

## **Paddy's Ready for Prime Time**

There was nary a Nor'easter in sight for this year's 12th annual Paddy's Pub Shillelagh Shuffle 3M which, for the past decade, has served as the Grand Finale to the NER Pub Series, now in its 16th year. In a welcome counterpoint to previous years, the sun shone through the foliage for the youth races, and also for the record field lined up at the end of Border Street for the flat and fast certified 3-miler. The certified 3-mile route runs the length of Border St. and takes a sharp left by Paddy's Pub. New this year in the lot across from Paddy's, nestled behind the many vendors on hand, was a beer garden. Post-race the entire block was closed to traffic, giving rise to Paddy's first "Blocktoberfest."

With pints and points in the offing, there was some strategy afoot among competing Pub Series zealots. Coming off an Achilles injury, Series' leader Jacob Barnett of the Somerville Road Runners knew he couldn't finish more than eight places behind his closest competitor—TJ Unger of the Hurtin' For Certain Striders. Unger would win handily in 15:12 but land 3-points behind Barnett, who managed to place 5th after previously winning at Doyle's, Evans Run and Common Fence Point. "My Achilles is healthy, but only because I haven't been doing any running," explained Barnett. "Near two miles a guy passed me and I knew I was in 6th. I was like, 'Uh-oh, I better get moving.'"

Top Series' Master Greg Picklesimer of SRR arrived second in 15:29 with defending Paddy's and Pub Series' champion Lee Danforth placing 3rd in 15:39. Next up was super Senior Mark Reeder, 53, of the Greater Lowell RR, who capped his first Pub Series campaign with a (50+) course record 15:41 to place 4th and eclipse the 15:56 Senior mark held jointly by Ken Leinbach (2007) and Doug Martyn (2010).

There was no suspense on the women's side as the Greater Boston TC's Sara Donahue, 33, captured her 5th straight Pub Series race. The 2008 US Olympic Marathon trialist closed the show in 16:42 (5:34 pace), good for 16th overall among 1,809 finishers. Irish Olympian and now mother of three Sinead Evans (nee Delahunty) placed 2nd in 18:01. Sinead was the original women's shillelagh winner (16:37) back in 2002 when the inaugural Paddy-O's race drew 232 finishers. Pub Series female runner-up Holly Madden, 47, of the Whirlaway Racing Team pulled in third at 18:37 with fellow Pubsters locking down places 4-5-6-7-8 among women.

With two national class women in the 60-69 Veterans division the age-group course record was in jeopardy. Sure enough, off it went...but only by 2-seconds as Linda Jennings, 61, lowered the mark of 20:38 set by Jan Holmquist last year. Jan, 69, would place 2nd in 21:07 (but 1st in the Pub Series!). Rob O'Hara, 59, the original winner of Doyle's and visiting from England, would arrive 6-seconds after Holmquist and just ahead of 77 year-old Cape Ironman Bill Riley. Almost rendered hors de combat after kissing the macadam 10 meters from the finish, Riley still managed a 7:05 pace and picked up 2-points to tie Dave Pember for Septuagenarian Pub Supremacy by finishing ahead of Rich Paulson (22:04) and Pember (22:35). "I was told (mistakenly) that Paulson was right behind me at two miles," explained Riley, who suffered a lacerated lip, deep chest contusion and gashes to both knees. "I was at my limit but I went over it to stay ahead. On Border Street I could feel myself leaning forward."

Luckily, women's Senior winner (Paddy's & Pub Series) Marge Bellisle of Warren, RI, was close by. A nurse by trade, Bellisle applied ointment and gauze. Spying the beer tent, Riley demurely shrugged off a suggested trip to the hospital. One more age-group record fell as Marshfield Road Runner Regina

Wright, 71—the first ever Pub Series 70+ female champ in 2012—ran 27:24 to knock over a minute from her time last year.

At the awards ceremony, it was shillelaghs for the winners, New Balance shoes, jackets and bags for multiple award winners, and a “Good Citizen” award to runner and small business owner Kevin MacNamara, who’s been there with his wallet from the beginning. Paddy’s proprietors Karl and John O’Hara also received Adirondack chairs for their work in hosting the event.

“None of this would be possible without Karl and John,” commented race director Mark Kelly. “We had 2,172 entrants this year, another 211 in the Youth 1K and 222 kids in the park run. Those are all records. We also raised \$45,000 for the Newton Athlete’s Unlimited program and that’s another record. In the 12 years we’ve had the race with Karl and John’s help, we’ve raised \$300,000 for the Athlete’s Unlimited program. We couldn’t publicize the beer garden because we just got OKed for the permit this week, but obviously there’s room for growth in the future, we’ll just have to decide how much we can handle. This was a transitional year.”

—*Bob Fitzgerald, Paddy’s Master of Ceremonies*