

## FELLS LEGEND JOSS NAYLOR STILL RUNNING AT AGE OF 74

By Tony Greenbank

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**North Cumbrian runners turned out in force for the 57th Lake District Mountain Trial on Sunday where traditionally they have often excelled.**

Olympic gold medallist and London Marathon founder Chris Brasher called it "the toughest event in the British athletic calendar".

The prestigious event, which changes its venue year by year, took in the mountains from Glenridding and Patterdale to Pooley Bridge, those usually seen by motorists negotiating Kirkstone Pass by car.

The list of clubs competing read like a role of honour with Cumberland Fell Runners, Border Liners OC, Keswick AC, Borrowdale Fell Runners, and Ellenborough AC competing in strength.



Joss Naylor with Richard McGrath, of Ellenborough AC

A record number of 278 runners ran their hearts out on some of toughest mountain terrain in Britain.

The seniors ran 20 miles and covered a height of at least 7,000ft with peak following peak in succession, and scree slopes, deep gullies and crags and bracken and bog all adding to the challenge.

Joss Naylor was still running, albeit in the shorter race of 10 miles and a minimum of 3,000ft. In the 1970s he won the senior event seven times, aptly, "on the trot".

Altogether he has run this blue riband event 48 times and young runners were delighted to see the 74-year-old legend even now competing amongst them on the hills.

"I haven't been training because an MRI scan has just revealed a trapped nerve in my back," he said. "I get a lot of cramp in the muscle leading up to the groin.

"Recently cramp was so bad after a run I couldn't get out of the car. Salt and water help a bit but the cramp won't go away. An op isn't an option at my age, and because of the amount I've punished my body through the years.

"Age affects you. I can't climb fells the way I used to. My legs are dead with the trapped nerve. They felt like lead today on Kentmere Pike. But just occasionally on a good day I can still fair fly along.

"Today was not too bad. I got lost near the start when someone gave me wrong directions but I gradually caught up on my time and finished in the three and half hours I expected, so I am pleased."

Joss was the first to congratulate Ellenborough AC runner, Richard McGrath who lives in Fleming Square, Maryport and works as an environmental consultant at Westlakes Science Park.

He was the first runner home in the senior race, but finished a still highly creditable 10th overall after the remaining runners finished.

Members of Borrowdale Fell Runners have won this blue riband event five times out of the last six years.

Steve Birkinshaw, a hydrologist from Threlkeld, was the winner last year, running for Borrowdale Fell Runners.

This year, however, a combination of factors ensured he was pipped at the post by Rhys Findlay-Robinson of Dark Peak Harriers.

Hector Haines from Ilkley Harriers was second, but Steve still earned a place on the podium.

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