



## Just champion!

**ARISE Sir Mark Le Gassick, the newly-crowned RR10 summer cross country champion who, after a fantastic 2006, has continued to turn on the style this year.**

Mark agonisingly lost out on the RR10 title last summer by a solitary point to Winchester & District AC's Julian Mann in the final race at Hursley Park - no thanks to some interesting front packing by the Winchester runners, writes *Dave King*.

This time, Mark left nothing to chance and he wrapped up the title with two races to spare after securing win number four of the season at Janesmoor Pond in the New Forest.

He needed only a top three finish in the race to claim the title, and after a fast start he took the lead at the first hill and was never headed on the 4.1-mile course.

"I had an amazing run," reflected Mark, who weeks earlier had warmed up in style with an impressive victory in the New Forest 10, retaining the title he had won 12 months earlier.

"I felt really strong on the hills and I was flying on the flat sections. I couldn't actually remember too much about the course from last year but, during the run, I

started to remember it and how it had felt much harder last year.

"I think due to the fact that I'd been concentrating so much on the Hampshire Road Race League and was knackered, and I hadn't bargained on continuing to race competitively in July/August.

"However, this was a different story.

"There was a fairly fast start by a Southampton RC runner, but I sat in behind and overtook him towards the top of the first hill and then pushed on from there extending the lead around the two laps.

"Although it was a fairly short course, the two-lap undulating terrain made it a pretty stiff challenge.

"Having done the race last year, I knew that the final hill would be tough so held a bit in reserve and took it quite steadily as I knew I had a comfortable lead."

It was a great effort from Mark, who has been central to the organisation of the RR10 team during the summer, leading from the front with his running, but there at the end to cheer on the rest of the team.

Thanks to his persuasion and cajoling, the club has regularly been putting out more than 20 runners for the series and done well.

A fortnight earlier, the 34-year-old won in style at the New Forest showground in Brockenhurst, capturing the New Forest 10 in a time of 54min 10sec. It was his third quickest 10-mile time ever.



The start of the New Forest 10, with race winner Mark Le Gassick, far left, in the white kit.

The final two rounds of the RR10 take place at Stoke Park Wood in Bishopstoke on Wednesday, August 1st (7.30pm) and at IBM in South Hursley on August 15th (7.15pm). Contact Mark Le Gassick if you would like to run either race at: [marklegass@sgrac.net](mailto:marklegass@sgrac.net)

He said: "It was pretty warm as usual for this race so the shady forest sections provided some much needed rest bite from the sun.

"The start of the race was altered slightly this year; we didn't pass through the farmyard at the beginning or end of the race, but took a short detour around it via a track which quickly joined the same route as usual.

"I heard that it got a bit congested as the main race flowed through because the track was quite narrow but I don't think there were any problems.

"I had a good run, I started steadily and took the lead just after the mile mark and then pushed on for the rest of the race - it was like doing a nine mile time trial.

"I haven't been doing any distance work but wanted to try to run a decent time in the race so that I have a marker to work from later in the year when I plan to run a quicker 10-mile time on the road.

"So I was pleased to run 54.10 on a largely off-road course which isn't flat.

"My season is going very well - I ran mainly 10ks on the road for the first five months of the year and was particularly pleased with my run at the Eastleigh 10k - 31.50 for 14<sup>th</sup> place.

"I also had a good run at the Hampshire 10-mile championships at Alton - it was another solitary run out front and I was pleased with the 54.28 clocking."