**Sinclair’s sensational day**

 Ben Rinnes hill race organiser hails ‘remarkable performance’

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**IN FORM: Rob Sinclair wins the Ben Rinnes Five Tops Hill Race.**

Organiser Graeme Bartlett was massively impressed by Aberdeen athlete Rob Sinclair’s winning performance in the Ben Rinnes hill race at Dufftown.

Sinclair completed the 14-mile course, which includes 4,900ft of climbing, in 1hr 56min 29sec which is the fourth fastest time in the 26-year history of the race.

He finished well ahead of fellow GreatBritain ultra trail running internationals Tom Owens (Shettleston Harriers), who was runnerup in 2:02:39, and third placed Kyle Greig (Metro Aberdeen), who clocked 2:04:59.

Ireland international Eoin Lennon (Carnethy), who set the course record of 1:53:47 in 2018, had to settle for fourth position in 2:07:54. Bartlett has organised all 26 races so far and even managed to take time out to win the inaugural one in 1994 and again in 1996.

He said: “Rob’s performance was remarkable. It’s difficult to compare times from one year to the next because the conditions can be very different. But this year it was very warm and humid.

“Not only that, he defeated an exceptionally high quality field, which included Eoin, the course record holder, who well back in fourth spot.”

**Stefan Wagner won the over-40s prize in 2:17:49** while Mike Stewart (Keith and District) was first over50 in 2:30:17, **Phil Kammer (Cosmic Hillbashers)** led the way in the over-60s, 3:05:40, and Iain Thomson was the fastest over-70 in 3:42:16.

Scottish champion Jill Stephen (Hunters Bog Trotters) was in fine form, winning the women’s race for the third year in a row.

The Edinburgh-based Dufftown athlete, who set a record time of 2:18:12 last year, finished 13th overall from a field of 102 to win in 2:23:29.

Former world duathlon champion Catriona Morrison (Highland Hill Runners) was second, first over-40, in 2:32:03 while Jenny Gillies (Spey Runners) took third position in 2:44:24.

Meanwhile, Great Britain mountain running international Robbie Simpson decided against competing in the Davos 20km at the weekend and will instead take part in next Sunday’s Fletta trail race at Malonna, Italy.

The Banchory athlete is putting the final touches to his preparations for the Sierre-Zinal mountain race in Switzerland.

He said: “I received an invitation to the Italian race and felt it would be better to get a bigger week of training done rather than to race at Davos.”

Simpson will be joined in the Fletta competition by Highland athlete Andy Douglas, who tops this year’s world mountain running world cup race series standings.

The race starts at 525m, climbs to 1,272m before descending steeply to the finish.