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'Old' man wins Cracker 10k

A sea of elves, santas, fairies and reindeer took to the beach at Weston-super-Mare for the annual Christmas Cracker 10k today. The rain held off for most of the race as 1,640 hardy runners battled the wind and hung onto their tinsel as they pounded the beach and prom.

This was the 26th year of the ever-popular Weston Athletic Club race. How fitting for the race to be won, for the first time, by club member Chris Old, who beat off the pack to cross the line in 34.53, still looking strong. Chris has been on fine form in recent races, and all his hard work has clearly paid-off. Annabel Granger, of Bristol and West AC is no stranger to victory on Weston's beach and was first woman home in 37.22.

Second and third places went to David Coales from Team Bath AC and Peter Monaghan from Torbay AC who battled to the line finishing in 35.21 and 35.31 respectively. Second and third females to sprint for the pier and cross the line were Catherine Lee of Westbury Harriers in 40.20 and Nikki Linfield in 41.23.

Jim Plunkett-Cole from challenge 10kx365, two men and one dog each running at least 10k a day throughout 2013, ran the course for the second time in two days having taken part in the club's 'Not Cracker' the day before. Jim, in full pirate regalia, proved that 349 days of significant mileage have not yet completely exhausted him, finishing 38th overall in 40.19. And as if all that wasn't enough, Jim then set off to run the whole course again with Alfredo the dog who needed to do his own 10k for the day, providing entertainment for the rest of the runners out on the course.

The fancy dress outfits showed huge imagination this year, proving that some people will do anything for a mince pie, and included Father Christmas astride an over-fed turkey, the cast of Star Wars, three Drummer Boys and a rather intimidating Dalek hell-bent on exterminating the rest of the field to steal victory. Fortunately, his underhand tactics failed.

Malcolm Gammon, race director said: "We've had a great race today, and it's been clear to see that it provides something for everyone from the serious athlete to the fun runner. The costumes were fantastic, and so were the crowd, cheering on the runners as they passed.

"The event is a firm-favourite in the running event calendar, and always sells out fast, so I would encourage anyone who wants a place next year to enter early.

"I'd also like to thank our event sponsors Easy Runner for all the support they have given to us again this year, and everyone who raised funds for our race charity Weston Hospicecare."

For more information about the race, including results in full, go to www.westonac.co.uk where you can also find out more about the club's other events throughout the year.

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