

2016 Jura Race Report

The fifth year in a row when we have enjoyed fine **weather** for the race: this year, it was fine and sunny almost all week before and after the race, so the going was relatively dry. We are confused. Lovely for the marshals, cool breeze on top, and torrid going back along the road.

Jura was chosen as a Scottish Hill Runners **championship** counter this year, which resulted as expected in a bigger than usual entry from Scottish clubs – but there was increased interest and entries from all directions, the rest of the UK, and abroad. This resulted in a particularly high quality field.

The race already had 500 **entries** through SI only about four days after they opened, which is quite exceptional, so it was closed to most new entries at that time. It was a long time before anyone started to drop out, but around January agreement was obtained from parties concerned (marshals' coordinator, hotel/camping, Forest Estate for Corran Sands, Raynet and the Mountain Rescue Teams) to raise the max limit of entries from 250 to 300 for this year only. At all stages up to the day before the race, maximum effort was made to enable any qualified entrant still on the waiting list to get an entry, and many did. In the end, 248 started.

Two of our most experienced base **helpers** dropped out late on due to personal or partner's injury, but several people very kindly offered to help with various tasks, and I think it all went pretty smoothly, so thank you to everyone involved.

The race shot off on time at 10:30, and from then on for the next two or three hours, the radio operators kept us informed of the order through the checkpoints of the first five and the first lady (no guesses). There was little change from CP1 onwards, with the same six or seven numbers more or less maintaining position, so to enlighten us about what was really going on, here are some comments from some of the runners nearer the front:

- **Finlay Wild:** Rhys F-R led the pack to CP1 then myself, Sam Tosh and Andy Fallas jostled along CP2 and CP3. Sam Tosh in hot pursuit going up Pap 1 but I managed to slowly pull away on each of the rocky descents. Very good racing conditions. No major line choice issues for me.
- **Duncan Coombs:** A few comments that may be of minor interest.
 - *Rhys, Doug and I dropped quite far right off the first pap and lost a wee bit of time.
 - *Andy, Rhys and I were together on the last hill and at the bridge and it was a decent battle for 3rd. 3:20 was the bait as opposed to 3rd.
 - *Rhys was significantly out front on the first hill.Aside from those I'm not sure I've any more. Apart from it hurt!
- **Doug Tullie:** I'd just like to say that Jura was, without doubt, the best weekend of fell running/orienteering/racing etc I have ever done. And I have taken part in a few all over the world! Of course the stunning weather that we had helped too. 😊 I can safely say that Jura will be the first race in my calendar for many years to come. I'm looking forward to coming back next year already and hopefully I can get a bit closer to Hector's record.
- **Alasdair Anthony:** I left the big guns to it and settled in to a good group with mixed experience, from Holmes at one end of the scale to Sam and Adam at the other. Although we were a fair bit behind the leaders, my split times were pretty much bang on what they were last year. The near perfect conditions apparently cancelling out my lack of training since becoming a father 4 weeks earlier. Having led newbie Sam over the last pap, I pulled

away over Corra Bheinn and had a solid run down the road, but never quite got Jebb in my sights.

- **Mark Harris:** I tried to keep very close to Richard Mellon but his lines were always excellent, except for following some Welsh runner far too far off to the right after CP1 which allowed Andrew Jebb and others to get in front. Mellon went off to the right off CP4 to avoid the scree which I wish I had done as well. Instead Andrew Jebb and Jasmin Paris screamed past me on the final part of the scree off Pap 1. Similar positions to the top of Pap 2 where Jasmin and I went off together and found a good route from half way down along what looked like a new path (in fact there were a number of new paths I had never seen before e.g. up Corra Bheinn). Then going up to Pap 3 Jasmin was clearly climbing strongly, I just about held onto her tails because I wanted to follow her descent off the last Pap. As it turned out she went too far left while I continued down on a heathery path. Unfortunately this felt too luxurious for me and Jasmin came over to my line but then realised we had gone far too low about 350 m and corrected herself. It was too late for me so I had to traverse round and lost about 4 mins on her. Andy Jebb also got in front. And then went to the right to Corra Bheinn and looked to be slowing. I was amazed when he starting descending as I neared the top. I managed to catch him by the burn crossing before Three Arch Bridge. But could not pull away enough on the road before I got cramp and he caught up and stormed past me. Jasmin was a distant memory.
- **Andrea Priestley:** The start of the race seemed very steady, until I looked up and saw how far away the race leaders were already!! The women's race didn't see Jasmine (to be expected) and I seemed to be about 4th lady after the first climb. The visibility was excellent. I did overtake the HBT female runner on ascent to the first pap and a number of other runners (who subsequently flew by me in descent - this pattern continued for most of the race!). However, as we descended the second pap, and I had lost sight of the next runner, she passed me again and then climbed very strongly. Unable to pass her on the climb she flew off the third pap and ran more strongly to the finish. I came off the third pap trying initially to get the right route and then ran alone on the road with rather tired legs! The marshals were really lovely, handing out sweets and, at the road, water - most appreciated

Highlight of the race for me was Ian Holmes, Bingley, achieving his ambition of the V50 record. It would also have been his 21st Jura, had he not had to pull out at CP2 a couple of years ago with a knee problem. It was only a shaving off Stewart Whitley's last V50 record, though, and Alan Smith, five years older, was only 14 minutes behind.

The LV50 record fell to Andrea Priestley, Ochils; and Gareth Bryan-Jones, Ochils, the second V70 to complete this race, set a formidable V70 record.

Due to their closeness to the open Men's and Ladies' records, if Finlay and Jasmin are back next year, they look under threat.

Joe Symonds was a popular choice for the John Dare Shield for outstanding performance in the Scottish Islands Peaks Race + Jura, back to back.

It was great to see so many names from the extreme ultra world competing this year, with some of the most impressive performances of the last year or two behind them, not least being Nicky Spinks who, just two weeks after her record-breaking double Bob Graham, is winding down for while with some ordinary races.

Congratulations to everyone, of any standard, who had a really good race. To those who were slowed down by poorliness or injury, or got lost, or just were not having a perfect day, but finished anyway, well done, and there is another race next year.

Graham Arthur