



AUTUMN EDITION OCTOBER 2011

Mud, Sweat and Cakes!

I think we were lulled into a false sense of security last weekend: it was almost as if we experienced the summer we should have had in June, July and August. Now that the wet and windy weather has returned, it feels almost as if normal service has been restored.

Talking of normal service, it's great to think that another Gwent League season is nearly upon us, so that we can huddle together in the sanctuary that is the red tent, revel together in the mud and then indulge together in the delight that only cakes can bring! Yes this is civilisation as we know it!

Of course there are many events ongoing throughout the winter months, and indeed the diversity of our activity is just one of the things which makes our club so great. However, given that cross country may be a prominent feature for many, I thought I'd bring the main fixtures to your attention. Please note that all information is only as accurate as the best of my knowledge at the time of writing.

Sunday 9 October 2011	Gwent League 1	Bridgend
Sunday 13 November 2011	Gwent League 2	Bath University
Saturday 26 November 2011	Home Countries Masters	Glasgow
Weekend 3/4 December 2011	Gwent League 3	Swansea
Weekend 10/11 December 2011	Welsh Inter-Regional Champs	Builth Wells
Sunday 15 January 2012	Cardiff Cross Challenge	Blackweir
Saturday 11 February 2012	Gwent League 4	Brecon
Saturday 18 February 2012	Welsh Champs	St Fagans
Saturday 3 March 2012	Gwent League 5	Bristol
Sunday 25 March 2012	British Masters Champs	Bath University

Rather than quote loads more fixtures and dates, please refer to the following useful websites

www.welshathletics.org

www.welshmastersathletics.com

www.bmaf.org.uk

London Marathon 2012

The Virgin London Marathon will take place on Sunday 22 April 2012. Dave E Williams will again be organising a club trip, maintaining the wonderful tradition started by Mel James. The hotel will again be the Paddington Hilton, and the Saturday – Monday trip costs £145, inclusive of all transport. A £25 deposit will secure your place. You may also wish to register your intentions on the requisite thread on the website forum.

For those of you who were rejected in the ballot, please give your rejections slips to Karen Phillips and the draw for club places will take place on a Thursday evening soon (exact date will be announced and posted on the Forum). Only paid up members need apply!

We Love Hearing From You.....

There's some outstanding talent in this club, but not many of you have submitted anything for ACE. The Forum proves you have plenty to say, so please send me (mick.mcgeoch@sky.com) your thoughts for any running-related activity for the Christmas 2011 edition of ACE. Thank you!

Ironman Wales Sept 11th 2011



‘Stop – I’ve forgotten my wetsuit’. Ironman weekend is not starting well, and I have only driven as far as the edge of Cardiff. Home again and check bike, check shoes, check goggles and check the multitude of fiddly bits that triathlon needs. At this moment I wish that I had stuck to the glorious simplicity of running, and not started out in a sport where wearing rubber, body lubricant and an oversized Baby Grow are normal. A sport that devours money for pointy helmets, uncomfortable frail bikes and eye-watering race fees, a sport that consumes all waking hours in a blur of solitary cycling, swimming and running. At this moment I truly hate the sport of triathlon.

6am on Sunday. I’m walking to the start on Tenby North Beach and it begins to sink in that this is something very special. It’s dark and windy but there are thousands of spectators on the cliffs, and as the sun rises they line the natural amphitheatre around the two lap swim course. The locals have stopped grumbling about the road closures and got out to cheer, marshal and help. The Ironman corporate razzmatazz has come to this small Welsh town – and they love it. Born in Hawaii in the 1970’s the iconic M-dot 2.5 mile swim, 112 mile bike and marathon has become the Disney of endurance racing, and spawned over twenty replica races round the world. Tenby is not Hawaii, but the sunrise, cheering crowds, golden sand and the odd palm tree made this the next best thing.

To even make it to the start had been a team effort. Thanks to Mary my wife for riding the back of the tandem and joining me on sea swims, Ironmen Simon and Andrew for their advice, the support team of Sasha, Malin Tom and Katie, and Les Croupiers – the club where you will always find someone more deranged than you are.

7am and the gun goes off. I position myself at the back of the 1300 starters with the aquatically challenged. The guys at the front may have been powering out to sea like a scene from Baywatch, but we just shuffle around for a few minutes and nervously wander down the beach. The rather laid back start was helped by the double dose of seasickness remedy I had taken, so I was more at risk of sleeping on the swim than nausea. I had been dreading the swim since I entered the race; I have been known to get seasick on a rowing machine and my hands go white in the cold. So concerns of being pulled out of the water retching or unable to use my hands after the swim were real. After ten minutes in the water I start to relax and enjoy it, the big swell makes it feel like a proper ocean swim, the view back at the cliffs is priceless and I even engage in a bit of jostling around the buoys. I am never too happy about having my personal space invaded, but when you are a quarter mile out to sea it can be frightening as well as annoying. Out up the beach and off for a second lap – steady, safe and slow. I come out of the water a happy 1100th in 1 hour 20 minutes to the encouraging yells of Team Croupiers.

