5K on Wednesday 9th May at 7 30pm. More details on this one sponsored by Longs Super Valu shortly.