

DORSET ROAD RACE LEAGUE

Portland 10 Race Report

Turning out to be last season's league title clincher for the Egdon Heath Harriers men, the Portland 10 represented an opportunity for them to stake their claim for a second one. It was only the seventh race in the Dorset League calendar though so they couldn't quite mathematically seal top spot just yet. With four wins and two third place finishes out of the first six fixtures though, they were certainly in a strong position.

The Bournemouth AC men had been unable to challenge them this season though and were languishing at the bottom of the table and facing the dreaded drop down to the second tier. Their priorities had been divided, due to entry into the Hampshire Road Race League this season, meaning they struggled to find the resources for the Dorset races.

A fixture clash with the final race of the HRRL season meant that BAC were thin on the ground for the Portland 10. Recent recruit Matt Brown had entered though and he isn't afraid of a hill or two. In fact, he tends to flourish on undulating types of route so this was right up his street.

After winning the last four Dorset League races, Christopher Peck was looking to make it five in a row at the Portland 10. He would face competition from Poole Runners man Lewis Clarke though who had come second in the last two races and pushed Christopher to bring out his best.

Christopher's Egdon Heath Harriers teammate Charlie Williams had been having an excellent season thus far as well and he'd finished 2nd at the Marnhull 12k and the North Dorset Village Marathon, 4th at the May 5 and 3rd at the Puddletown Plod.

After failing to get the result they would have wanted at the Puddletown Plod, Poole Runners were looking to bounce back in the Ladies' First Division. They had Vicki Ingham in their arsenal this time which would help their cause. It was just a question of whether they had another couple of women who could place highly enough to back her up.

As usual, Egdon Heath Harriers brought a strong squad with Georgina Povall, Alex Door, Hannah Martyn and Julie Wargent turning out.

The course for the Portland 10 heads down to bottom of the island first, with the first 2.7 miles being mostly downhill. Then after turning round and heading back up, it's then uphill all the way to the top of the island which is the 6 mile point. It's then a small loop for the remaining 4 miles, including going back up half the hill again a second time.

The amazing views of the lighthouse and out to sea in the first couple of kilometres soon become a distant memory as the seemingly endless climbs come into play as you head back up to the top of the island.

It can be a daunting prospect going downhill at first but then knowing you're going to have to go all the way back up and face the mutiny of hills. The elevation gain is of the Portland 10 is between 600 and 700ft.

The initial section to Portland Bill isn't all downhill either as there are two steep inclines that can easily catch you out. That kind of sums the Portland 10 up really. Even the downhill sections are uphill!!

A total of 216 athletes participated in the Portland 10 with all but two of them successfully competing the course. The race winner was... drumroll... Christopher Peck of course!! For the fifth time in a row!! He was proving to be an unstoppable force on the Dorset road race scene.

It was close though, with Christopher crossing the line in 56:04 and Lewis Clarke arriving 13 seconds later to take the runner up spot. Again, he had been foiled by the Egdon Heath Harriers man for the third consecutive time.

In fact, it was the exact same top three as at the Puddletown Plod, with Charlie Williams taking 3rd place in 56:48. Those three were well clear of the rest of the field. Dave Hicks of Poole AC took 4th place in 59:17 and claimed the first M50 prize.

Matt Underhill was Egdon's third runner in the top five, with his time of 59:30, making it another very impressive display from the league champions, who currently look odds on to retain their crown.

Making it to the line in a magnificent time of 59:36, Matt Brown finished 6th overall, just six seconds adrift of the man in front.

John Bassinder of Poole AC was 8th in a time of 1:00:44, making him 2nd M50. Then Joe Godden arrived in 9th place to give Poole Runners their second man in, He clocked a time of 1:01:24.

Finishing as first female, Vicki Ingham got round in a time of 1:01:51 which was enough to see her take a top ten finish overall.

Egdon Heath Harriers had their fourth man in when Daniel Hull arrived in 11th place, clocking a time of 1:02:06. Then Corey Stone of Weymouth St Paul's arrived in 12th place to claim the first Under 21 placing.

As usual, Julian Critchlow was the first over 60 to get round, clocking a time of 1:03:25. That put him in 16th place overall. Then Adam Davies arrived to complete the scoring team for Egdon Heath Harriers and give them their fifth win of the season.

Arriving in a time of 1:05:44, Georgina Povall was 2nd placed female and came 25th overall. The next woman in was Jenny Lee Marshall of Purbeck Runners who crossed the line in 1:06:12, putting her 27th overall.

Jenny's Purbeck runners teammate Anna Philps then reached the line in 1:08:23 which put her 39th overall. Alex Door was Egdon Heath Harriers' second lady in, registering a time of 1:09:29 which put her 45th overall.

11 seconds later, Hannah Martyn completed the scoring team for Egdon Heath Harriers to give them a very important win. Their prospects of retaining the women's First Division title had been given another massive boost.

Poole Runners did get 2nd place in the end, with Clare Wood finishing as 16th lady and Lisa Pitcaithley taking 18th in 1:15:06 and 1:18:03 times respectively.

Purbeck Runners did take first place in the Ladies' Second Division, with Abigail Baker completing the scoring team in 1:25:46. She was 30th fastest female. That brought them close to Dorset Doodlers at the top of the Second Division table since they didn't have a team out at the Portland 10.

Hamish Murray won the first over 70 prize, clocking an excellent time of 1:11:18 which put him 56th overall.

Poole Runners took 2nd place in the Men' First Division, with Littledown Harriers in 3rd and Poole AC 4th. Bournemouth AC were 6th due to only having four runners and Twemlow Track Club were the only club in the top division not to field any runners.

That no show meant Twemlow Track Club dropped down to 4th in the table, with Poole Runners moving up to 2nd and Poole AC assuming 3rd.

Wimborne AC won the Portland 10 fixture in the Men's Second Division, keeping the pressing on Westbourne who were 2nd and are currently top of the table.

Only the top three teams will remain in the Second Division though with the new league format coming into play next season so it will no doubt be hotly contested between the remaining teams for that all important 3rd place.

With no Bournemouth AC ladies featuring at the Portland 10, the BAC women remain rooted to the bottom of the table with time running out if they're to save themselves from relegation to the second tier. The men are in the same situation and looking like they might be plunging to new depths next season as well.

The next race of the Dorset Road Race League campaign is the Sturminster Newton Half Marathon on 6th August. Then after that it will be the Round the Lakes 10k in September which will no doubt provide some fireworks as all the top runners in the area will want a piece of the action.