

NATIONAL HILL-CLIMB CHAMPIONSHIPS, SUNDAY OCTOBER 27

Storming up the Stang

**Richard Abraham in
Arkengarthdale**

One man's 'storm of the decade' is another's autumn afternoon. As the south of England shut up shop and battened down the hatches, the National Hill-Climb Championships embraced the typical North Pennines weather and simply got on with it.

"You wouldn't want to bring a cornet out in this weather," said event secretary Howard Heighton, whose children trumpeted the riders' efforts with homemade horns of which Blue Peter would be proud, crafted from a coiled ring of hosepipe with a plastic funnel attached at one end and a cornet mouthpiece at the other.

The rest of the fans out on the course had their work cut out leaning against the howling wind, although others chose to lean closer to the wood-burning stove in the country pub that made up the HQ in the remote corner of North Yorkshire. The 2.33-mile climb of The Stang, however, closed to cars for the afternoon, seemed used to this kind of weather – there were few trees left around the climb to be blown over and the ditches alongside the road were used to dealing with the sheets of water that lashed down on and off all day.

That buffeting south-westerly wind made for uncomfortable conditions — particularly if you happened to be wearing a skinsuit — but it also made for fast times, lifting riders up the road that pointed north-east towards the edge of the Yorkshire Dales.

It meant that the event winner, Tejvan Pettinger (Sri Chinmoy CT), could clock over 17.5mph and get his hands on the national champion's jersey four minutes quicker than he'd expected, having ridden a practice effort into a direct headwind two weeks earlier. But to be fair to Pettinger, he's been waiting almost a decade for his first national title.



Organisers get down to the hard work

“At least it didn't snow and there was no ice”

“I knew this year was a really good chance because the hill suits me and I knew I was in good form,” said Pettinger. “Fortunately, it came together for me today.”

Pregnant pause

The women's winner Maryka Sennema (Kingston Wheelers) had been waiting for her title too, but not quite as long as Pettinger. After riding her first Nationals in 2010 when two months pregnant, she had since gone through the ultimate weight-saving regime of giving birth to her daughter, and this year beat four-time winner Lynn Hamel by 17 seconds.

“I was really disappointed a couple of years ago because I was two months pregnant and my power just went right down,” she said. “So I didn't do very well at the Nationals that year, but I knew I could.”

“Lynn [Hamel] is the real female hill-climber, until we get Emma Pooley out here,” she added. “It was good that she showed up and had a decent day so I could win on merit.”

Pace perfect? Perhaps not

The Stang lived up to its billing as a tactical course where the constant gradient changes and fast downhill sections meant that the majority of riders ditched their ultra-light hill-climb bikes in favour of their standard, unmodified road bikes.

“It was hard to pace,” explained men's runner-up James Gullen, who lost out to Pettinger by just two seconds. “Given how steep the bottom bit was, you set off and think, ‘I'm going alright.’ But then you think, ‘I'm not going hard enough.’ But you realise you're probably going too hard.”

Unusually, because the wind speed outpaced the riders on the steeper sections, one modification that might have helped was a baggy outfit. Presumably, however, CTT regulations on aerodynamic fairings apply equally to unfurling a spinnaker

as one rider suggested doing, as they do to gaffer-taping on a drag-reducing nose cone.

That said, there was one baggy outfit allowed during the event; to counter the wind and rain on the descent, marshals were giving finishers a free ‘gilet’ made from a black bin bag with three holes cut in it.

“The weather was a bit disappointing, but at least it didn't snow and there was no ice,” added Heighton. “But it's gone really, really well. It's mainly Ferryhill Wheelers members who have put the show on today, so I'm really pleased.”

RESULT

1. Tejvan Pettinger (Sri Chinmoy CT) 7-57.7
2. James Gullen (Hope Factory) 7-59.8
3. Matt Clinton (Mike Vaughan Cycles) 8-08.1
4. Hugh Carthy (Rapha-Condor-JLT) 8-15.8
5. Richard Handley (Rapha-Condor-JLT) 8-18.6
6. Dan Evans (VC Melyd) 8-19.5
7. Josh Teasdale (In-Gear-Quickvit TrainSharp RT) 8-24.7
8. James Knox (Champion System-Maxgear) 8-25.6
9. Pete Tadros (In-Gear Quickvit TrainSharp RT) 8-29.1
10. Charles Coleman (VC Walcot) 8-29.2

WOMEN

1. Maryka Sennema (Kingston Wheelers) 9-49.2
2. Lynn Hamel (Herbalife-LeisureLakesBikes) 10-06.6
3. Angela Hibbs (Tyneside Vagabonds) 10-25.6
4. Joanne Blakeley (Champion System-Maxgear) 11-07.7
5. Helen Eborall (Born to Bike-Bridgetown Cycles) 11-12.4
6. Nicola Soden (Champion System-Maxgear) 11-16.3
7. Lou Collins (Beeston RC) 11-17.0
8. Eve Dixon (Champion System-Maxgear) 11-22.1
9. Karen Poole (gbicycles.co.uk) 11-28.6
10. Annabell Sill (Clay Cross RT) 12-17.4

JUNIOR MEN

1. James Knox (Champion System-Maxgear) 8-25.6
2. Josh Jardine (Kent Valley RC) 8-42.9
3. Max Spedding (Birkenhead North End CC) 8-46.6

JUNIOR WOMEN

1. Alice Cobb (Scott Contessa Epic) 13-45.3
2. Isla Rush (Wyndymilla) 14-06.6
3. Eve Lyon (Nutcracker Racing) 14-28.1

VETERAN

- A. Pete Tadros (In-Gear Quickvit TrainSharp RT); B. Chris Myhill (Peak RC); C. William Belcher (Clayton Velo); D. Ian Hutchinson (Cleveland Wheelers CC); E. Peter Greenwood (Clayton Velo); F. Mike Westmorland (Border City Wheelers); Women's C. Sharon Clifford (Coventry City RC).

