

In 1976 the Barnsley Chronicle produced a four-page broadsheet supplement about the Barnsley 6, called the 'GREAT RACE SPECIAL'.

Below are some extracts from this extensive report.

It's still the best

Sunday's Barnsley Six was a mixture of glorious fun, high drama, world class running, and, sadly, of tragedy too. The fun was there for all to see, for all to enjoy. Even the programme gave an appetising taste of things to come, with one Barnsley firm advertising central hearing with the inducement that their staff were the fittest in town. They were, in fact, competing in the race, and would be pleased to give estimates on their way round!

One memorable moment came when Kathy Valance, of the Dorothy Hyman Track Club found herself finishing the ladies' race alongside England international Mike Tagg, who was taking third place in the mens' race. Earlier, officials had clocked Kathy as the winner of the ladies' race until someone pointed out that she was just completing her first lap!

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The boys' races, sponsored by the Barnsley Chronicle, drew a tremendous response and it is obvious that here there is a great wealth of previously untapped talent. Consider, for instance, that more than 50 local boys competed in the two races, most of them having been fired with enthusiasm for the sport by these races alone.

There were also more than 150 locals taking part in the men's race, and while most of them were 'run-for-funners' it is a proven fact that once the running bug has bitten, it is difficult to shake off, and we are bound to hear of a good number of them again.

We were particularly impressed with the turn-out of the Full House team, immaculate in their orange vests, and it was good to see all eight of the Cutting Edge Strollers team cross the finishing line. The development of local teams, however, has reached such a standard that not even this strength in depth performance was sufficient to win the Strollers the prize of the best local team, that honour going to Willowgarth High.

It is this element of running for fun displayed by local competitors which makes the Barnsley Six the great race it is. There were moves this year to tighten up on the rules to such an extent that this fun element would be virtually erased. Thankfully those moves failed to bear fruition. We believe it

would have been a disastrous mistake. Without the local representation from pubs, clubs and local organisations, the Six would become just another race.

Tragedy marred the big race on Sunday when 52-years-old Dennis Sutton, East Crescent, Stocksbridge, collapsed and died on Park Road during the first lap. He was rushed to Barnsley Beckett Hospital but was found to be dead on arrival. None of the competitors and only a few of the spectators knew of the tragedy at the time, and the race went on. Mr Sutton had been training nightly in preparation for this year's event and had been looking forward to it. Johnny Kennedy, captain of the Barnsley Road Runners' Club which organised the race said on Monday, "We are all completely choked. Some of us will be going to see his widow to offer our sympathy and we are considering a suggestion that a special trophy should be awarded next year in Dennis' memory.

No doubt that the tragic death of Dennis Sutton during Sunday's race will bring the critics into action again. For Dennis did not belong to a club. He was one of the men who ran the race for the fun of it. But it is for this very reason that Dennis would be the last person to want to see others like him robbed of the chance of taking part in the future.

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Finally, another word about those crowds. They were marvellous. All the competitors were overwhelmed by their reception and impressed with the friendliness of the Barnsley people.

ALISON'S SECRET – CUT OUT SAUSAGES!

Attractive mother of four, Alison Blake, cut out sausages from this year's training menu for Sunday's Ladies Six...and won!

She didn't last year...and never took part!

Like this year, she was pre-race favourite 12 months ago, only on that occasion she broke her 300-mile journey to Barnsley to call in at a motorway service station area, ate some sausages and by the time the race started, she was returning to Plymouth following a visit to Barnsley Beckett Hospital, in acute pain from a stomach upset.



This year she planned every eventuality down to the smallest of details and the swimming teacher walked away with the title, in 38 mins 59 seconds, shattering last year's record-making run by Stoke's Christine Readdy by an incredible 67 seconds.

Alison, who took up running only seven years ago at the age of 21 and has since run cross-country for Great Britain, was in the leading pack by the time it reached the bottom of Shambles Street.

On the long trek up Racecommon Road, she started to open up a gap, and from that point, she was not going to be caught.

Never once looking back to see where the opposition were, Alison, of the Aldershot and Farnham Club, gradually strode away and by the time she reached Burton's corner on the first lap, the rest of the runners were out of sight.

At the same point, Susan Dean of Longwood Harriers, the 18-years-old student from Huddersfield, was in second place, followed by Rosemary Duddle of Leicester Coritanians, and Dianne Taylor, from Barnet, in fourth place.

Blake kept up the relentless pace up Old Mill Lane and so did the Huddersfield girl, who was third in last year's English Schools Cross Country championships and hold the Yorkshire School 1500 metres record.

However the gradient put paid to the Leicester challenge of Duddle and the Leicester girl was overtaken by Taylor. And that's how they stayed for the whole of the second lap, with Blake steadily increasing her lead.

When she crossed the finishing line to an ecstatic and appreciative reception from the massed crowds, she looked as though another lap would have been possible at the same pace, such was her composure.

The race produced some really game performances from the local contingent, all of whom ran for the pure fun of it all.

Old Mill Lane turned out to be the scourge of them all, especially Rockingham's housewife entrant Shirley Pickering, who seemed set to finish first Barnsley runner home. Unfortunately on reaching the top of the hill on the second lap, and with the finishing line in sight, she collapsed and was taken to hospital...just across the road.

