

Pub Points, Pints, Primes, Paddy's, Oh My!

Per usual, Paddy's Shillelagh Shuffle 3M in West Newton started at the end of the poor man's Champs Elysees, i.e. industrial Border Street, a gritty start and finish to the flat, fast and certified route along tony Newton roadways with a skirting of the village of Auburndale (NER's home turf and the capital of Newton's 13 villages).

It was seasonably pleasant and sunny for the 11:30 am start this Oct. 14 with a few twists added beyond the 30 outside vendors and Blocktoberfest Beer Garden. For one, Paddy's—which had originally been Paddy'Os before proprietor's John and Karl O'Hara became sick of responding to questions about whether their patio was open—is now Paddy's Publick House with a general upscaling that includes a totally refurbished upstairs with a second bar. Also, RD Mark Kelly upped the bounty for a course record from \$150 to \$250 and NER sponsored a \$100 prime for the first male and female to reach the mile mark, with Newton's Albano family matching that at two miles.

This produced some new faces at the starting line, including 800m man Billy Looney, miler Connor Reck, five-time Sugarbowl 5K champion Brad Mish, Phil Royer and his wife, former Dartmouth runner Hannah Rowe, all B.A.A. team members. Add defending Pub Series champions TJ Unger and Amanda Watters, along with current leaders Alex Kramer and Holly Madden-Merrill, and fireworks loomed.

Not surprisingly, 800m specialist Looney was first to the mile in 4:39 with Reck on his heels. Kramer, Royer and Mish were all within striking distance. Watters was the closest female onlooker as Rowe copped a C-Note in 5:38. The men's time to go for was John Mortimer's 2004 clocking of 14:24, a stiff test as the former Michigan runner and Olympic Trials steeplechaser had averaged 4:48 per mile on the course. Rowe would sweep the primes but fall a minute short of Villanova great Kathy Franey's 16:27 clocking (5:28 pace) from 2007.

Reck ran solo through the second mile in 9:28 but slowed over the final mile as both Mish and Kramer advanced. When Reck hit the Village Bank finish tape in 14:24 he'd tied the record. Organizers certainly wanted to spread the wealth and awarded the \$250 bonus to Reck. The course has always been USATF certified but Mortimer's time was recorded pre-chip so who knew how he and Reck's time compared down to the hundredths of a second?

“I admit it, I almost blew it by falling asleep that last mile,” said Reck. “I felt really comfortable in the first mile. When my watch read 9:22 at two miles I knew I was under the record. I looked around late and saw Mish gaining and that got me going again.”

Mish would place second in 14:43 with 2018 Pub Series champion Kramer in third at 15:06. Defending Pub champion TJ Unger would solidify second in the Series with an 8th place 15:49 showing while copping the top Master award at Paddy's; HFC teammate Stephen Curley would claim the runner-up Series spot with a 6th place finish in 15:31.

Pubsters swept all the age division while solidifying their top spot in the Pub Series, including top Senior Greg Picklesimer of the Somerville RR (13th overall in 16:34); top (60-69) Vet Dave Wessman of the Thirsty Irish Runners in 18:56 over runner-up Jon Waldron of the Cambridge Sports Union in 19:02; Medfield's Dave Pember at 70+ in 24:22 and 82 year old NE-65+ runner Bill Riley in a superb 24:41.

Rowe, 27, would run unimpeded to the women's win in 17:28...but that doesn't mean she wasn't hampered. "I had a side stitch at the mile and it stayed with me the whole race," revealed Rowe. "It was a nuisance but I knew I had a decent lead so I kept running."

Whirlaway's Katrina Martyn, 26, and the BAA's Watters, 38, couldn't have been closer at the finish, both timed in 18:24 with Martyn getting the nod for second. "She's certainly got my number," laughed Watters, who led the entire previous Pub outing at Bernie's Run before being clipped by a single tick at the finish by Martyn.

With Watters missing a Pub Series race and Martyn only coming on late, this year's Malt & Hops garland goes to 4th placer and top Senior Holly Madden-Merrill, 52. The Whirlaway ace ran 18:36 ahead of Katrina's sister, Deidre Martyn, who rounded out the top-5 in 18:44. Madden-Merrill also eclipsed by 7-seconds the W50 mark set by NY great Kathryn Martin in 2010. Pub Series silver goes to the BAA's Kristin Shaw (8th, 19:20) with HFC's Emily Larson (7th, 19:14) forging bronze.

Kudos to Warren, RI's Marge Bellisle, wearer of the W60 maillot jeune (yellow leader's singlet) as she topped her division in 20:44 ahead of fellow publican Claire McManus of the Greater Boston TC in 21:27. World class NE-65+ runner Jan Holmquist, 74, laid down a 7:34 pace as she logged in at 22:45!

The 1,781 finishers in the 3M were preceded by a Youth 1K that drew 287 participants and for even younger attendees there was a morning of activity in the adjacent park. The shrieks of delight here were only topped by the cacophony of the post-race Beer Garden. Participants gathered upstairs and down at Paddy's, outside by the Beer Garden or the awards truck from which Shillelaghs, cash and merchandise were distributed as the aroma of chicken pot pie, sizzling dogs and fried dough permeated the air.

With a total of 2,645 registrants, over \$52,000 was raised through the race and multiple sponsors for Newton's Athlete's Unlimited program benefitting kids and adults with disabilities.

—*Bob Fitzgerald*