

Wonder Woman



Tired but victorious: Diane Behan takes a well-earned breather after winning the women's section of The Race 2015 in Donegal last weekend. Inset: Diane completing the cycling leg of an incredible feat of endurance. | Photos: The Race 2015

Portlawn's Diane Behan wins 260-kilometre, day-long epic

Eighteen hours, forty-three minutes and fifty seven seconds: that's how long it took Portlawn native and Waterford AC's Diane Behan to complete and win The Race 2015, which was held in North West Donegal last weekend.

Diane, who is well known on the local athletics circuit, was the first woman home in an event which (you may need to read this more than once to take it all in) included 15 kilometres of kayaking on Lough Swilly, a 166km cycle, a 5k mountain run and 64 km of road and trail running.

Months of diligent training, to which Diane is no stranger to given her many athletics successes, certainly paid off, as she emerged victorious in an event described by organisers as "the toughest endurance event ever to take place on these shores".

As well as winning the women's category with over five hours to spare, Diane placed eighth overall, a phenomenal achievement and testament to her physical endurance and mental strength.

Delighted but understandably fatigued after a day most of us would need a rub down just thinking about, Diane described 'The Race' as "incredibly testing and emotional - I could write a book about it!"

Thanking all who congratulated her on social media, Diane said: "I'm on top of the world at the moment! It was the toughest event I have ever participated in; the weather conditions were horrendous."

She added: "I never had any doubt that I wouldn't complete it within the 24 hours, but to win with five hours and 13 minutes to spare (over the next female finisher) and beat two very well seasoned female endurance athletes, and not to mind all the men, I finished eighth overall and was the first female home. I don't normally gloat but today I'm going to!"

Followers of Waterford sport, but athletics in particular, have long since recognised Diane Behan's talent and commitment to running. That a wider audience has been made so spectacularly aware of this tigerish competitor's brilliance given what she achieved in Donegal last weekend is no bad thing at all.

Diane will rest and recover, but not for long. After all, there's so many miles she's yet to run or cycle. Quite what her next great challenge shall be remains to be seen, but Diane Behan's name is up in lights after an astonishing achievement - and well it looks up there.

A not-for-profit event, all monies raised from The Race will support the work of Self Help Africa. For more details, visit www.selfhelpafrica.org