

Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

P.O. Box 129, Linville, N.C. 28646

Contact: Frank Ruggiero | (828) 733-2013 | frank@grandfather.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Masland finishes first in Grandfather Marathon for second consecutive year

GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN, N.C.—Area business owner Caleb Masland finished first in the 51st annual Grandfather Mountain Marathon for the second consecutive year, beating his previous time by 10 minutes and change.

The marathon, part of the 63rd annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, took place Saturday, July 14, and saw 279 runners assault a grueling course, spanning from Kidd Brewer Stadium on the Appalachian State University campus in Boone, N.C., to MacRae Meadows at the base of Grandfather Mountain in Linville, N.C.

Masland, 37, of Boone was the first to cross the finish line with a time of 2:43:12.

“My main goal was to better my previous time,” Masland said.

Mission accomplished. To do so, Masland approached the course with a different mindset.

“I was very patient,” he said. “I worked really hard this cycle and tried to focus on strength, on hills and on getting as much rest as I could in between hard workouts. But really, it was just about being patient today.”

Masland opened up the race a little slower than usual, he admitted, which he said helped in the long run.

“I was in second for, probably, I want to say 10-plus miles — almost half the marathon ... but I was able to keep grinding and stay relaxed,” he said.

Masland, who works as a running coach and recently opened a running store in Boone, Up and Running, said he’s run portions of the course on numerous occasions and has completed the marathon four times now.

His favorite part?

“I like the challenge,” he said. “I’ve never been a speedster, but rather the kind of runner that thrives on something that’s difficult but rewarding at the same time, and this course has everything — uphill, downhill, beautiful waterfalls, amazing surroundings, and I think this is the most interesting and special finishing venue of any race I’ve ever seen.”

Once the runners reach U.S. 221 and near MacRae Meadows, they're greeted by the sounds of bagpipes and merriment.

"It's like that little bit of motivation," Masland said. "If you can just get to that point, you know you have only a little bit left, and the pain kind of melts away for that last mile and a half."

Masland was followed by Tanner Cook, 24, of Johnson City, Tenn., who came in second with a time of 2:59:19, and William Harden, 30, of Atlanta, Ga., who finished shortly thereafter at 3:00:22.

Mary Michaels, 34, of Moody, Ala., was the first female to finish the 2018 marathon (11th overall), with a time of 3:15:39 — more than 10 minutes faster than her 2017 outing. She was followed by Melissa Bell, 37, of Charlotte, N.C., with a time of 3:24:37 (17th overall) and Shenna Patterson, 35, also of Charlotte, with a time of 3:34:43 (25th overall).

"I came back this year, and I wanted to win," Michaels, a veterinary technician, said. "I came in second last year, and I knew I wanted to come back, but, I was like, 'I've got to go for it this year.'"

And she did, thanks to some hard work and practice. Michaels even ran her first sub-three (less than three hours) marathon in Tokyo, Japan, in February. 2017 marked her first Grandfather Mountain marathon, which she'd initially planned to use as a training run.

"But then I got on course, and I felt good, so I just went for it," she said. "I was supposed to use this as a training run today, but then I felt good again on course and was like, 'You know what? I want to win.'"

The course, itself, serves as motivation, she noted.

"I love the Blue Ridge Parkway, and this is one of the most beautiful courses I've ever run," Michaels said. "Also, there's not a ton of fans, but the ones that are out there are just so enthusiastic and so excited, and the fans are what make it. And finishing here at the Highland Games? You can't ask for a better finish line.

"The last mile, I was running about a seven-minute mile, and then as soon as I got here, I dropped my time to about a 6:20 mile around the track, because you just feed off the fans."

Race director Jim Deni concurs, admitting that the course carries a certain mystique, but that it can also be deceiving.

"If you don't know this course, it humbles you," Deni said. "When you try to attack this course, as I've personally done, it'll humble you. The one time I tried to attack it, I just

literally fell apart about mile 21. It's deceiving, and that's why it's ranked as one of the toughest courses, but also one of the most beautiful."

According to Deni, 20 states were represented in the race, while one marathon runner hailed from Guam.

"So, we've got a great field," Deni said. "This marathon is noted as one of the toughest, but it also runs so smoothly, and it's so well organized. And with the atmosphere and mystique of the Highland Games, it all comes together. That's what makes this thing. I think being a part of the Highland Games for 51 years, when the Games themselves are 63 years old, is pretty amazing."

The 63rd Grandfather Mountain Highland Games took place July 12-15 at Grandfather Mountain in Linville, N.C. To learn more about the Highland Games, visit www.gmhg.org.

The not-for-profit Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation strives to inspire conservation of the natural world by helping guests explore, understand and value the wonders of Grandfather Mountain. For more information, call (800) 468-7325, or visit www.grandfather.com to plan a trip.

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CUTLINES:

071518_GFM_GMHG_marathon_Masland_RM: Caleb Masland, 37, of Boone, N.C., completes his fourth Grandfather Mountain Marathon on Saturday, June 14, finishing first with a time of 2:43:12 — more than 10 minutes faster than his 2017 run, in which he also finished first. Now in its 51st year, the marathon is part of the annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, which returned for its 63rd installment July 12-15 at Grandfather Mountain in Linville, N.C. Photo by Rob Moore | MTNSnapshots

071518_GFM_GMHG_marathon_Michaels_RM: Mary Michaels, 34, of Moody, Ala., pauses after crossing the finish line as the first female finisher of the 2018 Grandfather Mountain Marathon, with a time of 3:15:39 — more than 10 minutes faster than her 2017 time, which had earned her second place. Now in its 51st year, the marathon is part of the annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, which returned for its 63rd installment July 12-15 at Grandfather Mountain in Linville, N.C. Photo by Rob Moore | MTNSnapshots

071518_GFM_GMHG_marathon_men_SS: The top finishers of the 51st Grandfather Mountain Marathon are Caleb Masland (center) of Boone, N.C., Tanner Cook (right) of Johnson City,

Tenn., and William Harden of Atlanta, Ga. Now in its 51st year, the marathon is part of the annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, which returned for its 63rd installment July 12-15 at Grandfather Mountain in Linville, N.C. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

071518_GFM_GMHG_marathon_women_SS: The top female finishers of the 51st Grandfather Mountain Marathon are Mary Michaels (center) of Moody, Ala., Melissa Bell (right) of Charlotte, N.C., and Shenna Patterson of Charlotte. Now in its 51st year, the marathon is part of the annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, which returned for its 63rd installment July 12-15 at Grandfather Mountain in Linville, N.C. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation