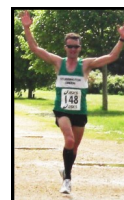


## Mark seals HRRL title with win at Netley 10k



May was a very good month for SGRAC's Men's Captain, Mark Le Gassick, as he rounded off his Hampshire Road Race League season, at the Netley 10k, with a third consecutive league victory and maximum point score. Mark's win at Netley also consolidated his position at the top of the HRRL leaderboard and confirmed for him the overall championship title.

Mark's victory at The Royal Victoria Country Park came hot on the heels of his win at the Alton 10 mile road race the previous Sunday. In warm, sunny conditions it was the quickest of his three wins over the hilly north Hampshire course, with a time of 54 minutes 17 seconds, and crossing the line ahead of HRRL contender Paul Cameron, of West Wight Road Runners, by almost two minutes.

Going into the final fixture, at Netley, Paul was lying in second place in the overall league standings, but he needed to win the race and finish ahead of Mark by several places in order to win the league title. However, given the recent form of SGRAC's men's captain that seemed unlikely, and it was Mark who was odds on favourite to hold on to the top spot in the overall individual rankings.

In a race that was reminiscent of the 2006 Stubbington 10k, Mark was once again involved in a closely fought contest with Southampton Running Club's Andy Morgan-Lee, following his recent return to competitive running after being out injured.

On a twisty, three-lap course that included several very tight and slippery corners - thanks to a heavy rainstorm earlier in the day - the old adversaries went head to head once again, with each taking the lead a number of times throughout the race only to be pegged back by the other.



Setting the pace: Mark leads Mike Grist of Poole Runners and Andy Morgan-Lee

However, Mark was determined to round off his road race season on a high, and he started to open up a gap over the final stages of the race to win by a 12 second margin in a time of 32 minutes 46 seconds.

There was an unfortunate incident at the start of the race involving Paul Cameron, who had his heels clipped by a runner from behind. Paul was sent sprawling to the ground, badly grazing his arm, and sustaining a nasty cut to the side of his face.

The incident caused considerable chaos as the field surged forward with people having to take evasive measures to avoid the runner on the ground. (*Ed. For the record, this was purely a racing accident and no brown paper envelopes changed hands after the race!*)

Amazingly, despite taking the tumble, Paul managed to recover and finish the race in a very respectable fifth place (34.25).

This is the second time that Mark has won the HRRL in recent years, after finishing in joint first place with Andy Morgan-Lee back in 2006. On that occasion, the pair finished the season with the same overall point score and could not be separated on count back as they each had two wins, three second places, and one third place. Therefore, they were both awarded the league title - the first time in the event's history that the league has ended in a draw.

Commenting on his latest HRRL win, Mark said: "I'm delighted to win the league after being out injured at the beginning of 2008, and being unable to compete last year. My training went very well over the winter months, including many tough, high quality sessions, and all the hard work certainly paid off towards the end of the season with some very good performances, times, and race results."

~ See page 5 for a roundup of the final HRRL standings ~