

All England 2010

With the hill at Norfolk's magnificent artificial ski facility absolutely swamped with racers looking for the perfect line during a hectic course inspection period it was clear that this was no ordinary day.



Indeed with over 200 athletes primed to do battle down a brace of championship testers on a bright and sunny September Saturday, even as early as course inspection it was clear that the athletes were going to provide the lucky spectators with a battle royale. Snowsport England's premier summer event, the All England Championships, was up for grabs and a substantial number of racers had genuine designs on lifting the old trophy.

In the ladies race Chatham starlet Emily Evans stamped an immediate authority upon the rest of the field with the arguable exceptions of elder sister Charlotte and Gloucester's zero pointed Charlotte Davies. Denied victory last summer by a mere 0.13s Evans always looked odds on to go one place better this year right from the moment she put her foot on the accelerator during the opening gates of Richard Breese's first course challenge.

The afternoon proved a markedly similar story with Evans again proving to be the class act of the field, negotiating Sally Bartlett's second run twister like a hot knife cutting through sun softened butter. Indeed with elder sibling Charlotte producing an equally impressive 2nd run and mid-point second placed Charlotte Davies perishing over the final throes of Bartlett's course the event not only had a new winner but had produced a Chatham and sisterly 1-2.

Elsewhere Charlotte Gould's impressive season continued with a fully deserved 3rd place overall, whilst Alice Hales took full advantage of 2nd run mistakes elsewhere to leapfrog into 4th with Alex Bullock claiming an excellent 5th.

In the male event, home town racer Shaun Blythe looked likely to spring a real surprise after impressively negotiating run 1 with an outstanding effort that was bettered only by senior warhorse David Hatcher. And with eight or nine racers all within striking distance of leader Hatcher after the morning skirmishes the afternoon event always looked likely to be a case of do or die. Nail it and you were in with a chance, ski it safe and any chance of victory would be long gone.

As the race came to its climax and each of the top ten males left the gate to begin their challenge it became fairly evident that good course inspection and even better technique was likely to prove decisive. Indeed, as others tried and failed an old name emerged from the chasing pack and leapt to the fore as Nick Robinson, Grand Prix winner at the very same slope only 15 months earlier, applied every ounce of his superb technique to break out of the pack and stake an early claim to the title.

This, however, was a claim that Andrew Davies quickly proved capable of bettering. One of the stars of the 2010 Grand Prix series Davies continued where he concluded the GP series with another fine display of strength and technique that whilst it wasn't quite as quick as Robinson it was still enough to nudge the Cardiff's athlete into the lead.

A lead that was somewhat short lived as Davies's Cardiff team mate and 2010 zero pointer Andrew Watson again reproduced the form he's shown for a quite a while, finding a couple of tenths on Davies and snatching the lead with only Blythe and Hatcher left to race. Blythe's impressive challenge faltered on Norfolk's weight shifting ridge and then Hatcher followed suit, the edge of his pants racer pushing his luck an ounce or two too far on the very same ridge and perishing into DNF territory. Blythe, however, at least managed to recover enough to ensure his name and fantastic first run time would be added to the final result.

In the categories Yasmin Cooper & Brandon Matthews triumphed in Children 1 whilst Antonia Pretty and Brodie Goddard-Jones ended victorious in Children 2. Emily Evans and James Grant proved too good for the rest of their peers in Junior 1 with Charlotte Evans and Andrew Watson prevailing in Junior 2. In the seniors Emily Goddard and James Greenwood took the honours whilst Carrie Walsh and Rob Hales won their respective Masters categories.



The successful switching of the minis race from an end of event space filler to a middle of the day spectacle provided our youngest racers with an event that their commitment and talents fully deserve.

Olivia Mitchell proved too good for the rest of the girls posting an aggregate time that was a full second quicker than runner up Grace Williams and Olivia Ward in 3rd.

In the male event Kristofer Berglindarson dominated proceedings producing a combined time that was almost a second and a half in front of runner up Ryan Llywarch and third placed Merrick Southall.

The day however not only belonged to winners Watson and Evans but also to the sport of dry slope summer racing. The Norfolk facility provides the event organisers with the perfect opportunity to showcase the sport and the talent within it to wonderful effect and with a start list brimming in both numbers and talent Evans and Watson can look back in the future and be sure that their victories were fully deserved.

Those who predict a rapid death to outdoor racing may need to rethink.

