

RACE REPORT
SHOE CLINIC BELL HILL CHALLENGE
SATURDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2016

The annual Shoe Clinic Bell Hill Challenge Mountain Running Race was held at the Ferguson Family's Baldoon Farm in the foot hills between Sheffield and Springfield last Saturday.

With a predicted southerly front moving up the South Island late Friday, organisers were preparing for a challenging day and possible postponement or, at best, delay in the start time scheduled for 10.00am.

On the morning of the race it was raining in Christchurch and snowing in Arthurs Pass. Snow had fallen and settled on the summit of Bell Hill, but with breaks in the weather and very little wind organisers decided it would be safe to start the event as scheduled.

Race Director Chris Cox said there was a lot of discussion and full assessment made and it was agreed that it would be safe to hold the event in the cold conditions. There were constant reminders broadcast as competitors arrived reminding them to carry full warm-up gear. As Cox said, "this is a mountain race after all" and with very little wind, there was no increased danger of wind chill.

200 competitors lined up for the mass start of runners competing the 18k loop, and fitness walkers completing a 12k loop on the same course.

First runners to the Bell Hill summit were David Fitch and Sam Bell, closely followed by Nathan Peterson. First woman to the summit was Georgia Whitla. Peterson, who competed in last year's Coast-to-Coast and known for his ability to descend over rough country, proved his ability to be able to handle the snow and rocky underfoot conditions, to pass Fitch and Bell in these early stages of the descent.

Bell and Fitch used their strength and endurance over longer distances to pass Peterson before the 10k mark at the Dalethorpe Saddle to set up a two-way battle for the remaining eight kilometres. Both men tried again and again to run clear, but the race down to the final 400m where Fitch proved fleetest of foot for a six second victory, while Peterson held on for third.

Georgia Whitla was always well clear of the rest of the women's field with 2nd placed Claire Bell closing in over the final stages to finish 6 minutes behind women's champion Whitla. A further 2 minutes back behind Bell was Megan Murdoch.

The weather fluctuated throughout the day, with hail and rain following the last finishers across the line.

Race Director Chris Cox said "luck was on our side this year and fortunately we did not have to make changes that we knew we would have to make if it had kept snowing and hailing. One of the reasons we chose this area when we started the race several years ago was we were confident we could safely hold a mountain running race of this type in most weather conditions. We proved ourselves right this year and everyone came away having experienced a great day in the hills."

Chris Cox
Race Director

(Podium results over)

Podium Results:**RUN:****Run - Open Race - Men:**

| Name | Placing | Time |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------|
| David Fitch | 1st | 1:28:59 |
| Sam Bell | 2nd | 1:29:05 |
| Nathan Peterson | 3rd | 1:32:10 |

Run - Open Race - Women:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Georgia Whitla | 1st | 1:50:16 |
| Claire Bell | 2nd | 1:56:48 |
| Megan Murdoch | 3rd | 1:58:53 |

Run - Men 40-49:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------|
| David Fitch | 1st | 1:28:59 |
| Nathan Peterson | 2nd | 1:32:10 |
| Brad Williams | 3rd | 1:43:17 |

Run - Women 40-49:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Diana Te Awa | 1st | 2:08:08 |
| Lucy Hone | 2nd | 2:13:24 |
| Victoria Elworthy | 3rd | 2:13:25 |

Run - Men 50+:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Craig Kerr | 1st | 1:50:22 |
| Peter Richards | 2nd | 1:50:35 |
| Guy de Lacey | 3rd | 1:50:44 |

Run - Women 50+:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Carmella Zuccaro-Back | 1st | 2:13:25 |
| Colleen Ayling | 2nd | 2:15:47 |
| Lucy Kawana | 3rd | 2:52:38 |

WALK

Walk - Open Race - Men:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|--------------------|---------|---------|
| David Scobie | 1st | 1:54:10 |
| Graeme Albon | 2nd | 2:08:58 |
| Jeanco Engelbrecht | 3rd | 2:15:19 |

Walk - Open Race - Women:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|-------------------|---------|---------|
| Emma Gambles | 1st | 1:52:51 |
| Mrs Stubbs | 2nd | 2:15:14 |
| Charlotte Beasley | 3rd | 2:18:56 |

Walk – Men 40-49:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| Jason Fowler | 1st | 2:59:33 |

Walk – Women 40-49:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| Emma Gambles | 1st | 1:52:51 |

Walk - Men 50+:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| David Scobie | 1st | 1:54:10 |

Walk - Women 50+:

| Name | Placing | Time |
|------------|---------|---------|
| Mrs Stubbs | 1st | 2:15:14 |