

Glounageenty Race

Report by Douglas Barry

John Lenihan brought it all back home on Sunday the 8th August 1999. The Glounageenty farmer who won the World championship in 1991 at Zermatt, Switzerland, far from his home base in Kerry, had the satisfaction of running up his own laneway to his own farm and winning the inaugural Glounageenty race which he organised himself. The 12 kilometre course went over Lenihan's land and that of his neighbouring farmers in a twisting and turning course that climbed and descended every high point on both sides of the narrow Glounageenty valley.

The valley had seen the death of one of Ireland's more famous insurgents - the rebel Earl of Desmond - who had his head cut off when he was discovered hiding there in 1583. Most of the field in the race felt that they had also been put to the sword, as the sheer physicality of the course chopped at their legs. However, it made great viewing for us spectators. Up and down they went, never far from our view, as the long haired Riocht runner - Riocht means kingdom in Gaelic - proved he was king of his own kingdom and twisted the sword in his rivals.

In the initial stages, Lenihan led from Martin McDonald (North Laois) but halfway through the punishing course the other local hero John Barrett slipped past the gallant McDonald and pulled away for a strong second place to the howls and cheers of a large crowd. Talented cross country runner Maureen Harrington from Kenmare won the women's race in her first outing in a mountain race from Killarney's Catherine Kerrisk and Dublin's Julie Hilliard. Fergal Fitzmaurice won the juniors from Ross Alexander.

The race also featured an organised walk over the course and a hundred locals and others took the opportunity to get a taste of what was in store for the runners. The walkers, added to the great groups of spectators, gave the race a unique atmosphere as the shouts of encouragement - mingled with judicious slagging - echoed around the narrow valley. The race may have the last round in the Munster Championship which Lenihan duly won to add to his 1999 Irish title, but it certainly was the toughest. Thirst slaked later in the Half Way bar in Ballymacelligott, the consensus was "We'll be back!"

1 st	John Lenihan	Riocht AC	55.14
2 nd	John Barrett	Desmond Currans	57.30

3 rd	Martin McDonald	North Laois	59.22
4 th	Willie Reidy	Riocht AC	60.43
5 th	Tim O'Connor	Riocht AC	60.53
6 th	Eoin McKenna	Desmond Currans	60.56
1 st Woman	Maureen Harrington	Riocht AC	27.14
2 nd Woman	Catherine Kerrisk	Killarney	28.48
3 rd Women	Julie Hilliard	Ipswich	
1 st Junior	Fergal Fitzmaurice	Riocht AC	
2 nd Junior	Ross Alexander	Coolquill	