

The Lakeland 50

Report by Paul Blundell

I recently completed the Lakeland 50, the easier of the 50/100 mile options available but my first race over 33 miles, for anyone who hasn't run in the lakes, it isn't just hilly but difficult to run on as well in places due to the loose rock and scree.

First thing is that the organisation is spot on, very well done and the only negative was the race starting 25 minutes late due to coach problems as the 50 mile runners are coached out to the 100 runners half way point this meant we would be running a bit longer in the dark but crucially for me 25 minutes less in the sun.

We had electronic dibbers to announce our presence at each of the checkpoints which were all well manned by enthusiastic, helpful and friendly marshals.

I thought I was well prepared having done a recce in the lakes on the 100 course over 3 and a half days and several ultras of 30 plus miles in training.

It was very tough, much too hot for me, I think I was dehydrated and suffering loss of salts by cp2 as felt sick, really struggling not to throw up too much, despite taking electrolyte tablets and bad cramp in my leg. I told Martin Loveless who I was running with to go on alone which he reluctantly did, I started walk/running with a guy who did it no problem last year but also was going to drop out at cp2. We passed a lot of 100 runners in trouble and saw a few people throwing up.

I took one bottle to last between checkpoints and for me in the heat it was not nearly enough for cp 1 -2, 9.4 miles but the largest climb of the 50 at 2510 ft.

When I got to cp2, I managed some fluids- water, soup and coffee and was told it was a 2 hour wait for the coach back but if I could make it to the next cp, it was only 10 minutes. I knew how bad the next climb was so elected to wait.

After a bit Dave Gould from Hardley and Lulu his running partner arrived, we sat for a while and I stopped feeling sick, Dave was suffering also and Lulu said they were going very slowly if I wanted to go with them so I did.

I managed that climb but by cp3 was feeling awful again and going to drop out.

I sat down, Lulu persuaded me to take some smoothie, coffee, soup and rice pudding, I took some salty water also which I think made a real difference. I patched up a blister that was forming with zinc oxide tape as recommended by nurse Lulu. Dave and Lulu were great and said if I carried on then they would walk the rest if that was what it took, after half an hour I felt much better so decided to press on to Ambleside after a talking to by the doctor at the checkpoint about hydrating properly.

It was much cooler by now, photographers and crowds of cheering supporters appearing in the most unlikely places and we ran a fair bit arriving amid terrific cheering at Ambleside just as it got dark. I was feeling OK again, ate and drank plenty and we ran on, I fell over not being familiar with running with a head torch but the others patched me up. Lulu and I set the pace but as soon as Lulu arrived, she felt sick, and couldn't get her breath much like me earlier, cue my chance to return the favour, getting salty water, coffee and food for her and after a while we walked on. We were now travelling sporadically with different groups of runners and one lady

and guy who were travelling as a pair. He was desperate to drop out, hating every moment despite being a seasoned ultra runner, she wanted to continue and I think we helped persuade him to go on as pairs have to drop out together.

David was doing a grand job of map reading but progress was slow in the dark and my GPS really was pretty useless not showing the routes turns at all well. My legs had stopped hurting but I was having some chafing problems, the terrain was very Rocky and hard to walk on and the hills were challenging. We all managed to get soaked in a peat bog. At one point there was a lone lady marshal cheering us on in the dark in the middle of nowhere, I think that takes commitment.

After what seemed a very long time, we arrived at the last cp only 3.5 miles from the end.

This was a very hard 3.5, very steep up a rocky path and back very steeply down on loose scree, my quads were killing me and it seemed to take forever, everyone was in great spirits though and when we arrived at Coniston amid intense cheering, we all ran finishing in just under 16 hours. It was still dark.

Food, and drink was all laid on and an exhausted Sue Sleath (2nd lady in the 100 mile event) was waiting for us. I had lost 3 kilos on the way in but I wouldn't recommend it for weight loss.

I reckon we stopped between 2 and 2.5 hours at checkpoints, but I couldn't have gone on if we hadn't.

Martin finished in just under 13 hours but had similar sickness/cramping problems to me after cp2 so hardly ate anything

It was a hell of an experience; I found out so much about myself and was just pleased to finish in the end. I would never have believed I could bounce back during a race like that.

There was a great camaraderie with all the runners keen to help each other.

As for the future, well I need to get over this one first. A bad case of DOMS in the quads and shoulders right now, and still weighing in a bit light.