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Weston AC at their best

Sunday saw the start of the spring marathon season and gave Weston Athletic Club's members the chance to put into practice what they'd been working towards for the past four months. Some members headed north to Manchester in pursuit of a fast flat course, while others stayed closer to home and tried their hand at the Taunton version - an altogether different animal. Taunton also gave a half marathon option for those wanting a shorter route or saving their legs for a later spring marathon.

The weather in both locations was warm, something those training over the winter months weren't used to, which made for an added challenge and increased the chances of dehydration and heat exhaustion. While some were less fortunate, Weston's members battled on and all made it to their respective finishes.

At Taunton Half, Chris McMillan excelled himself yet again finishing third overall in 1.13.44 and achieved a new personal best, which is a superb result on a far from flat course. Kieron Summers followed next to finish fourth overall and win his age category in 1.15.03. Rob Furlong took third club spot in 1.28.13 while Paul Snelling won his age category and finished in 1.42.55.

Susan Duncan set a convincing new personal best and finished fast in 1.40.44. Geraldine Hope and Nikki Fulstow took second and third club spots in 1.50.52 and 1.53.37. The race also proved profitable for Sarah Harris, Antonia Stokes and Belinda Wilson, all also finishing in their fastest half marathon times.

The full marathon at Taunton, however, is most definitely a race of massive contrasts. For the first lap the marathoners are accompanied by 1,000 other runners who then stop at half way leaving the lonely few to complete the same course again. Gone are the crowds and the encouragement, and those left behind are out there on their own to the finish, in the hottest part of the day. This is a race which is just as much about mental stamina as it is physical fitness.

Ian Connock nailed his first race at the distance entering the envied sub-three hour club at the first attempt in 2.59.02. Phil Richards finished second female overall in an impressive 3.13.55. Josh Harris and Artur Osicki followed hot on Phil's heels in 3.14.04 and 3.14.20. Vanessa Andrews took second club female spot and set a new personal best time of 4.37.08.

Meanwhile in Manchester, 14 members completed the 26.2 mile course, six of them for the first time. Rob Stokes was first from the club to finish in 3.31.03 followed by Elaine Eldridge in 3.47.28. This strong race from Elaine qualifies her automatically for London Marathon next year.

Paul Hudson and Paul Baker were both running the distance for the first time, and earned great times finishing in 3.49.31 and 3.51.23 - not bad considering they have both only got into running in the past couple of years.

Wendie Beardsall went off like a rocket and finished in a super-quick time of 4.04.49 knocking a staggering 38 minutes of her last marathon time. Julie Monaghan achieved her goal of a sub 4.30 finish convincingly in 4.24.03, while Shaleen Summers, Rachel Hedges, Sarah Wheatley, Nicky Baker, Mike Smith and Lorraine Smith all set marathon best times.

The next races in the 2016-17 Weston prom run series take place on Thursday April 20. The main five mile race starts on the seafront near the Tropicana at 7.30pm and is preceded by the one mile junior race at 6.45pm. Runners can enter on the night or online at www.westonac.co.uk/promrun.

ENDS

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