Christmas Cracker goes off with a bang in Weston-super-Mare

The 27th Christmas Cracker 10k, organised by Weston Athletic Club, saw 2,000 runners tackle the seafront course on Sunday December 7. As is traditional, fancy dress featured extensively, with a shepherd and his flock, reindeers, snowmen, elves, Santas, penguins and Christmas trees among the participants.

The strong headwind on the home straight proved challenging for the runners as they headed back up the beach towards the finish at the Grand Pier. First man to complete the course was Peter Monaghan of Torbay AC in 35.32 who led from the start. Russell Forsbrook, from Weston-super-Mare, and running for Cheltenham and County Harriers, took second in 36.11 and Keith Shapland of Bideford AC came third in 36.45.

Annabel Granger of Bristol and West AC won the race for the women again, crossing the line in 37.23 and bettering her overall finish position from last year by five places, to finish sixth overall. Second woman home was Nicola Brookland, also of Bristol and West AC, in 39.41. Laura Croker of Clevedon AC took third in 40.59.

Other notable participants at this year’s event were Team Lydia which comprised 40 local runners all taking part in memory of local girl Lydia Biddlecombe who died in 2012 just after her fourth birthday. The team were running to raise funds for Bristol Children’s Hospital, and included Weston Athletic Club members James Wotton and Wilf Huxtable who had each run 52 miles the day before from Weston to Bristol and back again.

Also running their first 10k were the Santas in Training, a group of about 35 women and men from Weston-super-Mare who followed a structured training programme organised by Weston AC in the weeks leading up to the event. Together they raised over £1,000 for the race charity Weston Hospicecare.

Race Director Malcolm Gammon, of Weston Athletic Club, said: “We organise lots of races throughout the year, but the Cracker is by far the biggest and most colourful. It’s great seeing so many runners of all abilities lining up together at the start, and seeing such imagination being put into their outfits.

“This year’s race has enabled the club to donate £5,000 to Weston Hospicecare, on top of the sponsorship money raised by individual runners, and I’m pleased that we can support such a worthwhile cause.

“My thanks go to all the runners and spectators who made it such a great event, and to the club’s many volunteers who worked tirelessly behind the scenes and on the day.

“I’d also like to thank our race sponsors for supporting the event again this year and
Next year’s race will be held on Sunday December 6 and entries will open in July with places normally selling out in September.

The club’s next 10k race is the New Year’s Day Hangover on Thursday January 1 at 11am, which takes place at Kewstoke near Weston-super-Mare.

For more information about all the club’s activities, and becoming a member, visit www.westonac.co.uk.

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