830am and I am running through Tenby. The run should be last, but due to the tail of hurricane Katrin the swim had been moved to North Beach and so there was a 1km wetsuit run to transition. I make the decision to change fully into dry cycling clothing, and although tri suits may look pleasing on the young female form they just look repulsive and slightly pervy on a hairy and pale middle aged man. So dressed in a comfortable and dignified manner I am off on the bike. The cycle is a big loop to Angle and Narberth followed by a smaller second loop. It all goes in a bit of a blur of hills, wind, rural scenery and hundreds of cheery marshals. The closed roads made it all low stress and I stuck with the game plan of keeping comfortable, keeping going and eating lots. Marmite covered cashew nuts are superb, the antidote to the sickly sweet gels and bars. Team Croups keep popping up at random places on the course and doing lots of yelling and leaping. I can't thank them enough.

4pm and I'm off the bike after a mid pack time of seven and a half hours. The relief at being off the saddle lasts until I try to run on legs of cooked spaghetti, but as always the wibbly-wobbly legs last for about 30 minutes. The run was a four lap course of Tenby with lots of 'there and back' bits. It was rather confusing to run as nearly everyone was walking, and on different laps. The sight of so many young, bronzed, muscled and athletic men walking painfully did cheer me up, I am not sure if being passed by a skinny bald bloke did the same for them. Team Croups armed with an Ironman official merchandise cow bell were still bouncing around and yelling. I distracted myself by trying to look for the most obscene tri suit of the day, which went to the Swiss chap in the white two piece that was on the small side. It was obvious that he dressed to the left.

755pm and nearly thirteen hours after shuffling down the beach it all end in a big cheer, bright lights and flash bulbs. I think my brain had turned to mush hours ago as it all seemed rather confusing. Four hours behind the winner and minutes in front of nightfall and the rain starting. Eight months of training and obsessing, and a solid mid pack finish. I was chuffed.

Tenby took on a big event and pulled it off. It's expensive to enter, but you get a world class event with faultless organisation without having to fly somewhere. Ironman Wales combines London Marathon style organisation with the best Welsh scenery. If you want a big challenge without a big journey this may be for you next year.

"Swim 2.5 miles! Bike 112 miles! Run 26.2 mile!
Feel slightly chuffed and very tired"

Richard Self



It's Been a Hard Day's night...

I hope this article goes some way to explaining why I only covered 77 miles. Sorry, fans, but thanks for sticking with me...

I'd just finished a 'bad day at the office' on the Dartmoor Discovery (it was boiling hot, I'd had a busy day at work the day before, etc...a good day at the office on Dartmoor is enough of a challenge), when Pam Storey came breezing over and said,

"I've just seen you walking like a train; when are you doing your first '24 hour,' then. The Run and Become in Tooting Beck is in September, if you do it, I'll crew for you."

"Alright then, I'll be there," I agreed, still drenched in sweat from a Dartmoor that nearly got to me. Realising that I wasn't going to have the race of my life, I enjoyed myself by relaxing, admiring the crystal-clear views, and finding a broken man and helping him get through. John was fit and strong, and had done his first London this year in 3.23, a highly respectable time, especially considering the fact that he had reinvented himself after a previous life as a podgy fast-food couch potato. But Dartmoor is not London, and at 23 miles I found him hanging on to his knees- he wanted his mammy... So I came along and told him that he would get through by walking the hills.

Sitting on the chairs at the finish, my jubilant finisher of his first ultra looked puzzled. "What's a 24 hour? Surely you don't...I mean, eh, *run...for 24 hours...do you...?*"

"You try," I said lightly, "but there are no nasty hills, because it's round and round a track..."

He went quiet. As we went round Dartmoor, I regaled him with some other delights of ultra-running, like the Barry 40, 100k, multi-day events and The T.I.T. (10 marathons in 10 days), and of course the Marathon Des Sables, and how proud I was of my 'Hero of the Desert'. But 24 hours round a track, now that's taking it too far...

But I've wanted to do it for years. When I started reading running magazines in the 1990s, I read of extraordinary feats of endurance, like the aforementioned MDS, as well as 24-hour track races, in which people 'sleep jogged' and hallucinated- well, the lengths people go to for self-transcendence! I also knew that Pam Storey is a truly great supporter of ultra events; her faith, diligence, patience, intuitive competence and humour make her invaluable- if Pam's about, she'll look after you, and she loves doing it. Let's make no mistake- supporting a lengthy event like this can be nearly as hard as running it; standing for long periods, atrocious weather, fractious tempers (not me, of course, I promised to be cheerful and courteous at all times and, of course, I was....well 'pretty much' anyway, according to Alan...). All support is immensely appreciated, without it, it wouldn't be possible.

So I spent the next few months trying to get my head around how to prepare for something like that. In terms of advice, I had 'nothing- don't train for it at all,' to '120 miles a week, run three times a day, and do 20 miles at 6pm, then 6 am the following morning.' My approach would have to lie somewhere in-between; I have an on-my-feet physical job, so I can't do the Kenyan approach of running my ass off three times a day and staring into space or at a screen the rest of the time (it's true, I've read it). So I figured that a little more running plus life in general would suffice.

I did a few specific things, though. I spread them over three and a half months, so that overtraining would not lead to illness or injury, as I wanted to succeed, but I still had to go to work. One Friday night in June, I stayed up all night on ProPlus caffeine tablets. I needed to prove to myself that I could stay up all night, even after a day's work, so I had a clearout of all my clothes and shoes, better than watching telly as I'd probably nod off doing that. When dawn came up, I went for a gentle 2 hour jog, followed by a nap, a bowl of muesli and a 2 hour walk/jog. By Saturday night I was hanging, but excited. I'd successfully completed my first 24-

hour specific session. Then came the back-to-back 20s, the run and walk everywhere, then go for a run days, the track sessions...

