

CLARIFICATION: A previous version of this press release did not include the second- and third-place women's finishers. The winners and their finishing times have since been added below.

Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mint Hill, Gastonia residents win Grandfather Mountain Marathon

GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN, N.C.—Saturday saw a fresh finish for Mint Hill, N.C., resident Mike Mitchell, winner of the 49th annual Grandfather Mountain Marathon.

The grueling, 26.2-mile race drew 325 runners to the starting line in Boone, but it was Mitchell, 32, who took a firm lead and finished with a time of 2:51.48.

This marks the Mint Hill runner's second time completing the Grandfather Mountain Marathon, the first being in 2013, when he finished fourth. He said the challenge drew him back, as well as a love of the course.

"It was a little bit windy today, but if we wanted a quick and fast course, we'd go somewhere else," Mitchell said. "The last 10 miles, there's not a lot of reprieve. It's kind of like a movie you've seen a couple times. You know the ending and kind of hope for a different outcome, but you know there's no downhill any time soon. But that's part of the challenge, coming up with the wind, hills and mountains."

Mitchell's no stranger to the High Country, having graduated from Appalachian State University in 2007.

"I always wanted to come up here and participate in (the marathon)," he said, adding that he plans to run again next year. "It's just a great course and a great event. I love it."

Mitchell was followed by Patrick Woodford, 23, of Roanoke, Va., who finished with a time of 2:53.45, and Brian Fowler, 34, of Raleigh, N.C., with a time of 2:58.19.

Fourth time was the charm for Suzanne Hutchins, who finished first in the women's category and sixth overall with a time of 3:11.58.

“This is the fourth time I ran the marathon,” said Hutchins, 36, of Gastonia, who keeps coming back for two reasons. “I love the mountains, and this is my favorite marathon. It’s a beautiful course — rolling and hilly.”

Hutchins was followed by Kimberly Hefner, 42, of Rock Hill, S.C., with a time of 3:46.56, and Ha Green, 39, of Clemmons, N.C., with 3:48:00.

A breezy, cloudy morning greeted the runners at the starting line — Kidd Brewer Stadium at Appalachian State University in Boone. From there, the group snaked along the Blue Ridge Parkway and back toward Linville to finish on the track at the 61st annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games.

“We had 29 states represented, and even some runners from New Zealand and El Salvador,” race coordinator Jim Deni said. “We have people from very long distances running a long distance. It’s a good group.”

And it’s a grateful group.

“It was really nice,” said Fowler, the marathon’s third-place finisher. “Running around (the track at the end), everybody knows what you’ve been through, and they’re cheering you on. Right when it hurts you the worst, you’ve got a big smile on your face, and it’s impossible not to be happy when you’re smiling.”

Complete results will be available online at finishlinepros.com.

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ATTACHMENTS:

070916_GFM_GMHG_Marathon_Mitchell_SS: Mike Mitchell finishes first at the Grandfather Mountain Marathon, part of the 61st annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. The Mint Hill, N.C. resident completed the race with a time of 2:51.48. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

070916_GFM_GMHG_Marathon_Mitchell_2_SS: Grandfather Mountain Marathon winner Mike Mitchell takes his victory lap at MacRae Meadows, during the 61st annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

070916_GFM_GMHG_Marathon_Hutchins_SS: Suzanne Hutchins of Gastonia crosses the finish line at the Grandfather Mountain Marathon Saturday, finishing first in the women’s category and sixth overall with a time of 3:11:58. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

070916_GFM_GMHG_Marathon_Hutchins_2_SS: Suzanne Hutchins, first female finisher at the Grandfather Mountain Marathon, takes her victory lap at MacRae Meadows, site of the 61st annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation