

Field of (RD'S) Dreams at Leona Divide

The 15th annual Leona Divide hosted an amazing field of ultra athletes, more than making up for the disappointing cancellation of the race in 2005. Records fell like autumn leaves on this cold, damp, and overcast day and stories of exceptional performances filled the air.

Due to severe storm damage in the area, last year's 14th running was forced to be cancelled. Never the less, five die-hards decided to run the 50 mile course on the day the race had been scheduled. With the aid of good friends John and Betsy, Darcel, and John Howard at the paved road crossings, three of the five, Victor Low, Danny Trudeau, and Joshua Lowe crossed the finish line in that order.

Jorge Pacheco, winner of the 2003 Leona Divide, came back this year to reclaim the title and snatch the course record by 11:07. Scott Jurek, four time winner at Leona, held the record of 6:45:58 since 2002. William Emerson, second place finisher and age group record holder from 2004, reeled in the course record as well. Pacheco, Emerson, Jurek, and local runner Kevin Dean were all on a record pace until close to the turn around, staying within seconds of each other. A scant nine seconds separated the first eight runners through mile 20.5, which shows some quality depth in the men's division.

Krissy Moehl from Seattle got her first taste of the LD course, earning top honors in the women's division with the added bonus of the women's record by 4:10. A smart pace and strong finish gave Moehl her ninth overall 7:42:14. Second woman Ashley Idema of Mt. Baldy, California reached the finish line in an impressive 8:42:22 for a 19th overall finish.

The men's 60+ record was lowered 3 minutes and 44 seconds by Wally Hesseltine of Lafayette, California. The previous record was short lived, set by Denis Trafecanty in 2004 at 9:55:25.

The Leona Divide Run continues to support the Live Again Recovery Home and The Painted Turtle Children's Camp, both of Lake Hughes. One of the days many exceptional performances was by Roger Welch, from the Live Again Recovery Home. Welch, along with Tyson Tisdale, summed up the courage to enter the race. Although Tisdale was unable to complete the course, Welch, with very little training, and through sheer will power, finished 32 minutes before the 13 hour cut off. We wish these men all the best in their quest for betterment.

This was the second year for the Leona Divide 28.4 mile Spring Chicken Sprint which uses the first half of the 50 mile course then heads down to the finish. The race is limited to runners 60 and over. For the second time Don Caldwell was first at the finish, bettering his 2004 time by 4:36 with a superb 4:24:09. Pat DeVita, at 72 was the only woman brave enough to join the eight guys on this outing. Marv Powers, who celebrated his 78th birthday the day before, puts most youngsters to shame with his 7:24:35 finish.

Perhaps the most exceptional performance of the day was that of the tireless and hardy volunteers. The course marking folks, radio crew, aid station people, and finish line pros all endured the cold, wind, and rain without complaint, getting their jobs done efficiently and with a smile. Our gratitude also goes to the men from the Live Again Recovery Home who continue to help Don Hughes and Marv Powers with trail maintenance.

Our sincere gratitude goes to our many sponsors, and we ask that you keep them in mind.