I did a 75 mile week, followed by a 100 mile week, culminating in a 20 miler on the track while everyone else was having Sunday lunch, followed by a 2 hour track session the following Sunday containing mile reps, 800s, tempo running, jogging and walking. Lake Vrynwynryvwyrynny (I've never been able to spell it) in an enjoyable 1.49, I was ready. Well, I wasn't ill or injured, which is about as ready as you can be, I guess...

But I wasn't sure about the mental bit... Well, yes, we all know I'm bloody mental, but, I mean, how to get your head round it. Running for a set amount of time is a completely different discipline to running for a set distance, and therein lay my mistake. I knew that I could run for 50 miles; I had done so last May in the Cardiff Ultra. I had done so in 9.40 something, allowing for getting lost more than several times, and having to retrace my steps to ask the runner I'd passed ten minutes ago, which way is it? So 50 miles in under 10 hours on a running track had to be a piece of cake, right? Leaving a luxurious 14 hours for the next 50 or so, right? Wrong... It all started off well; bright sunshine, feeling fresh as a daisy; not going mad, obviously, but breezing through the miles comfortably, surrounded by the support and camaraderie that is unique to ultra running. Two hours in, and down came the rain...Not bothered, well, when you live in Wales, you get used to running in the rain, don't you? So I clipped merrily along, smiling at everyone, loving the jelly babies swimming in their little polystyrene paddling pool; the floppy pretzels, the soggy fig rolls, the water cups filled to the brim with rain. Once again, my heart went out to our supporters, as they diligently counted our laps, and tried their best to protect our floundering food from the relentless downpour. I didn't give a monkeys if the fig rolls were soggy or the jelly babies were learning to swim; at this point, dehydration wasn't going to be a problem! I continued to clock up the miles, almost meditating to the mantra of my trainers squelching, and the good-natured back-slapping of my sodden ponytail.

It continued to rain for a solid three hours, that's five hours in, by which time I was heading towards 30 miles, and still smiling. Thirty miles was reached in a modest 5.30, plenty still left in the tank, so 50 in under 10 hours should be a breeze... I was vaguely aware at this point that my feet were sopping – squeaky squelch, squeaky squelch- but they didn't feel unduly uncomfortable, except for the fact that my little toes were beginning to make their presence felt...But I was on a misguided mission; nothing was going to stop me reaching 50 miles in under 10 hours, and then, and only then, my reward would be a change of socks and shoes...

40 miles reached in 7.30 or so, still feeling strong, but at this point my sodden feet are feeling a bit itchy, with protesting little toes. Shut up little piggies, only another 10 miles to go, then you can have a nice fresh pair of socks and shoes....So on I squelched, little piggies squealing; the rain had stopped by now, but the wind was blowing strong. I bulldozed my way through the remaining 10 miles for my magical 50. For some hours now, I had been walking. But I don't mean ordinary walking; I mean Me Walking, a unique, unfathomable, relentless gait that has been my only form of transport since I was a kid- partially sighted, banned from having a bike, and thank God, having the sense not to even attempt driving a car. I don't do strolling; if I have to get anywhere, The Walk will get me there faster than most average people can jog. So The Walk was employed to great effect, much to the astonishment, admiration and annoyance of my fellow competitors, but those pesky little piggies kept on squealin'....

At last 50 miles was reached in under 10 hours; mission accomplished. Darkness had well and truly come, and as I hobbled towards the tent where my dry clothes and shoes were, those goddam little piggies were squealing like they were going to slaughter. Pain. But it would be OK with dry foot wear, wouldn't it? I took off my trainers, heavy with water, and peeled off my dripping socks. It was not pretty. The skin on my feet was wrinkly, white, and all itchy, a bit like halfway between bathtime and trenchfoot- ew!- and those poor little piggies, well, each one was

swollen up, like a blistered balloon. Not so much little toes, but tight little orbs of fluid, throbbing with pressure, and fit to burst. But I daren't burst them at this point, for that would only open an excruciating, manky can of worms, so I hurriedly put on fresh socks and shoes, and hobbled back on to the track. It didn't really feel any better, but my next goal was to reach 100k, so on I marched. Suddenly every mile felt like an awfully long way. Each stride brought a fresh squeal from those pesky little piggies; they were bloated with fluid, fat, throbbing, and busting to burst. Ibuprophen only reduced their squealing to a relentless, petulant whingeing. Once I had hobbled my way to 100k, in a pitiful 12 and a half hours, I marched on for another mile, determined to do more than 'The Little Sod' had ever done in one go. Meanwhile, The Little Sod thought that it would be a good idea to bring his son Stuart along for the occasion, but I advised him to take Stuart home when the rain became torrential, which he did. I had plenty of people looking after me, which wasn't a problem.

At 63 miles, my feet were itching and throbbing, and I was ready for a lie-down, I didn't intend to have a lie-down, but at this point I realised that I had been a silly buggler; instead of being hell-bent on reaching 50 miles in under 10 hours, I should have ignored that, looked at the bigger picture, and changed my footwear as soon as the rain stopped. At this point, I already vowed to be wiser next time. Never again was not even on the radar...

We had been given provisions for a not-too-comfortable lie-down in a gym, with firm yoga mats that were two inches thick. They were not comfortable, by any stretch of the imagination, but they were better than the floor...While I was grovelling around on my yoga mat, moaning and listening to the relentless throbbing of my feet, in came The Little Sod, saying an hour would be OK.

"Right," I said, full of good intentions, "I'll get back on the track at 2.30, then I'll go till 4.00, and lie down till 5.00. Yeah, right..."

I did get up at 2.30, head spinning, feeling sick with the pain from my poor little toes, but I soldiered on as best I could. Another torrid hour, another pitiful 4 miles covered. I was up to 67. More than I had ever done in my life. At this point, pathetic though that seems, I was in so much pain that I was happy with that as an achievement. I had learned a stern lesson about 24 hour running; forget short-term goals, if there is so much as a knicker elastic out of place, stop and put it right. I believe the SAS adopt a similar policy, but perhaps, not in quite those terms...But The Little Sod came back, peeling me from my yoga-mat miasma with a cup of thick, hot delicious soup, chiding me that if I gave up now, I'd live to regret it. So I got up, and showed the on-site physio my poor little piggies. She visibly blanched at the sight of those pale, pulsating porkies, and said that bursting them was the worst thing to do, 'cos they'd go all manky. She obviously didn't want the responsibility. Can't say I blame her...

The Little Sod, however, was far more proactive, God bless him. With a glint in his eye and an iodised pin, he proceeded to pop those pitiful little porkies while I sat on a chair on the side of the track, staring at the stars, and screaming as though I was birthing shoulder-to-shoulder twins. After that, I obviously needed another lie-down.

Ever diligent, The Little Sod kept tabs on me, plying me with cups of soup, and trying to urge me back into action. Dawn had broken, but I still didn't give a shit, me and my poor little piggies were having a lie-down, thank you very bloody much! So, to get rid of his pesky encouragement for just a little while longer than usual, I sent The Little Sod away, with a very specific request, for Thick Porridge, Made with Water, with Salt, and Apple Sauce, and strong black coffee with no sugar. From the exertion of the request, I flopped down in a torrid, sweaty, trembling repose, grumbling at the sharp draughts every time anyone opened the door, and meditating to the throbbing of my traumatised little toes. It sounds pathetic, doesn't it? Aw, love 'er, 'er little toes are hurting...She can't possibly go on...But The Little Sod had other ideas...

"Shut the bloody door!" I barked, as yet another person caused A Bloody Draught. It was The Little Sod, full of warm smiles and equally warm Perfect Porridge, with apple sauce, of course,

and steaming hot black coffee. What's a girl to do? Of course, I smiled, said Thank You, and devoured the revitalising oats, prepared to just my liking. While I scoffed, The Little Sod speculated on how many miles I could do. Only 3 miles to 70, he coaxed, but 75 would be a nice round number, wouldn't it? "f*** off!" I scoffed through my porridge. When I had finished eating, I spotted an abandoned airbed on the floor of the gym. "Oh, yes!" I exclaimed, as I luxuriated theatrically. It felt like sheer weightless bliss, compared to those yoga mats. But The Little Sod was having none of it; "Come on, Lolo, Coffee Time!" I had No Choice. With oats in my belly and caffeine in my veins, and rattling with painkillers, the pearly light of dawn beckoned. That precious pearly light, that enticing, primeval glow, that sends the serotonin flowing in the brain once more... I staggered to my feet, my little toes sending lightning bolts up my legs. So I spent a moment counting my blessings. While I wallowed in my foetid yoga-mat comfort zone, I listened in on a wretched procession of casualties who were visiting the on-site physio. Lots of back pain, hip problems, protesting knees, cramps...it all looked pretty grim for them. I had no muscular or skeletal injuries, so most of them were much worse off than me. So I hobbled out into the crisp Autumn air. Pale pink fluffy clouds decorated a faded denim sky, and a tired moon hung low- it had obviously been up all night. When it was announced that I was back on the track, a quiet ripple of applause acknowledged me. A stagger became a hobble, a hobble became a limp... a limp became The Walk! I was invincible again, aware of the pain from my little toes, but I could smell home now, so I marched on. I said to The Little Sod:

"I don't suppose I'm third lady now, am I?"

"No," he replied honestly enough, "but you're going twice as fast as the lady ahead of you, and you only need to lap her twice and you will have gained a place."

The Walk went up a gear, a frenzied march with arms pumping, feet a blur, face fixed in a manic grin. I duly lapped the lady, and relaxed once more, still walking faster than most people could run at this point; third was A-OK after what I'd been through. I needed a wee, but it would have to wait till the end, but I figured that I could quickly grab my i-pod. I had resisted the lure of music up to this point; I believe that when it is a racing situation, you should soak up the atmosphere, and draw on your mental resources for as long as possible. But I figured that I had earned a bit of music in the last two hours. And it sounded great! But, of course, I still made sure it was just on in the background, and I could hear my surroundings. As we neared the end of the race, our lap counters announced the total time on the clock as we completed our laps. This created the climax of the race, where, once again, The Walk reached a frenetic pace, trying to gain as many metres as possible in that last-gasp lap. On my last lap, The Little Sod had to follow me with a little sandbag with my race number on it. At the sound of the horn that signalled the end of the race, he had to drop the sand bag where I finished, to measure how far I'd done, in case I needed to leave the track immediately or die or something. Suddenly there were bodies everywhere, people collapsing, loved ones embracing, but I continued to walk around on my 'lap of honour,' analysing where I'd gone wrong, and how I'd do better next time. "I shall return," I told my lap counter.

At home, I peeled the dead skin from my devastated little toes, and both toenails came away, just hanging by a thread, Sick to my stomach, I cut their ties and tossed them in the waist basket. On Monday evening, Alan had to drive me to work, where I did my job without shoes, rattling with painkillers. With my little piggies wrapped in Compeed for the foreseeable future, the pain is gradually decreasing day by day. Today, on the way home from work, I jogged three steps... See, I'm already back running. Sorry to let you down, fans; I'll do better next time, promise!

Keep on Running,
Little Lolo

Berlin Marathon 2011 – for the Berlin Erdinger Award

	Gender Pos	Age Cat	Marathon	1st Half	2nd Half	Split
Ed Donovan	106	42	2:35:31	1:18:55	1:16:36	-02:19
Martin Williams	641	75	2:54:16	1:25:22	1:28:54	+03:32
Andy Cleves	1136	245	2:59:45	1:29:24	1:30:21	+00:57
Dave Coles	1367	72	3:02:54	1:28:44	1:34:10	+05:26
Mick McGeoch	1473	18	3:04:20	1:29:50	1:34:30	+04:40
Andy Blair	1477	227	3:04:23	1:34:14	1:30:09	-04:05
James Bruce	1630	350	3:06:04	1:28:09	1:37:55	+09:46
Dave E Williams	4370	815	3:25:44	1:42:53	1:42:51	-00:02
Tom Jeffery	5366	551	3:29:51	1:39:15	1:50:36	+11:21
Malin Falck	821	172	3:44:55	1:51:51	1:53:04	+01:13
Frances Machin	1178	237	3:52:00	1:57:01	1:54:59	-02:02
Claire Beatty	1210	211	3:52:40	1:44:06	2:08:34	+24:28
Gareth Rees	12892	2536	3:59:12	1:58:27	2:00:45	+02:18
Gary Bodman	20551	4013	4:38:32	1:43:51	2:54:41	+01:10:51
Caroline Nightingale	5415	1046	4:52:05	2:10:58	2:41:07	+31:09

Congratulations to David E Williams on a near perfectly paced run to win the first “Berlin Erdinger” award.

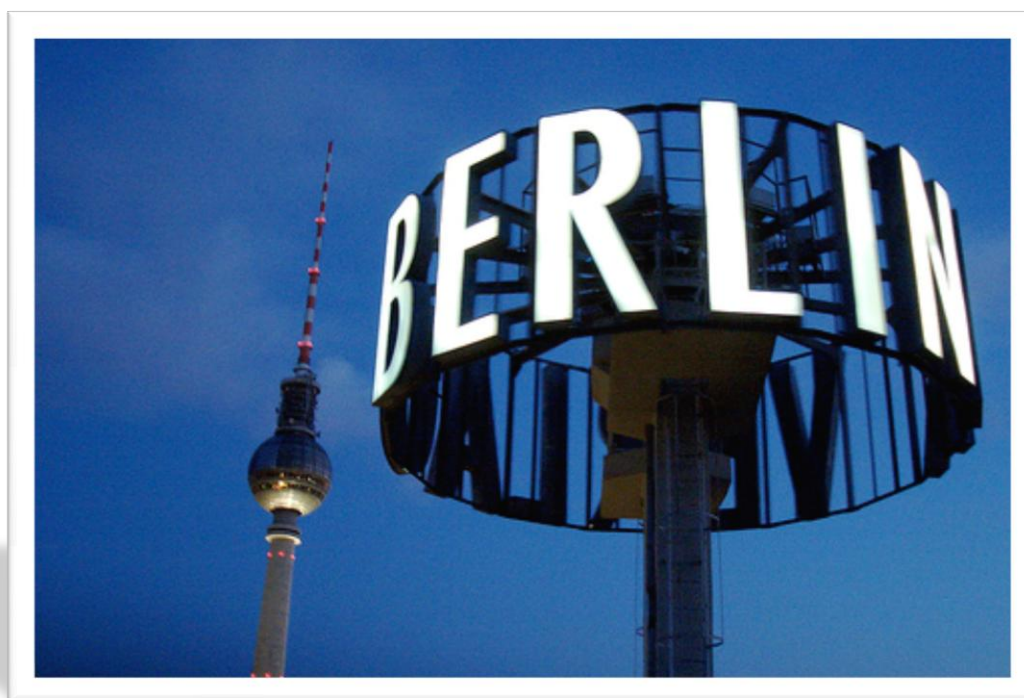
Croupiers Trips to the Berlin Marathon

Year	Numbers
2011	15
2010	5
2009	14
2008	5
2007	1
2006	15
2005	0
2004	0
2003	1
2002	3
2001	2
2000	0
1999	0
1998	0
1997	9
1996	1
1995	0
1994	0
1993	0
1992	1
1991	0
1990	2
Total	74

Berlin Marathon – Croupiers Alltime Stats

Time	Athlete	Year	Runs	Time	Athlete	Year	Runs
2:30:24	Alex Fritsch	2009	1	3:13:12	Ben Farag	2008	1
2:30:55	Mick McGeoch	1997	6	3:13:28	Brian Richardson	2009	1
2:31:06	Paul Wheeler	1990	1	3:14:02	Libby O'Duffy	2009	1
2:33:07	Phil Cook	2001	4	3:14:31	Dave Price	1997	1
2:35:13	Gareth Thomas	2006	1	3:15:12	Jen Salter	2008	1
2:35:20	Stuart Crees	2009	2	3:15:40	Terry Caveney	2006	1
2:35:31	Ed Donovan	2011	1	3:16:38	Mike Davies	2008	1
2:45:47	Gerry Crispie	2003	2	3:16:48	Mal Farnham	1996	1
2:46:07	Nick Dukes	2009	1	3:18:27	Eurof Davies	2010	1
2:50:10	Paul Morris	1997	1	3:23:53	Jeremy Forshew	2008	2
2:51:28	Dave Coles	2010	2	3:25:44	Dave E Williams	2011	1
2:53:09	Jeff Aston	1997	1	3:29:51	Tom Jeffery	2011	1
2:53:23	Stuart Reeves	2006	1	3:30:22	Gerry O'Beirne	2010	1
2:54:16	Martin Williams	2011	1	3:31:26	Cheryl Hudgell	2009	1
2:56:45	Steffan Scholz	2010	1	3:32:20	Liz Ashton	2010	1
2:57:13	Keith Page	1990	1	3:42:47	Alan Bladen	1997	1
2:57:13	Dave Weeden	1997	1	3:44:55	Malin Falck	2011	2
2:57:38	Andy Cleves	2006	2	3:52:00	Frances Machin	2011	1
2:57:56	Dave Headon	2009	1	3:52:40	Claire Beatty	2011	1
2:58:42	Dave Lloyd	1997	2	3:52:43	Wouter Poortinga	2006	1
2:58:59	Scott Howell	2006	1	3:54:59	Sarah McCarthy	2009	1
2:59:03	Angharad Mair	1992	1	3:59:12	Gareth Rees	2011	1
3:02:24	Firouz Mal	2002	2	4:01:13	Steve Owen	2006	1
3:04:23	Andy Blair	2011	1	4:10:58	Rachel Jones	2007	1
3:04:25	Phil George	2009	1	4:24:36	Richard McCoy	2006	1
3:06:04	James Bruce	2011	1	4:36:43	Mike Lister	2006	1
3:06:54	Katie Beecher	2009	1	4:38:32	Gary Bodman	2011	1
3:09:05	Dick Brewer	1997	1	4:41:57	Sandra Caveney	2006	1
3:10:25	Dave Carter	1997	1	4:52:05	Caroline Nightingale	2011	1

After another highly enjoyable weekend in Berlin, we decided to compile an alltime Croupiers Berlin list. It should be noted that some of the results may be “gun time” and some “chip time”. With another trip planned in 2012, who will be the first to break 2:30?

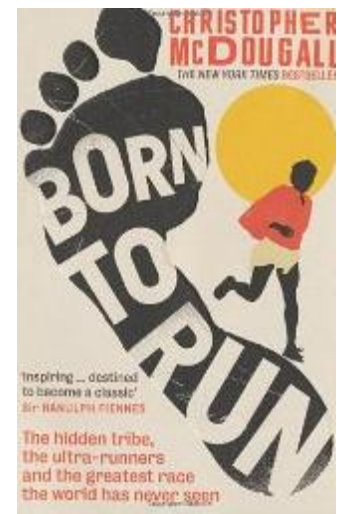


From the Horse's Mouth – An Evening with Caballo Blanco

Once upon a time not so long ago and in a land not so far away, a stumbling klutz discovered running. Ditched the couch potato lifestyle. Ditched the cigarettes. Donned a pair of trainers and hesitantly attempted to run. Through the gasping, aches, pains and some injuries, I was able to sort of call myself a runner. A novice runner at best and as a novice I developed an obsession for most things to do with running. Websites, blogs, Twittersphere chatter and books. It was in this myriad world of reading that I stumbled upon a book enticingly called 'Born to Run' by Christopher McDougall. A book which I thought would affirm in me that there is no myth in running and that everyone can run and this is where it all began.

“Full of incredible characters, amazing athletic achievements, cutting-edge science, and, most of all, pure inspiration, Born to Run is an epic adventure that began with one simple question. Why does my foot hurt? In search of an answer, Christopher McDougall sets off to find a tribe of the world's greatest distance runners and learn their secrets, and in the process shows us that everything we thought we knew about running is wrong...”

– source: www.chrismcdougall.com



Having been quite inspired by this book, when I received an email that one of the central characters in this book was in UK, to do a series of talk, I promptly registered for the talk. The man I went to see was Caballo Blanco, an eccentric American who roamed, ran and lived among the Tarahumaras, a tribe that McDougall described as super athletes as this tribe has the ability to run continuously over long distances of hundreds of miles.

Caballo Blanco's real name is Micah True and as he claimed in the opening of his talk, he is no super athlete nor proclaim to be an expert in running and is definitely not here to talk about the science of running. He is just someone who loves running and who is privileged to live among the Tarahumaras, in the Copper Canyons, Sierra Madre in Mexico. So what was his story? How did he come to be featured in the book?

Caballo cuts a tall, lean figure at age 58, but you would have thought he might have discovered the fountain of youth in the canyons. Perhaps, distance running is the elixir of youth? He looked quite different from how the book portrayed him. In the book, he was portrayed as a wild, unshaven, long-haired hippie who lived in the mountains. Here stood a man completely shaven, dressed in T-shirt, shorts and yes, he even wore shoes. Caballo even made a joke about

how he left all his long hair behind in the canyons and when it came to the issue with shoes, he does wear them and no, he does not run barefoot. Neither do the Tarahumaras and he cannot quite understand how barefoot running was associated with this tribe. This is one of a few things that Caballo was quite critical about with what had been written in the book. ‘The book has taken some poetic licence’ – Caballo said with a cynical smile.

