

## Danish Champion Wins Inaugural Mtn Run

More than 150 runners and walkers turned out for the inaugural Flagpole Hill Run Up, including eventual winner and Danish Olympian Carsten Jorgensen.

The Flagpole Run Up is an exciting new mountain run in the foothills behind Whitecliffs, 60k south west of Christchurch. The 20k run took participants on a scenic tour of one of the regions most historic but hidden landmarks. Flagpole Hill was the original inland landmark used by early settlers as they travelled from Christchurch into the foothills and mountains behind the towns of Darfield, Coalgate and Glentunnel. The 897m high peak can be seen from every angle in the surrounding region and once on top the view stretches for more than 30 kilometres in all directions.

The Flagpole Run Up is held within the Selwyn Plantation forest block. From Flagpole Farm the course headed straight up the south western face of Flagpole summit, before continuing around the back country headwaters of the Selwyn River past historic copper mines and through the Selwyn Gorge.

Former world orienteering champion, Carsten Jorgensen, dominated the race. Jorgensen was first to the top of Flagpole Hill in just over 30 minutes, but was closely followed by top Christchurch mountain runners Alistair Cory-Wright, Dennis de Monchy and Bruce Clulow.

"It was a great sight," said Cox of the initial climb up the 897m high summit. "You could see the entire field strung out on the long climb up Flagpole Hill."

Jorgensen carried on to win the 20k run in a time of 1hr 31min 56secs, more than three minutes ahead of Alistair Cory-Wright who took consolation in being the first veteran 40-49 finisher. Dennis de Monchy and Clulow finished a further two minutes behind in third and fourth. Canterbury farmer Gary Ferguson was another standout, the 53 year old finishing in the top-10 overall to win his veteran 50+ age group in 1hr 45min 44secs.

Among women, Annabelle Latz was first to the summit only seven minutes behind the lead men. She was closely followed by New Zealand mountain running rep Ruth Croft and New Zealand orienteering rep Jenni Adams. But Latz got stronger as the race progressed and would eventually win by almost eight minutes in 1hr 53min 51secs.

Behind her Jenni Adams caught the teenage Croft with 2k left to run and managed to outsprint her in the final hundred metres to claim second by four seconds in 2hrs 01min 17secs. Yvonne West from Ashburton showed everyone that she still has good form, easily winning her Veteran 50+ age group in 2:11:47.

Event organiser Chris Cox was thrilled with the response for the inaugural event. "Being a first time event we thought 100 entries would be good. So to get 150, including some of the country's best mountain runners, was very pleasing," he said.

Cox says the Flagpole Hill Run Up will become an annual race and hopes the event will develop into one of the South Island's favourite mountain runs.