

30th Anniversary Introduces New Stars

Almost 4500 runners and walkers from 16 countries turned out in perfect running conditions for the 30th anniversary Armstrong Motor Group Wellington Marathon. And while some celebrated three decades of Wellington's premier marathon event, the main races were won by runners younger than the race itself.

Established in 1986, the Armstrong Motor Group Wellington Marathon has been the region's favourite marathon event for just as long, but this year's winners weren't even born when the first race lined up at Wellington's old Overseas Terminal.

These days the event is based in Wellington's beloved Westpac Stadium and even an upset Super Rugby loss for the Hurricanes the night before failed to dampen the spirits of the 4446 who lined up. Particularly, the winners of the feature Full Marathon and Half Marathon, who all came from out of town.

Napier's Ruby Muir turned 24 just a few days prior to the race, but illustrated calm beyond her years to comfortably confirm her favouritism despite illness. The trail running specialist was trying her first major marathon but came down with bad air sickness on the flight from Napier. Feeling ill from start to finish she decided not to push things too hard, but still cantered around the Capital to finish nine minutes clear of Dutchwoman Klaartje Van Schie.

On the finish line, however, even Muir was wondering "what-if" when she saw her winning time of 2hrs 49min 08min fell just 38secs short of the race record and the \$1000 bonus that went with it.

Cambridge runner Rowan Torckler had a similar story. The 31 year old isn't exactly a new star. Five or six years ago she was one of the country's best young distance talents, but then took a break from racing before returning this year.

Today she was pushed by local hope Katie Kemp, but moved away in the second half of the race. Both women had been injured in the month before the race, so only took to the streets of Wellington at late notice. Kemp, who won the full marathon here in 2013 and was second in last year's half marathon, was keen to be the only woman to have won both races. But although Kemp ran faster than last year, Torckler was too strong and won by 57secs in 1hr 17min 56secs. Olympian Liza Hunter-Galvan was third in 1hr 25min 13secs.

Even more frustrating than for Full Marathon winner Ruby Muir, Torckler was just seven seconds short of the race record set by Nelson-based American Belinda Wimmer in 2008.

The men's Half Marathon and Full Marathon were won by young runners from opposite ends of the country.

Half Marathon victor, Oska Inkster-Baynes is also just 24, but the Christchurch runner has tasted success in Wellington back in 2010 when he won the under-20 age group in a record time of 1hr 14min 41secs. That time would have been good enough for fourth this year, but Inkster-Baynes is improving every time out this year and took line honours today some two minutes clear of local hope Nick Horspool.

While the Men's Full Marathon was won by another young runner, it proved totally different to the other races as a tight tussle saw five runners finished less than four minutes behind Auckland's Chris Wharam.

The 27 year old held off Mark Boyce by 90secs to win in 2hrs 40min 11secs. Forty two year old Spaniard Juan Garrote Des Marcos nabbed third, 65secs further back, just ahead of former winner Dan Clendon (Wgtn) and 49 year old American Ariel Galvan.

The Armstrong Motor Group Wellington Marathon is renowned for providing something for everyone. As well as the feature Full Marathon and Half Marathon there are 10k and 5k options, as well as the popular Kids' Magic Mile.

In the Kids' Magic Mile, first and second place Callum Pepper and Louis Ferguson had to pull out all the stops to beat first female, Erin Leeksma-Redmond, who claimed third overall. The 10k went to past winners Tim Hodge and Gabrielle O'Rourke from Wellington, while the new 5k event was also won by Wellingtonians Donal Hanratty and Anna Von Dadelszen.

All events also include walk categories. The Full Marathon Walk standout was Christchurch's Kate Newitt winning among women yet again in 4hrs 52min 54secs to finish third overall behind winner David Wackrow, who clocked 4hrs 38min 34secs. The Half Marathon Walk saw Eric Grimsley take line honours in 2hrs 01min 23secs, while Terri Grimmitt was first woman in 2hrs 19min 24secs. Jamie Shaw and Jacqueline Wilson dominated the 10k walk, while Jon Rockvist and Anne Lafaele went one-two in the new 5k walk.