Here’s a link of Caballo in person

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fj_pyfMoLio&feature=related

This is when he explained the reason he was here. The reason for him to take on taking speaking engagement. He wanted to use what the book has done for him and the tribe, as an opportunity to tell the world about the true lives of the Tarahumaras. An opportunity to raise awareness, funds and help to support a sustainable livelihood for these people whom he has great respect and love for. All proceeds of his talk goes to a non for profit organisation he heads called ‘Friends of the Running People’. It is through such support that he hopes, the Tarahumaras can continue to run free and that their lives can be sustained , respected and flourish for many generations to come.

Here’s a link of a film that was shown

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIyEvomUz14>

So how does someone called Micah True became Caballo Blanco and became synonymous with the Tarahumaras? Micah as he was called then, stumbled into running quite by accident. He began running in his mid 20’s and it was to escape from the everyday life of working hard and partying hard. He would starve for days and take long hikes to get away. Then realising how unfit he was, he took up martial arts, watched his diet and began to run regularly. Soon he was running more than his friends in martial arts because he enjoyed it, with a mileage of 180 – 190 miles per week.

He still hadn’t taken himself to be a serious runner though he had won a few races. Blighted by injuries, he stopped racing and he felt that he have had enough because he ran for enjoyment. Then he had a terrible accident on a bicycle from which when he recovered, he decided to celebrate by entering the Leadville 100, in Colorado. It is here that his encounter with the Tarahumaras, eventually changed his life.

In 1993, the Tarahumaras were entered into the Leadville 100 by an astute and enterprising organiser. Impoverished and hungry, the Tarahumaras agreed to participate in exchange for food. Up till then, no one had heard of the Tarahumaras, soon they caught the media attention,

sponsorship came pouring in and Leadville 100 was launched into the limelight. As in the book, Caballo's re-telling of this story, makes you feel quite angry at how the vulnerability of the Tarahumaras was exploited for the personal gains of others – organisers, media and sponsors. In a sense this, makes you question the commercialisation of running– glorifying the sport, making it cool, making it sexy and putting it on a 'stage'. The must have kit, the proliferation of fancy running techniques, training regimes, the performance enhancing diet etc.. and the list goes on.

As to be expected then, that Caballo was asked questions relating to what shoes is best to running techniques he would recommend and diet to adopt if one wants to run better. His answer – where what feels good for you. Lower base shoes will help minimise the rolling of the foot on uneven surfaces. With running techniques – run tall, run smooth, relax and feel your own pace. His philosophy 'Be easy, be light and be smooth' – he said with a smile.

Perhaps, we have really overcomplicated things. Perhaps, as the book said, we are born to run but through modern lifestyle, our muscular structure, our physical bodies have no need to develop and adapt to enable us to run. Caballo pointed out that the Tarahumaras are not super human, they are just more adapt to run because of where they live and because of their lifestyle. 'If you can run 15 miles, you can run 50 miles' – so Caballo said. I must admit I cannot fathom running 50 miles but I guess when you think about it, he is quite right. It is a matter of motivation and desire. If we all really wanted to, we will train ourselves to run whatever distances we set our minds to.

I wouldn't say Caballo is a great orator or inspiring speaker but he kept things very real, down to earth and reminded me that simplicity is best. His stories, his attitude towards running, affirms me in why I run. Affirms me that in enjoying running, I have perhaps stumbled upon a whole new world and lifestyle choice that promises much more than just P Bs.

Ai-lin Kee

[RAB MM 2011, Snowdonia](#)

Even though this was the 5th running of the event, the RAB is still the spotty fresh kid on the wrinkled brow that is the UK [Mountain Marathon](#) circuit.

Mountain Marathoners refer to the RAB as ‘the new one’, as opposed to ‘the technical one’ ([the LAMM](#)), ‘the commercial one’ ([the OMM](#) which Wouter and I will be doing in at the end of October), ‘the one where you get woken up by a piper’ ([the Highlander](#)) and ‘the summer one in the Lake District where you get beer at overnight camp’ ([the Saunders](#) which, in my own case, = ‘the one where you DNF because you’ve been bitten by a midge and have an allergy’).

The RAB has quickly established itself as a favourite amongst MMs enthusiasts, hence the predominance of Yorkshire accents, Scandinavian types and Inov-8s that greeted Graeme and myself at registration. This is ‘strictly hardcore’ although you’ll never find a nicer bunch of people. There is a downside though; the sparsity of mortals, like G&I, carrying belly guts, pork pies, oversized packs and trekking poles (i.e. those we had any chance of finishing ahead of...)

Being new (and having a nice big fat sponsor) the RAB is also rather keen - hence the novelty, of us receiving not just the traditional bowl of gruel at the finish, but also a *goody bag* ([Joss Naylor](#) types would be baffled by such a turning of the back on all things austerity) complete with a rather nice hat, whistle, multi-tool set and lots of yummy things to eat. Much mind bogglingly expensive kit was also on sale (£250 for a 150g waterproof smock ?). We, being of the Aldi faith, averted our eyes...

This year’s RAB was a home match, held in the much underestimated [Caernaddau](#) in Snowdonia. The start was in Besthesda, an odd little mountain town in a fine but maybe dodgy setting. Walking along the High Street on a Friday night the place looked and felt a little like the unlikely offspring of an unprotected liaison between Merthyr and Ambleside...

