



2014 Bupa London 10,000

Vernon and Steel impressive winners at biggest ever edition of race

British internationals Andy Vernon and Gemma Steel were impressive winners at the Bupa London 10,000 today as record numbers turned out in bright sunshine for the seventh edition of the central London event.

Vernon beat his Aldershot, Farnham & District club-mate Chris Thompson in a closely contested men's race, while Steel dominated the women's event from the start. Behind the elites, more than 12,000 runners completed the looping course from The Mall to the City and back to St James's Park.

Vernon was a late addition to the men's field after five-time champion Mo Farah pulled out this week. While Farah took on new duties as official race starter, the 28-year-old Vernon raced on to victory, raising his arm in triumph as he crossed the Finish Line in front of Buckingham Palace in 29:33, more than 50m ahead of Thompson.

"It was a last-minute decision to run today," said Vernon. "This wasn't really in my summer plans but when Mo dropped out the organisers asked me to run. I really enjoyed myself out there, and it's nice to follow Mo as the winner."

With double world and Olympic champion Farah taking a break from this year's race to train for the Commonwealth Games, the men's event was far more open than it has been in recent years, so it was no surprise that a big bunch developed on the front as they went through the first kilometre in 2:51.

Vernon and Thompson were joined by Blackheath & Bromley's Scott Overall and Tipton's Tom Payn, with Neil Burton of Run Fast a stride behind.

By 2km the group of five had pulled 10m away from the pack to go through the mark in 5:44, and they stayed together as the race wound through the City and past the Bank of England, passing the 4km point in 12:02 when Payn dropped well behind.

A slower fourth kilometre gave some of the chasing group a chance to catch the leaders as they turned through Leadenhall Market to negotiate the tightest turns on the course. John Beattie of Newham & Essex Beagles and Alex Bruce-Littlewood of Blackheath & Bromley managed to bridge the gap as the group ran shoulder to shoulder along Cannon Street.

With Thompson and Vernon on the front, and Overall a step behind, the leaders passed the 6km point in 18:02 before turning back onto the Embankment and into a wall of noise from the crowds who'd turned out to support the runners.



Emerging from Blackfriars underpass into the spring sunshine, the leaders took the opportunity to look around and check each other out, but it wasn't until they passed 8km (in 23:55) that Thompson and Vernon started to pull away from Overall and Burton.

The two leaders looked relaxed as they matched each other stride for stride along the final stretch of the Embankment until Vernon put in a huge surge as the pair turned past Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament.

Thompson, the 2010 European 10,000m silver medallist, couldn't respond, allowing Vernon to pull 30m ahead. He passed the 9km point on Great George Street in 26:45 and in the last kilometre his victory was never in any doubt. He crossed the line in 29:33, cheered on by huge crowds gathered around the Finish Line gantry on Spur Road.

"I was pretty confident today so when I got to Big Ben I just pushed on from there," Vernon said. "There's lots of running still to come this season so I just wanted to get a decent run out.

"I've done two 10km races now and it shows I've got the base. The next two races are 3km so that will start to show what kind of speed I've got."

Runner-up Thompson, who made his marathon debut in London last month, crossed the Finish Line 15 seconds later in 29:48, admitting he'd found the race tougher than expected.

"I never felt comfortable today," he said afterwards. "It felt like a slog, and when I went through halfway in a little over 15 minutes, I felt in trouble. Without doubt, after the marathon, getting back into it was tough."

Overall put in a late surge to take third place in 29:55, also acknowledging he'd struggled to find 10km form after endurance training over the winter.

"I'm just trying to get my legs back into 10km shape after marathon training so I'm quite pleased with third place today," he said. "I only had Vernon and Thommo in front of me and they are in pretty good track shape."

Burton held on to finish fourth in 30:00.

In the women's race, Steel put in an imperious performance, leading from start to finish to take the win in 32:53. The Charnwood AC runner was delighted to improve on her runner-up place in the 2011 race after finishing second at the Manchester 10k last weekend.

"I was really pleased to win today," she said. "It's always good to win, especially after coming second in Manchester last weekend. This has helped my confidence, as the conditions were tough. It was windy and warm but there was great support from the crowds.



Behind Steel, there was a battle for second place with Vale Royal's Stevie Stockton just holding off Belgrave's Tish Jones as the women finished in 33:36 and 33:38 respectively.

"I haven't done a 10km race before so there was no pressure at all, and I just found the support on the streets absolutely amazing – I really didn't expect it," said Stockton.

"Because we start with the boys, we went off quite fast, but I just thought, 'Don't worry about it, just enjoy it. If they can do it, so can I.'"

"Gemma went off from the start, but I just went with it, then 2km out, the track runner in me kicked in and I fought it out with Tish. I was holding on to her at first but at the end it was like a track finish."

Jones was pleased to finish third after racing three weekends in a row. "It was a brilliant race. The atmosphere was amazing; it pulls you through and helped me to feel fresh after two weekends of competition."

"I want to do another 10km race on the track and a 5km race at the UK championships, so this helps. My endurance is there but speed always needs work especially while I've got youth on my side."

The elite runners were the first of a record 12,144 starters, while 12,133 had finished the course by 13:00 this afternoon.

Former BBC Royal correspondent Jennie Bond was one of the familiar faces among the masses of club runners, joggers and charity fundraisers who made the 10km journey round the capital.

Bond completed the race in one hour and 21 minutes as part of Bupa's Your First Step campaign, set up to demonstrate that over 50s can take in a running challenge. The campaign follows research showing that 60 per cent of UK adults believe their body will no longer be up to running once they reach 50.

Bond said: "I had a brilliant race today. I was nervous about getting round but the crowds spurred me on. Thanks to Bupa I've discovered a new form of exercise aged 63. This won't be my last race and hopefully I've inspired a few people to take on a new running challenge too."

"I've never ever run 10km before and I'm not a runner. In fact, I used to absolutely hate running but I surprised myself because it was alright. I enjoyed the atmosphere and crowd support and now may even keep on running."

"It is a great way to keep fit and healthy and you don't even need to do it quickly. I'm 64 in a couple of months and definitely not too old to run. There's something very satisfying about running a race and the crowd support today was absolutely fantastic with people cheering me on when I started walking."



“Starting the race with Mo was a real honour. He was lovely and charming and gave me some useful tips to pace myself and enjoy it.”

Top 3 Finishers

Men

1. Andy Vernon (Aldershot, Farnham & District) 29:33
2. Chris Thompson (Aldershot, Farnham & District) 29:48
3. Scott Overall (Blackheath & Bromley) 29:55

Women

1. Gemma Steel (Charnwood) 32:53
2. Stevie Stockton (Vale Royal) 33:36
3. Tish Jones (Belgrave) 33:38