

Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 11, 2015

Grandfather Mountain Marathon winners hail from Boone, Glasgow

A reigning champion from Boone and a first-time competitor from Scotland were crowned men and women's champs Saturday in the Grandfather Mountain Marathon.

The gritty 26.2-mile race drew 327 runners to the starting line, but it was 34-year-old Caleb Masland of Boone and 35-year-old Jill Smylie of Glasgow who earned the top spots.

"It went better than last year," said Masland, who also finished first in 2014. "I was shooting for 2:45, and I got 2:45.07, so I'm happy."

Masland had a 20-minute lead on his closest competitors, 24-year-old Thomas Briggs of Mount Pleasant, S.C., and 32-year-old Daniel Williams of Baton Rouge, La. The two finished together at 3:06.22 and 3:06.32, respectively.

Last year's female winner, 48-year-old Annette Bednosky of Jefferson, came in second this year in a time of 3:37.43, and third place went to Michelle McKenzie, 38, of Flowery Branch, Ga., in a time of 3:46.55.

Smylie, a teacher on a one-year cultural exchange program in Swansboro, said the race's finish at MacRae Meadows in the midst of the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games brought an incredible feeling.

Smylie said she had never attended a Highland Games before and will leave in just one week to return to Scotland.

"I heard the bagpipes and (saw) the kilts, and it was the most amazing experience of my life," she said.

Race director Jim Deni said it wasn't entirely surprising that the winners hailed from 3,700 miles apart, as the Grandfather Mountain Marathon has earned a reputation as one of the toughest marathons in the world.

"We generally have good representation from the western part of the state, but we've got people from 26 states here, so it's well-known," Deni said.

Overcast skies and a cool morning offered excellent conditions for the runners, who started at Appalachian State University's Kidd Brewer Stadium, snaked along the

Blue Ridge Parkway and back toward Linville to finish on the track at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games.

Competitors from 17 to 75 tested their mettle on the course, and even the first finishers remarked on the course's difficulty.

"It was hard because I've been living at sea level and running on flat," Smylie said. "But it wasn't as hard as I thought it would be."

Masland benefitted from his knowledge of the course from past years.

"This race just chews you up," he said. "You have to be really smart in the first 16 miles, and I learned that last year."

Masland offered his advice for runners considering this particular marathon: "Be patient. Enjoy the climbs instead of attacking them, and no breaks on the downhills — let them do the work for you.

"And survive the last 10 miles."

Complete results will be available at finishlinepros.com.

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ATTACHMENTS:

Masland: Boone resident Caleb Masland completes a final lap in MacRae Meadows en route to his first-place finish Saturday in the Grandfather Mountain Marathon. Kellen Short | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation.

Smylie1: Jill Smylie of Glasgow, Scotland, celebrates as she crosses the finish line at the Grandfather Mountain Marathon on Saturday. Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation.

Smylie2: Jill Smylie of Glasgow, Scotland, said she had never been to a Highland Games event before she won the Grandfather Mountain Marathon on Saturday. Kellen Short | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation.