

Tweed to Tyne 83 Mile Charity Run 20th October 2012

4 am and the Alarm goes off.....

Having prepared both physically, mentally and logically the time was now here to start my epic journey from Berwick upon Tweed to Tynemouth Priory following the National Cycle Route 1 as it was to raise money for the Northumberland Down's Syndrome Support Groups Christmas Party.

After a light breakfast I jumped in the car with my dad Kevin who was my crew and support for the day.

The drive to Berwick seemed to take forever but once we arrived at the start it was only a few minute turn around. After using the toilet took a couple of photos (which did not turn out so used this one)



I decided to head straight off as it was cold with a slight breeze and totally pitch black. I was going to set off at 7am but ended up being just before 6.30am. Boom.... months of planning was here and off I went crossing the tweed and heading on my 83 mile journey. Lots of people say wow 83 miles but I tend to run these things based on checkpoint to checkpoint which on this occasion I had asked my dad to meet me at 10 to 13 mile section which we had driven and planned a couple of weeks before. After about 10 minutes I seemed to be in to my stride and felt good, I had been concerned about my left knee as it had been aching all week which I had put down to over training over the past months rather than a recurrence of the knee injury I picked up in May this year. Soon after I left the tweed headed to Spittle and started the slight climb towards the trail that would lead me to Beal (Next to Holy Island) and the first water stop with my dad and the first 10 miles done only 73 to go. After a few minutes the weather changed and it began to rain heavily which was a pain as I was dressed for cold not to stay dry and with having dad meeting me I had decided only to carry water and food

(Gels and homemade energy bars – check out how to make them here they are fantastic <http://www.elanaspantry.com/spicy-power-bars/> over the last few weeks I have changed my diet to be more paleo) running in horizontal rain with a head torch is fun "NOT" I kept on the trail trying to jump the puddles and keep my feet as dry as possible for as long as possible and it was working well, I come across the cow field which I was dreading because it's so uneven with the cows and full of pot holes and with it being dark I just did not want to get injured at this stage nor did I want to slow down my pace as felt really good. All of a sudden I came to a massive group of cows, not sure who got the biggest fright, me or them. They started bolting so I quickly moved over to the wall and let them go by just in case they decided to trample on me which would not be good as was only about 3.5 miles in. After they headed past I picked up the pace to the end of the field and passed them again very slowly. Once out of the field it was back along the road passing a few campervans and passing the golf course (Did get a few funny looks by the golf people) The light had now arrived so it was time which was great as it was another cow field but this time they had young calf's so I cautiously moved passed them even taking out my head phones so I could hear the potential pending stampede as some silly bloke was running through at this godly hour. Soon I could see Holy Island and after a few twists and turns past a couple of farms it was rounding the corner to Beal which I could see my dad with the camera at the ready. **CP-1.**



Conscious of time I quickly picked up a couple of gels and homemade energy bars, handful of Pringles changed my jacket and off I went to the next CP, running out of the farm it was up the road and across the A1 following the cycle route. One thing that was starting to become evident was a slight tightness of my right shin which I had not had before, so it was Talk Ultra podcast turned up and on I moved.

What I did notice about this section was the climbs which when you are driving up the A1 you tend not to see or notice... trust me I was noticing.. I arrived in to Belford and come to a double sign post

hmm I thought left or right? The Cycle route had 2 signs so I carried on right, after a minute I stopped and looked at my map. Hmm think I'll try the other way as that will bring me out at the 20 mile CP. So I turned ran back up the hill and went the correct way. After about 20 minutes I could see my dad again with the camera so I knew the CP was not far, my ankle by now was giving me a little more trouble but I put it down to my footwear "Hoka" these are great for trail but I guess not so good for the road, even though I had used them before. **CP – 2.**



At the CP I changed in to my road trainers again topped up with Gels, Homemade energy bars, had some cola and a banana. Top up with water and I was on my way again. When you drive you just don't get to see or appreciate the fantastic villages that we have hidden away. With this though I passed a row of lovely cottages and again, my dearest father snapping away with the camera. I had



now been running for around just under 3 hrs and had physically felt great but had the problem with the ankle but having changed my trainers that seemed to subside and my pace picked up, I was feeling really strong and motivated and was engrossed in Ian Corless' es voice on Talk Ultra, winding up the road I was that engrossed that I breezed through the Bamburgh and was soon heading out of the town, on the way out and passing the castle I was concerned that I had took a wrong turn as I could not see a cycle route sign. I kept on going for about 2 miles then stopped to check out the map. Oops I had been that engrossed in the podcast that I had missed a turn in Bamburgh, so I called my dad and told him that I needed to move the next CP to Beadnell as I had took a wrong turn (anyone that knows me through running Ultras will know I tend to get lost all the time , I used to just blame my running partner Steven major but it's not him all the time) As I was running up the road I noticed a car slowing down, I thought it was some kids going to give me some abuse, but no it was fishy my mate who did give me some abuse then jumped out the car and decided to run with me. MINT I thought, we had a bit crack and I slowed the pace down so as not to kill him, we ran for about half a mile and walked for a bit as he was suffering (Brian is not used to this type of fitness anymore but he was doing well) We stated running again for about another $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile to where Gail his Mrs. was waiting with the car and taking some video (which he won't give me) I stopped for a minute or so said good bye and off I trotted picking up the pace, I passed through Seahouses weaving in and out of the people on the footpaths and taking in the lovely smells of the chippy mmmmmmm, once out of Seahouses I headed down the road and called Helen just to say good morning, tell her I had not been ran over and that I had got lost...AGAIN. After she laughed I said good bye and headed in to Beadnell. Yip daddy was their again with the camera and so was Brian and Gail at the 30 ish mile **CP-3.**



I stopped for a few minutes to have a bit more crack and stock up on supplies and this time I had a chicken and cheese Panini, which I had tried while running in the lakes a few weeks before and seemed great (how wrong I could be) after saying goodbye I Headed back out of Beadnell following the costal route that would bring me back on to the cycle route. I headed up the hill again passing the man with the camera and turned left down the costal road which was busy, not sure if it was the fact I was running at pace to get off the main road but I suddenly felt a bit weird, and my food was in my throat. I drank a few gulps of water to wash it down and kept plodding forward at pace (not sprinting but moving at 7.3 MPH which was not bad as I was in to my second marathon. I kept on going and finally hit the cycle route and the signs for Dunstan (not the one in Gateshead) by this time I was starting to hit my normal 30 – 40 mile wall. For some reason somewhere between these two distances I hit the wall big style, so I nailed a gel and drank it with water to get it in to my system quicker and kept on moving forward. I just kept thinking that this next CP is kind of the half way mark and ill stop for 30 minutes and Ill have tea and cake yum yum. I rounded the corner and recognised the CP was about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile down the road, instantly I picked the pace up, all I could think about was ginger cake and tea. I arrived at the CP only to find that my dad was not there, I tried to call him but I had no phone signal. PANIC! Where is he? What's happened? Is he lost? Has he crashed? All manner of things went through my mind, so I just kept running along the cycle route checking my phone for signal. Up the steep hill at pace keeping my phone in sight so I could see the signal kick in. Suddenly up popped the signal. Ring ring ring ring “hello” “dad where are you?” “Top of the bank as I had no signal and was worried in case you took another wrong turn” Panic over, he was just making sure he was contactable “THANK GOD” I said to myself. I told him where I was running so he headed over to me, after about 5 more minutes of him running he arrived **CP - 4**.



All my thoughts of ginger cake, tea and sitting for 30 minutes had gone. The wall had disappeared and I was back feeling strong after a re-stock and some cola it was back on to the road and the next CP Warkworth where the Mrs would be with Jack. MINT. As I headed up the road I remember thinking just how good I really felt considering that I had ran over 40 miles at a decent pace, yes I had the issues hitting the wall at my usual spot (Really does happen in every ultra I have done, think it's just in my head) Normally on Ultra I would fuel up on kids buffet stuff like cakes, flapjacks etc as well as use gels, and I think this was the key to my pace and the way I was feeling. At each of the CP's I had ate very little, maybe just a few Pringles and a couple of bits of chicken and cheese in the latter stages, I ditched the bread as it was not agreeing with me but the chicken and cheese was fine, On the move I was just sticking with Gels and the home made energy bars, so really think this is something to build on. 2013 is going to be a good Ultra year I hope. After a while and passing a few people on bikes etc I arrived in Alnmouth, which I seemed to breeze through on the road out to Hipsburn all the thoughts of when I was told I would be carrying the Olympic Torch started to flood back. When I received the call from London 2012 it was initially to carry the flame through Hipsburn but at the last moment they changed it for me to carry through Warkworth. After navigating a few puddles and still managing to keep my feet dry I ate another energy bar and gel washing it down with water as I could feel my lack of energy, I passed a young couple who kind of just looked at me in discussed which I thought was a bit un called for but then again kids these days. I headed round the bend and noticed a car parked on the side of the road which looked like one of our work cars, and I remember saying to myself "wow looks like a work car" then suddenly Deano pops out "alreet" he says ha ha quality he was there to run a section with me. So after I picked myself up off the floor (as Dean does not do running and is in the process of giving up smoking 50 tabs per day so massive respect to him) we head off for the final 3 mile is trot to Warkworth. Dean did really well we slowed the pace really down but he coped well, we ran for about a mile then he wanted to walk for a couple of minutes then we ran again for a another mile then walked for couple of minutes. We did this until

we reached Warkworth which is a fantastically beautiful place, my dad was there again with the camera and caught us both running in which was great.



Once we got to mid way through Warworth it was time for Deano to head back to his car which my dad took him back to, I grabbed some water off my dad and off I went running through Warkworth but this time without the Olympic Torch. It was really emotional and to be honest I had a bit of a tear in my eye thinking why I was nominated and here I was again running through the very town again raising money for another great cause. I headed up the hill (when I was carrying the Torch the BBC had wrote "Tony Holland picks up the pace and heads up to the castle" ha I remember the police running alongside me panting a little, but thinking back I ran to fast but that's how Ultra runners carry the Olympic flame I guess ha ha.



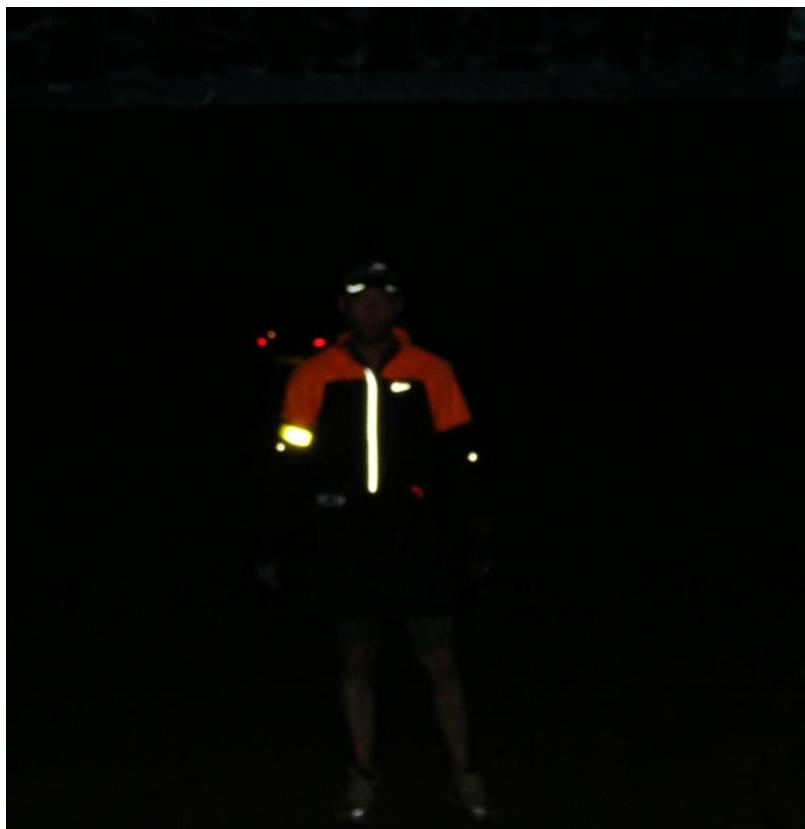
After rounding the bend and heading past the castle it was a slight decent where I could see Helens car and Mam with her camera. **CP – 5.**



I was buzzing to see them and it was a real pick me up, after a minute my dad arrived with the food and supplies so I had a few photos, grabbed some supplies and off I went to the next stop and homeward bound. The next section was a bit of a funny one, arriving in to Amble I followed the signs for the Cycle route but as normal I got lost. I knew the route was east so I headed east passing through a housing estate and an open field and eventually picking the cycle route up at Hauxley. I headed down the road and picked up a nice trail passing a few people walking their dogs etc. After about 15 minutes I was through the trail and on to the road again with the sea to my left, it was still a nice day with the sun still out, could but dry and sunny which was nice. Anyone that has driven in that area will understand why this part of the report is short. Sea on your left, and road and more road and yes more road. After what seemed like a lifetime I headed over the brow of the hill and spied my dad's car, he had my mam with him so she must have been chewing his ear as he was late to jump out and take a picture. CP -6

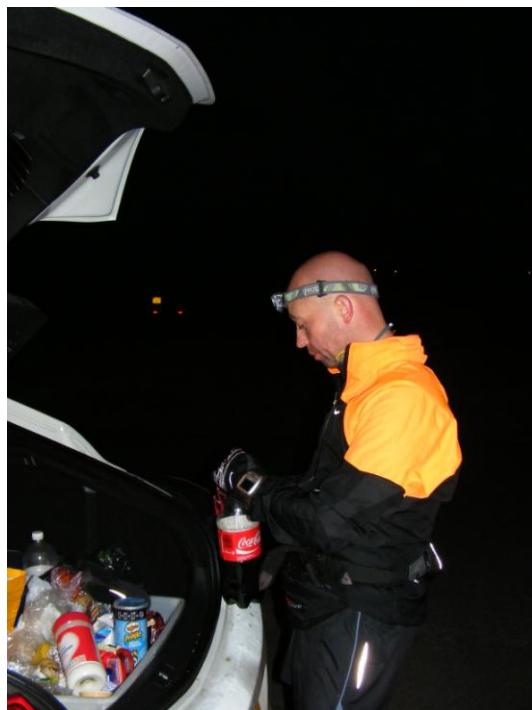


After a short stop and picking up the usual supplies and added my head torch and flashing lights to the kit as it would soon me dark and parts of the next section I was not looking forward to. I turned out of the car park and headed up the road towards Lynemouth. The light was starting to fade and I knew that within the hour it would be dark. I headed up the coast road and was so glad it was not dark as the boy racers where flying up and down the road giving me funny looks and probably shouting abuse but I did not care, I was nearly done, well I had about 20 miles to go which when looking at it I had covered 60 miles in fantastic time and still felt ok-ish (that would change at Whitley bay) I headed through Lynemouth and a group of kids who had the police there talking to them, I remember thinking how glad I was that they were. I headed out of the town towards Ashington. It was starting to get dusky and the cycle route took you behind the bushes but I decided to stay on the road as I was running alone and call me old fashioned but, groups of kids drinking and a bloke running past at dusk does not mix. I continued down the road crossing over when the path ran out until I reached Woodhorne village. At this point it was now dark and I had about 15 miles to go. COME ON I remember saying. I headed to the roundabout at Newbiggin and crossed over to pick up the cycle route. It was great to have street lighting again which was something I had missed coming from Lynemouth, but this was short lived. As soon as I reached the factory the route doubled back on its self to take you down a road that looked like no street lights and a bit dodgy. I was meeting my dad at Sleekburn which was I guess about 2.5 miles away. I headed back up the path jumped over the crash barrier and ran the final 1.5 miles as it happened to East Sleekburn down the spine road which was fairly quiet thank god. CP-7



I was still in to minds which was to run as I was thinking about the group of kids in Lynemouth and previous experiences running through Blyth and as this was a Saturday night I knew the streets

would be full of kids drunk.. not a good place when you are lit up like a Christmas tree and running. So I decided to take a detoured and head back up the spine road to the three horse shoes round about. I was well lit up and running in to the traffic so would be ok. I headed down the slip road and ran as fast as I could and every time a car approached I would not and shake my head so my head torch would be visible. A few cars passed and I god a few strange looks but I was soon at the roundabout and noticed that I had blasted up that section on about 35 minutes which was well fast considering what distance I had just covered. Once I reached the other side of the road my pace dropped right of that last 30 minutes had took its toll and I felt ill. O felt sick and dizzy and the fact my house was only just round the corner seemed so appealing. I walked for what seemed ages but really was only a few hundred yards I had a gel and a load of water. Soon I hit the roundabout at the top of the laverick road and my energy seemed to jump back in to my body, I was thinking I really need to at least do a gentle jog on this next section in case anyone from Blyth RC passes ha, so I did, I ran a gentle jog which was on a familiar route as I run this once to twice per week, however it was still spooky so I took off the headphones and just listened to the surroundings. Soon I was at South beach in Blyth and again I stayed on the footpath on the road as this was flat and the cycle route was up and down (not much but I was now starting to feel it. Running down the road I chuckled when I passed the car park as month before I had been court short and needed the toile but when I went in it was like the one out of train spotting. Before long I could smell the chippy mmmmm I could have killed for fish and chips. At this stage I was running and walking as my energy levels were on the floor. My legs were hurting and I needed the final CP, I was hitting another wall, this time it was massive. I had another gel and some water and as I passed through Seaton sluice to the round about at the top I seen the lights of Whitley bay wow I could smell the finish or was it the pub food?? With that I seemed to get another kick and off I went down the path towards Whitley, I did not want to follow the dark cycle path so I stayed on the road as it was lit and I could run without using my head torch. Soon I was at the caravan site, passed the grave yard, passed the crazy golf and hit the final CP-8



I was feeling ill, I had only 3.5 miles to go yet it felt like 350 miles. I took on some cola, Pringles, chicken and cheese and put my ¾ pants on as it was getting cool. I dumped my iPod, my front pack and head torch and stumbled out of the car park to the final stop Tynemouth Priory. As I headed down the road it was a mix of run walk run walk. I stuck to the path as it was well lit, I was not looking forward to passing through Whitley bay as I thought it would be full of drunk people (when I completed the wall run some weeks before the final stage was running through the quayside at 11 pm at night, not fun when you had just ran 69 miles) as I approached the bars I wanted to run as much as I could so I did, not a blistering pace but a steady one. To my surprise Whitley was dead, I passed a few couples who had had a few but that were it. Thank goodness. I was really starting to struggle now and every step seemed to be going backwards. I rounded the bend and headed towards Tynemouth when I was aware of a car beside me, I thought here we go some fools giving me abuse but it turned out to be Helens brother Ed. I remember him saying "I'll see you at the priory" that was a pick me up but I was still feeling rough. I rounded the corner and nipped behind a bush to use the toilet, I remember looking up and seeing an old man staring at me, great I though watch me get nicked 1 mile or so away from the end. I could see the sea life centre and to my surprise Ed was waiting there, he said "you don't look good so I'm going to get you to the end" and that he did he pushed me to run a little walk a little Ed had had an operation on his knee only a few weeks before) I kept saying "are you ok to run bud?" "Yes" he replied let's just get you to the end. He was excellent we had some great crack and before I knew it I could see the priory. We jogged up the bank and my dad's car was parked I remember says "eh I will have to walk back to here its miles" we rounded the final corner and there was the Priory gates. There was my parents! There was the end! I had done it and I had done it in style 15hrs 19 minutes. I was totally ecstatic, leaving Berwick at 6.30am and final arriving in Tynemouth. Yes I did have a tear but kept it to myself.



I want to thank my dad Kevin who is also my hero for crewing the full day for me. I would also like to thank Brian Fish, Dean Roylance & Ed Mount for all running with me at the best times when I needed them the most. Finally I would like to thank the Mrs. who puts up with me running, she said to someone the other day that she was also a running widow but she love the fact I am doing

something positive and constructive rather than just sitting in the pub all hours and smoking like I used to do only two years ago. Boy how life has changed and I love it!!!!!! 😊

