

As I sat in the hotel after checking out following the day before, taking the opportunity to have a 2<sup>nd</sup> breakfast, my thoughts were drawn to writing a report so here we go.....

I had been experimenting with 20 mile runs for a couple of years, those that use and follow me on that running social media site will know, and being regularly asked "How many miles so far tonight Richard?" January 6<sup>th</sup> 2018 I entered the Edinburgh Marathon – my 1<sup>st</sup> and as it was in the Grand Prix.....

Training was just building on my existing long run but with some heavier weeks thrown in for good measure. There was fortunately only one setback in February. Brought to a halt after about 9 miles with a tight left quad which I had all the way round but the discomfort was now unbearable. It was a cold day, limped home in damp (sweaty) clothing from the Cherry Tree, Stakeford, picked up a cold or may be a bout of flu in the process. After that was over, about 2 weeks and 6lb lighter to boot the job was to get back to where I was earlier. Good job this occurred sooner than later. The added frustration was the period of cold weather in March/April that put paid to races that were to be used as a guide towards my progress. Fast forward about 2½ months from mid February, last long run was the Saturday of the May Day bank holiday, in the heat. The club presentation night was used to refuel and recover. Tried to wind down over the following weeks, the 1<sup>st</sup> week didn't exactly go according to plan but with the Pier to Pier the week after I was forced to cut back.

Weekend of the race.... Took the train up Saturday, in Edinburgh for about 13:15, base camp/mission control/Tracy Island was the Ibis on St Andrews Square, close to Waverley Station and about 15-20 minutes walk from the start. I had travelled up at the end of April to see where the hotel is and check out the starting area so I knew where to go.

D Day or should it have been M Day. Had breakfast, left the hotel about 08:00. It was a cool damp start – had my prayers to the weather gods along with possible a few thousand others been heeded? Made my way to the start, watching some over the ½ Marathon from the bottom of Cockburn Street where it meets Market Street.

Met up with Anne and Anita first, then spoke with Adele and Davina and Paul Whalley shortly afterwards. Minor panic over did I have my bus ticket back to the start and was this still in the hotel room was quickly extinguished when I located it again in my bag – phew! Bin bag poncho time to take the edge off the cold and then load my bag onto the truck hopefully to see it again at the end. Went for another wander and met up with Rob Sharratt before we stood around for a bit, chatted about the lead up to where we were and then onto our respective pens, Yellow pen for me with my 3:37 conservative estimate.

Got to the start line and the watch started 10:03. Up George IV Bridge, down and around The Mound and past Waverley Station we went following the steady stream of runners. Was prepared for a steep drop down Canongate and then an out and back by Holyrood, this was where my pre-race reconnaissance ended. Either I was concentrating on the race or the next 15-16 miles didn't have any notable features apart from the club supporters on the course – I'll come back to them in a moment.

5 miles, caught up with Rob, shake of hands and ploughed on. 1<sup>st</sup> supporters on the route were the legends Rob Hall and Dave Kitching at about 12 miles, welcome support and sorry if I've got my location/distance order wrong. Coming up to about 13 miles, purple and gold vest – none other than Iain Singer, another exchange and then back to work. More support from fellow RnR runner Ian Baxter. At about 15-16 miles said "Hello" and passed former member Claire Calverley. Left calf was feeling a bit tight as we seemed to drop downhill, "If we're going down we'll have to come back up!" was the overriding thought in my mind. Turned around about 18 miles and through the grounds of a country home, the route map gives the name, shows how much attention I paid to that. Got talking to a runner from East Kilbride to stave off the thoughts of fatigue. A slow puncture was starting after rejoining the main road, meeting the other members of the Blyth contingent heading out as I was coming in. 20 miles was done in about 2:25, just the last 10k to do. About 23 miles was the worst, starting to struggle - reaching for sweets/drinks as often as possible, other runners were doing the same, some stopping to stretch. With doses of Ian, Rob, Dave Kitching and Dave Roberts motivation with a dash of, or should that have been treble of, sheer bloodymindedness, crossed the finish, watch stopped at 3:19:36, the same time as what was on the provisional results text message. 1<sup>st</sup> Marathon done, after being a member of Blyth Running Club for the past however many years doing a Marathon wasn't even a passing thought all those years ago or even 4-5 years ago when I gave myself a kick and trained harder/further.

Picked up my finishers pack as well as much needed fluids and made my way to the baggage claim, meeting up with Paul and Peter Brown going in the opposite direction. Once back in Edinburgh city centre and cleaned up, liquid post race refreshment in the Wetherspoons at Waverley Station before proper refuelling care of Cosmo, an all you can eat buffet, opposite John Lewis on Leith Street. Another bit of pre-race

research.

Reading the provisional results the day after, 627th place out of 7665, within the top 10%. Deconstructing the time and call it 3:20, this would work out to be  $2 \times 1:35 \frac{1}{2}$  Marathons +10 minutes which for my pace, is about right. My initial estimate was based on  $2 \times 1:40$  and a little extra, if you forget the extra it's the same.

So the Q & A:-

Would I do another Marathon?

This was to tick something off the bucket list, before I'm 40 next July and it was in the Grand Prix. So probably not, unless the GP Working Party vote in another for a future year? Might be tempted by a relay or somewhere with an all you can buffet.

Any advice for doing a Marathon for the 1<sup>st</sup> time?

*This is just a collection of the opinions I have formed from my experience.*

- I didn't follow a plan, I ran as I felt knowing that 26 miles had to be covered but there was a core run of 20 miles already in the bag before entering so I didn't have too much extra to find.
- Front load club sessions – I was doing 10 miles before training, as I had the time to. It may have been an in-joke asking me how many miles but it has paid off, looking at what is on the Power of 10 I have been on a level with members that would be significantly quicker over a shorter distance based on the times listed.
- If you can visit where the Marathon is do so, find your hotel, check out the start and even the 1<sup>st</sup> few miles of the course just to take out some of the pre-race nerves.

You dear reader will have to find out what works but you don't get owt for nowt. If anyone should be interested in the training I did from entering the race or even before, it's all in a spreadsheet – might help to cure a bout of insomnia reading it or displays a certain mindset.

What did you learn from it or could have done better?

It's a distance to be respected. Don't be complacent, one must have trained for it. Some parts were a bit quick which may explain why I tired towards the end, if I had held back or taken refreshment sooner what would have happened? Never mind it's done now, back to my normal training. Hang on, that's almost Marathon training.....?