EACH TO THEIR OWN

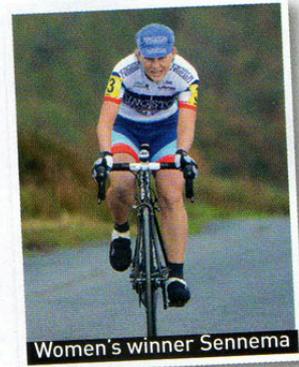
Junior cool

James Knox (Champion System-Maxgear) made it two junior titles on the trot and even managed to muscle into the top-ten overall, finishing eighth. Scott Contessa Epic's Alice Cobb took the honours in the junior women's event having been driven down the climb after blacking out from her effort.

Terrific twos

It wasn't unusual to hear women's winner Maryka Sennema put her victory down to her training partner. But when her training partner is her two-year-old daughter, she has to get creative.

“I tow her around in the trailer in Richmond Park all the time,” she said. “It's really, really good training; she sleeps in the back and I do my intervals. She doesn't mind because she knows we stop at the playground afterwards.”



Women's winner Sennema

Rapha rivalry

With three riders entered, there was always going to be some intra-team rivalry between the Rapha-Condor-JLT trio.

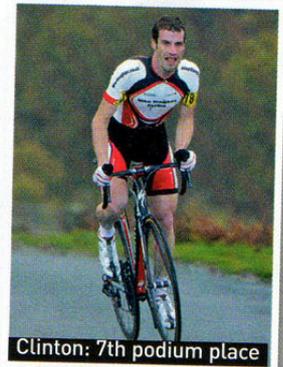
“I was aiming to be top Rapha, so I'm pretty pleased,” said Hugh Carthy, best placed in fourth, three seconds ahead of pre-race favourite Rich Handley (fifth) and Mike Cuming (14th). “Am I going to let them forget it? No, not at all.”

“Ah yeah,” said Handley wryly. “I think he'll bring it up a couple of times next year!”

Podium perennial

With another third place, Matt Clinton, the National Hill-Climb Champ's Mr Consistent, made it seven podiums on the trot.

“I was very, very surprised that I managed to make it onto the podium,” said the 2008 winner. “I nearly got blown off the bike twice up there, and I nearly rode into [CW snapper] Andy Jones!”



Clinton: 7th podium place

Well, blow me!

Some would say brave, others would say mad. Despite the high winds and steep gradients there was one man who chose to ride with a rear disc wheel: Nottingham Clarion's Richard Birkin. “I thought it would be a cross-tailwind and it would blow me up,” he said. “But it turned out to be a direct tailwind. It was fast coming down, though!”

Bear necessities

Not content with team kit, members of the Buxton CC rode the climb with small teddy bears attached to their saddle rails with key chains.

NATIONAL HILL CLIMB CHAMPIONSHIPS

Tejvan takes it to a higher plane

Richard Abraham

After nearly an entire decade of trying, Tejvan Pettinger finally won his first national hill-climb title last weekend in gale-force gusts and torrential rain in North Yorkshire.

The 2.33-mile climb of The Stang was almost perfectly suited to the tall 36-year-old economics teacher from Oxford. But he cut it fine against fellow time triallist James Gullen (Hope Factory) as just two seconds separated the pair at the summit.

"I was fairly confident, but I was confident in 2011 and it didn't quite work out," Pettinger told *CW*. "Fortunately, it came together today. I knew this year was a really good chance because the hill suits me and I knew I was in good form."

Tejvan is the name given to Pettinger by his spiritual

leader Sri Chinmoy, an Indian guru who taught meditation techniques as the path to inner peace. According to Pettinger, whose Christian name is Richard, it represents dynamism, enthusiasm and self-giving.

Pettinger was one of the favourites in 2011 when the championships used the four-mile drag of Long Hill in Derbyshire. However, he finished a disappointing fifth. After another season of taking open victories and toppling course records, he was billed as 'one to watch' last Sunday. This time he didn't let the pressure get to him.

"I felt surprisingly calm," he said. "I thought I might have been nervous, but I wasn't. As soon as I got on the start line and got cycling I felt good."

Having finally seized his

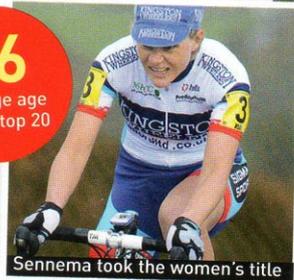
chance on his kind of climb, Pettinger's title will be one he will undoubtedly treasure.

"I may not get too many more chances to win," he added. "I'm 36 and a lot of the competitors are 10, 12 or 13 years younger than me."

Maryka Sennema (Kingston Wheelers) won the women's title. For a full report and results from the National Hill Climb Championships turn to page 64.



Pettinger: victory at last



Sennema took the women's title

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Average age of the top 20

Photos: Andy Jones

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↑ A female fan cheers James Gullen on to the runner-up spot

→ Beeston's Lou Collins powers her way to a fine seventh place

→ Terrible conditions made the race as much a test of determination as physical ability