There it was discovered that Shirley's blood stream had become dehydrated of sugar content and she spent the night in Kendray hospital on a drip-feed.



A highly disappointed but completely recovered Shirley said afterwards, "I only I'd walked up Old Mill Lane on the second lap; I would have finished the course. I know I was in a bad way but the disappointment at having gone so far and then having to pack in within sight of the line was terrible. Next time I'm walking up Old Mill Lane no matter what.

The three other Barnsley lasses in the race all did their share of walking. Dorothy Hyman Track Club's Kathy Valance was first local lass to cross the line..right at the side of Mike Tagg, who came in third in the men's race which started 45 minutes after the ladies had set off!

She stuck to her guns and although she was not accredited with an official time, you can take it that she covered the six miles in around 77 minutes.

Shelley Kennedy and Carol Kimberley were once again taken to the hearts of the Barnsley crowd. They finished long, long after Kathy, but they had an excuse. One the way round Shelley collected money for Age Concern and Carol was nursing painful knee and arm injuries.

All the lasses, from near and far –Shirley included – were unanimous in one thing. They enjoyed the race and will be back again next year.

IT'S THIRD TIME LUCKY AS KENYON WINS TITLE

Steve Kenyon, a 24-years-old fitting engineer from Bolton, made it third time lucky in Barnsley's famous Six on Sunday. Second in the inaugural race two years ago and



third last year, the fleet-footed Bolton United Harrier made no mistake this time, destroying a top-class field with a record run of 30 minutes 14 seconds.

It was a world-class performance by Kenyon, who earlier this year won this first international cap in the match against Poland and Canada, and who came fourth in the Olympic 10,000 metres trial in a time of 28 mins 37 secs.

Left struggling in his wake were such talented internationals as Ray Smedley, who only two days earlier had beaten double Montreal Olympic champion Lasse Viren in an I.A.C. two-mile race at the Meadowbank Stadium, and last year's winner, Mike Tagg.

And the winning time of this modest unassuming athlete who has suffered for the past two years from a duodenal ulcer, slashed 34 seconds off the previous best set up two years ago by Wakefield's Dave Slater, who was a regrettable absentee on this occasion.

Kenyon was never out of the first three after the 411 starters had somehow sorted themselves out into some semblance of order after the cavalry charge down Shambles Street to the Town End traffic lights.

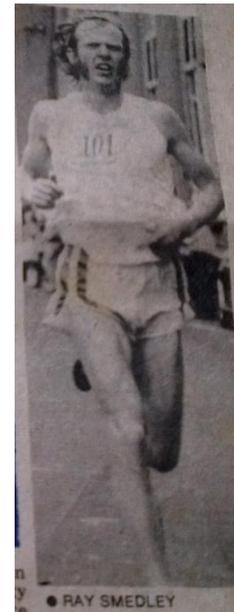


At Burton's corner first time round it was Smedley who held a slight lead, with Kenyon there at his shoulder and Alwyn Dewhirst, Graham Ellis, Keith Darlow and Tagg all in close attendance.

As in previous years it was Old Mill Lane which sorted them out! Kenyon made light of it, flowing up the steep gradient with such ease and grace that his feet never seemed to touch the ground, and he began to pull away from both Smedley and Tagg, who in turn opened up gaps between themselves and a chasing bunch led by local hope Darlow from Dodworth.



Said Smedley afterwards, "I've been training alongside the canals in Birmingham, and you can't get much flatter than that. You can imagine my feelings when I saw that great hill. Steve just seemed to float away from me and there was nothing I could do about it. Apart from the hills I was going well and easily".



From then on Kenyon just pulled further and further away, stamping his class and authority on the race with every stride and spectators gasped at the way he ate up the yards with his beautifully economical action.

Smedley battled on to pass a tiring Tagg, who was not at peak fitness and the Birchfield Harrier finished 14 seconds in front of Derby and County's number one.

Alwyn Dewhirst of Airedale and Spenn Valley improved from 11th last year to 4th; 5th was Dave Lemm the National Police Cross Country and Road Race Champion from Leicester Corinthians; and 6th was Darlow.

It was a great effort by Penistone-based Darlow to finish so high up in the order after missing nearly all of last season with Achilles tendon trouble, and he was delighted to help his club – Bolton United – collect the team trophy. He was second counter behind Kenyon, with Norman Ward who finished 16th completing the distinguished trio.

Airedale and Spenn Valley (Dewhirst, Temperton and Parkinson) and Leicester Corinthians (Lemm, Martin, Allcock) both packed three men into the first 14 to take second and third places respectively.

Bolton's tremendous strength in depth is reflected in the fact that as well as the individual winner and the winning team, they also provided the over-40 prize winner and the oldest competitor.

Jack Haslam won the over 40s prize with his ninth-placed run in 37:41, and seventy-years-old Billy Leach clocked 47 mins 58 secs as the oldest man in the race, to come 297th out of more than 350 finishers.

First overseas competitor to finish was Heinz Trost, from Barnsley's twin town of Schwabisch Gmund, who ran extremely well to finish 50th.

There was another magnificent run from Penistone's Jim Hinchey, who clocked 34:05 29th position and clinch Barnsley Road Runners' Club Championship for the second successive year. Dave Bennett, the first winner, was second in 35:32, and newcomer Eddie McKenzie a very creditable third in 36:05.