As soon as I finished the European Mountain Running Championships in July I told my parents, “I have got to go to the World’s.” I wanted to relive the experience of going to a major Championship all over again! So, after a few weeks of good training, I was absolutely delighted when I won the World Trial at Whinlatter Forest to guarantee my place in the Great Britain and Northern Ireland team for the 29thWorld Mountain Running Championships, which were to be held in Krynica Zdrój, Poland on the 8th September. When I got onto the plane with the other 17 GB athletes, I don’t think I could have imagined how unforgettable the trip would be. Race day was incredible and although people were wearing vests from all over the globe I felt as though everyone came together to support each other around the course, especically on the final section of each lap where the crowd lined the course and made a barrier of noise!! Those wearing the GB vest did the country proud coming home with 3 team medals and one individual medal.

The lapped course consisted of rocky forest paths and steep ski slopes. The junior women ran one lap which was 4.65 km long with +286/-286 m elevation. The junior men and senior women completed 2 laps of the tough course to run 9.08 km with +561/-551 elevation. Finally the senior men had a gruelling 3 laps to complete totalling 13.56 km with +828/-828 m elevation. Unusually the course was down and up rather than uphill first and then downhill. Although decents suit most of the Brits more than uphill only courses the fact that the climb came after the down presented its own challenges to all the athletes as tactics had to be adjusted to ensure that the downhill didn’t take too much out of our legs before the uphill.

On race day the sun was shining, which was fortunate as I got to the top of the gondola lift with my team mates Annabel Mason and Catriona Graves in plenty of time before the Junior Women’s race which started at 9:15. After relaxing in the sun and enjoying the views for a bit, it was time to begin to warm up and get on the start line for the race. After a small incline to begin with the field hit the decent and I found myself in about 10th position. We hit the downhill at a comfortable pace and I pushed forward to reach a small group of about 5 athletes who were a few meters ahead, so I could keep an eye on a Russian girl who was out in the lead on her own about 30m ahead. I stayed in this postiton for the majority of the decent until Annabel increased the pace as we approached the climb. I followed her in an attempt to gain an advantage over some of the Europeans who I knew would be stronger than me on the uphill. By the time we hit the first part of the climb, which was a steep zig zag up a ski slope Annabel was in 2nd, I was in 3rd and our teammate Catriona was back in 15th. The Russian’s pace suddenly dropped and Annabel and I found ourselves leading the World Championships! It felt so surreal but soon enough Mandy Ortiz of the USA who went onto win the race in 22:56 took the lead. I worked hard up the rest of the ski slope and worked with Annabel as we headed into the forest for the long ascent to the finish line. Unsurprisingly 2nd place finisher (23:07) and uphill specilist Lea Einfalt from Slovenia came past me and Annabel as we constantly switched position on the narrow forest path. Then with about 600m to the finish Tubay Erdal from Turkey who finished 3rd in 23:21 came past. I held onto the back of her and Annabel for as long as possible but I had nothing left in the last 200m and crossed the finish line in 5th in a time of 23:39 one place behind Annabel who finished in 23:32. I looked back to see Catriona finish in 6th in a time of 23:41, after showing her uphill talent and gaining an incredible nine places on the climb. We soon found out we had done enought to take team Gold and would soon be standing on top of the World’s podium!

The day got more and more exciting from there on. The Junior mens team took an unexpected team bronze, lead home by Brad Traviss who had the run of his life to finish 6th in40:17. MaxmilianNicholls was 12th in 41:03 on his GB debt and the rest of the boys packed well with Nathan Jones finishing in 14th in 41:14 and Max Wharton 15th in 41:16.

Up next was the Senior Women who ran exactly the same course as the Junior Men. The GB women went one better than they had done at the Europeans and took the team Silver. Emma Clayton also proved that she is one of the world’s best mounatin runners and took individual silver in 43:12, behind Italian Alice Gaggi (42:47). I felt so proud seeing Emma getting her silver medal as after training with her for over a year now I know how much hard work and dedication she has put into her sport, I’m sure she has inspired the rest of the team as much as she has inspired me to try to achieve as much as she has. The rest of the women performed well to secure the team Silver medal with Sarah Tunstall finishing 8th (44:40), Mary Wilkinson 12th (45:04) and Katie Walshaw 16th (46:01).

All 3 laps of the men’s race were dominated by the only 4 athletes Uganda sent to the Championships. The quartet took the first 4 places, lead home by Philip Kiplimo (55:22) to secure team Gold. First to finish for GB was Chris Smith in 19th (58:13), followed by Andi Jones in 26th (59:26), James McMullen in 48th (62:24), Tom Adams in 51st (62:36), Nick Swinburn in 63rd (63:18) and Rob Samuel (64:38).

I’ve come away from the World Campionships, I’ve ended my season with a Gold medal, with lots of swapped kit and a huge smile on my face! I’m ready for a rest, but after having such an amazing time I’m more motivated than ever to get stuck into training for cross country and next years mountain season. To get an idea of what it was like check out this video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wycp0jcB434>

