VEGAN MARATHONER WINS NORTH POLE WOMAN'S RACE AND SETS COURSE RECORD

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On 9 April vegan amateur athlete Fiona Oakes, 43, from Asheldham in Essex, won the women's race in the North Pole Marathon in -28°C. Not only did Fiona win the women's marathon but she also smashed the 2008 course record for women by 44 minutes – completing the race in just 4 hours and 53 minutes – despite the conditions that were described as the worst in the marathon's eight year history. Fiona was beaten by only two male marathoners. The second placed woman was 55 minutes behind Fiona's time.

On her Facebook page after the race Fiona wrote "Back in Spitsbergen. Job done! It is so cold and brutal in the Arctic I cannot explain. Marathon + Arctic conditions = TOUGH! I knew it was going to be bad but just how bad I couldn't possibly have prepared for. Not just the consequences of running at -30 with a wind chill but for half the course through deep snow. I haven't got the longest legs in the world and kept falling it was so deep as when you put your foot on it you didn't know if it was frozen enough to take your weight. On one occasion I sank up to my groin, on another I fell on my hand and now have a suspected fractured thumb. […] Never mind, job done, win in the women's race, new course record and 3rd overall. Can't ask for any more."

The North Pole Marathon is the northernmost marathon on earth and Fiona faced this extreme challenge to raise funds for the The Vegan Society and to support the 400 animals that she personally cares for every day at her Tower Hill Stables Animal Sanctuary. An Honorary Patron of the Vegan Society, Fiona Oakes has competed in more than 26 marathons. She has gained top 20 places overall in two of the world's Major Marathon Series - Berlin and London - as well as the Great North Run where she was the first woman to complete the race from the masses in 2010. Last April she became the first vegan woman - and one of a tiny number of women ever - to complete the grueling Marathon de Sables, often described as 'the toughest race on earth'. The race involves competitors running seven marathons in six days – at total of 154 miles - across the Sahara Desert in Morocco carrying all their own supplies for the week with only temporary shelter and water provided. Temperatures often reach in excess of 45 degrees.

What makes Fiona's achievement even more impressive is that she has achieved such success despite having a severe injury to her left knee, incurred when she was a teenager that left her with no knee cap. When she runs she is in constant pain due to the running style she has to adopt. After her operations she was told that walking normally would be difficult and running near impossible.

Fiona aims to be the first vegan to run a marathon on all seven continents plus the polar ice cap. She is well on her way to her target: in November she will take on the Volcano Marathon in the Atacama Desert the week before tackling the Antarctic Marathon, all in aid of the same charities.

Vegan Society CEO, Jasmijn de Boo, was delighted to hear the news of Fiona's success in the North Pole: "I believe that Fiona is a true inspiration to anyone, including runners, women, vegans and non-vegans, and above all, humanity. She shows what the values of dedication, commitment, discipline and staying cheerful in the face of hardship really mean."

Fiona's North Pole experiences can be followed on her Facebook page http://www.facebook.com/fionaoakes|http://www.facebook.com/fionaoakes. It is still possible to sponsor Fiona in aid of the Vegan Society, visit http://www.justgiving.com/The-Vegan-Society or to help Tower Hill Stables Animal Sanctuary visit http://www.fionaoakes.com/northpolemarathon.html. Every penny raised will go directly to Fiona's charities.

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For more information or to arrange to interview Fiona Oakes please contact Sam Calvert at media@vegansociety.com /01782 505430 / 07967 042050.

Note to editors
The Vegan Society is a registered educational charity (no. 279228) that provides information and guidance on various aspects of veganism, including to new and potential vegans, caterers, healthcare professionals, educators and the media. Visit www.vegansociety.com for more information.

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