

Barnsley Marathon 1978

MISERABLE DAY DID NOT DAMPEN THE MAGIC OF OUR MARATHON

The weather was grim! It was cold! It was foggy! But, even with all the elements against it - the fifth annual Barnsley Marathon which was run over 26 miles on Sunday afternoon was still a resounding success!

Still unbelievably Europe's biggest race of its kind (people take some convincing that Barnsley could possibly be host to such a giant affair!) some 381 runners from this country and overseas accepted the challenge out of an initial entry of close on 500!

And out of those gallant runners more than 280 of them finished the gruelling course; they were tired. They were dirty, but they had beaten the elements in fine style.

It was also a day for upsetting the form in the men's race! Previous winners and runners-up lagged behind local runner, Brian Pickersgill, 32-year-old member of Holmfirth Harriers, who completed the course in 2hrs, 22 min, 47 sec.

The local runner finished almost 120 yards clear of the second man home, Dave Francis of Westbury Harriers (2-23-12), but it was Mike Critchley (Bolton), the course record holder, whom he latched on to as he broke away from the leading group of eight.

This group included last year's Marathon winner, Jeff Norman of the Altrincham AC who was to finish eighth. There was consolation for him in that he helped his team to win the team prize.

There was particular delight among the spectators who had shivered through the waiting hours when Brian stepped forward to receive the Barnsley Chronicle trophy and a portable TV from County Coun. George Moore, chairman of the South Yorkshire County Council.

They were particularly happy that it was a local man who had carried off the main prize in what Coun. Moore described as 'a Marathon which increases in prestige in the athletics world year by year'.



The pleasant task of presenting the winner's trophy - yet again - to London Olympiads runner Lesley Watson, fell to County Coun. John Cornwell, chairman of the Recreation Committee of the County Council.

It was a hat-trick of successes for Lesley! She plucked the ladies' prize in devastating style - even knocking off seconds from her winning times in spite of the weather conditions. Her winning time was 3hrs, 1 mins, 32 secs and she came 152nd in the overall field.

LOVELY LESLEY WATSON creates an impression wherever she goes... and this time she really made a hit with her third-time victory in the Ladies Section of the Marathon. She is seen here receiving her prize from County Coun. John Cornwell, chairman of the Recreation, Culture and Health Committee of the SYCC.

But perhaps the warmest applause was reserved for the winner of the 'First Barnsley man home' trophy - this went to Dave Bennett, a member of the Barnsley Road Runners' Club, and who had played a considerable part in the success of the day. His trophy was presented by former County Councillor, Major Irvine Strutt.

A further round of applause was especially reserved for the 'veterans' in the field - including one 'over 60' who returned a time of 3hr. 32 mins. 51 secs. Prizes in this section were awarded by Mr. Anthony Galvin, Editor of the Barnsley Chronicle, co-sponsors of the Marathon.

It was one of the winning veterans, Jim Hunt, who had travelled from Bournemouth to take part, who summed up the day and the occasion: "It is bit just the winning or the taking part - but the welcome we get in Barnsley". And he meant it!

