

Vitality Westminster One Mile

Although this was a race I had been really looking forward to, I was also very unprepared, mentally and physically. The huge excitement of starting a race on The Mall, running around St James's Park (not the football ground) and finishing right in front of Buckingham Palace. Then the added pressure of seeing all the security measures, the Trooping of The Colours in the same place on the same day. The enormity and sheer scale of the area taken up for this event, taking in all Green Park, St James's Park and everything in between right up to Horse Guard Parade.

How is it possible that this event was only £8.00 to enter? And you got a Bling and a goody bag too.

With the race set off in waves, 39 waves in all, I was in the 4th to go, so around 9.50am. I had been at the site since around 6.30am, just walking around and taking it in. It was very warm but I had already discovered most of the course was shaded to some extent if not all, by trees and buildings.

There is so much I could include in this, like how often do you nearly run into a group of Queens Guards marching in formation along the road. But fast forward to the start line, I realised my nerves were now Hay Fever. This is something I have managed to avoid for 54 years of my life but suddenly last year I got my first introduction to it. It seems it was not a one off after all. My eyes started to itch as if they had grit in them, my throat developed an uncontrollable tickly cough and my nose turned into the Niagara falls. Looking up, we were surrounded by trees hanging over us that seemed to be sprinkling whatever it is that gives you Hay Fever, all over me.

I now just wanted to get this race over and done with and get a shower, blow my nose, gargle some cold water, rinse my eyes..... then I started to worry about Olly with his Grandma, where would they be, would he be lost, neither had been coping well in this heat, why am I even doing this.... Too late, we were called to the front and hooter went off.

I seemed to get off to a good start, not leading the group but comfortable and letting the younger ones take the lead. I had already noticed the course was set out with enormous count down markers at 800m - 400m - 200m and finally 100m just before we turned the final bend. In all the excitement, worry and hay fever, I had totally forgot about my recent calf problem which had only just forced me to pull out a race 2 days earlier. It was bang on the 800m marker when this injury decided it wanted a bit of the action and began to threaten me, at the same time I lost my position of around 7th or 8th, slumping back by around 5 places. Time to focus on that 400m marker, it was only once around a running track, no laps and then it was off to see 'Thriller Live', ok scrap that part, count to 100 and it is all over..... hello adrenaline where the hell you been..... time to get some of those lost positions back, let the arms do the running, get those knees up, loving it. Then suddenly it was over apparently, but I was still running. Because we were directed round the outside lane, we finished on the first mat not the second. Now my Strava is going to be all out.

With 8,048 finishers at this years race, it is officially the worlds largest timed mile race.

I did enter the Vitality Westminster 10k too, this was the following day, but it was not my race at all. The Hay fever was worse than ever, even though I was drugged up and prepared for it this time. My calf pain decided to tease me with a comfortable 4k then gave me no mercy as it floored me with shooting pains right up the back of my leg which forced me to stop all together at 5k. I did continue to do the second 5k but was under no illusion that I was still part of the race.

The 10k was more costly at £33, but you got a nice NB T-Shirt and another goody bag and Bling. I actually got 2 medals for this as I put first one in goody bag and another one was immediately put round my neck before I realised what had happened. Olly was pleased with his medal.

I came away from this weekend with mixed feelings, sad because I was not fit and feel I let myself and others down, I could and should have done much better. But Olly enjoyed his weekend, his Grandma got a weekend away and we met Mo Farah.

Taking the positives only, I came 3rd in my age category for the one mile and my Run Britain handicap did improve after all, despite a terrible week. I also enjoyed reading all about the amazing times some of the awesome Blyth lot pulled off up in Edinburgh in the Marathon, truly inspiring.

Taking some good advice home with me from Sir Mo, "Do what you enjoy, look at other peoples weakness as well as your own strength and find your place".

#LoveRunning #HateHayfever