The forecast had been horrendous, and so, true to form, the pre-race camp was a stinker - gales and rain throughout the night prevented sleep. My £45 Millets tent was, like me, not in its comfort zone. Peering out of a soggy nylon flap at 6:00am and seeing nothing but wretchedness, I threw a teenage strop and suggested to G we DNS’d and do the Park Run instead. It took some superb reverse psychology by The Don to cajole me out of my sleeping bag. The bacon sandwich also helped. So to the thought that even timophilic midges would struggle in 70 mph winds...

Envisaging survival as the name of the game, we packed 'heavy' waterproofs, spare gas, warm changes of kit, 'just in case of a twist' titanium trekking poles (a decadent, expensive but increasingly essential part of our first aid kit...) and tons of food, conscious of Napoleon’s advice that ‘an army marches on its stomach’. Boney would have been proud of us.

We dibbed in at the start, were handed the maps and control descriptions, crossed the line – and promptly sat-down again (in what other race do you get to do this?) for the ritual route planning plus reading and marking of the map. This was followed by my least favourite bit, the first hill –



Tim O and Graeme D just after the start at day 2 (and the trekking poles are already out..)

within minutes I was struggling to keep up with Graeme. G loves the climbs - I, on the other hand, am better at descending - our MMs thus tend to take on something of a two man relay with the map + associated navigational duties being passed, baton like, as G overtakes me (on the ups) or I overtake G (on the downs).

Just an hour or into our race something odd happened – the rain stopped, a small patch of blue stuff spotted in the sky, followed by intermittent but stunning views of the Menai straights, Irish Sea, glistening and banks and Llandudno (where Jen Salter was 23 hours into her 24 hour misery several '000s of feet below us). The waterproofs came off and remained unused for the rest of the jaunt. The wind stayed put though, which was fine by me...

We like the RAB lots as it is a 'score' event, 6 hours to nab as many controls as you can on Day 1, 5 hours to do the same on Day 2. The only hazard are the unforgiving time penalties should you return a minute or two (let alone 10) late. Unlike in a 'linear' event, missing one control does not result in automatic disqualification - just as well as we soon found ourselves in trouble on our 3rd, and more seriously 4th, control point ('The Pinnacles'). I wasted an age clambering up and down sharp, slippery, rock slabs determined but failing to find our target amongst the myriad of crannies and nooks. The Don shouted up from below, ordering me to come down and give up the quest - a wise decision as, unbeknown to us both controls had been wrongly set by the race planner, a hanging offence debasing the months of training and race preparation. Later we and others were compensated and awarded the points, but the delay & wasted time sapped our most precious of commodities, confidence. Assuming we'd messed-up, it took a little wind out of our sails – the terrain joined in with the moral duffing-up and obliged us both with numerous ankle twists and stumbles. For Graeme's ankle (broken twice in previous circumstances) this was not the best of times...

Knack'd, with just an hour left on the D1 clock, we found ourselves overlooking the overnight camp having gained a miserly 100 points in five hours bog trotting. We had a cruel choice of options, call it a day and have a much needed cuppa, or gamble and go for a 6-7k out and back dash to bag a control we'd decided to ignore previously. We went for the 'lotto' and were rewarded with both the extra points and an 'all hands to the pumps' sprint to the finish, both very dehydrated as the sun roasted all in its path - the run in felt good though. Nick and Caroline finished seconds behind us having grabbed almost twice as many Day 1 points. We stood in awe...

The overnight campsite was a beauty – Grand Designs mother nature style. Strange to see the human race ('00s squashed together in a nettle infested valley + some nice views) so content and at ease with itself. Sadly I didn't take a camera having believed the weather forecasts. The kitchen and shower facilities were 'basic', although the usual icy brook at the bottom of a gully was perfect for the much needed cold water post race bathe, the perfect anti-inflammatory treatment for battered ankles and feet. After much eating, banter, some reflective MM learning from the Dalls, and overdosing on instant custard, we went to bed at sunset all seemingly asleep by 8:00pm (a pb). The weather was very warm - wiser types slept under the stars. The midges also slept. I turned on my iPod shuffle (my 'luxury item' always carried on MMs) and listened briefly to a very dull R4 'In our time' podcast on Shinto - the perfect sleeping tablet...

Sunrise came with a stunning red sky and herring bone clouds. Those of us queuing for the portaloos looked on agog at the natures of wonder. The RAB gods were angry and wind returned, especially on tops, in our faces for most of the day. I always run better on the 2nd day of a MM and almost enjoyed the first climb through the gorse (see pic). We were bolder with route choice

(the key success factor in MMing ?) and braver with speed underfoot, finishing well but again leaving things a little late, needing to sprint to the line through a swamp to avoid time penalties - the result, a much better D2 result (135/292 as opposed to 220/300 on D1).

A hot shower at the local Leisure Centre followed after G bravely walked into the reception (a trail of slime and moss in his wake) and boldly asked if we could use the facilities. The manager didn't flinch, smiled and said the magic words 'yes, of course' after a polite 'shumai' (sp?). I imagined the b*lllocking we'd have got had this been either of my home towns (Clapham/Brighton). I like Bethesda lots - one day I'll learn the language...

Nick and Caroline finished 22nd overall (and 2nd Mixed Vets) and maintain their position amongst the demigods of Welsh orienteers. Julia Becker had a great (remarkable?) run, having met her scratched pair partner Ute only hours before the start of the race and finishing a highly credible 130th/292 overall.

Other highlights of a near perfect weekend included the the blueberry cheesecake on the way-up in [TH Roberts](#) (the world's greatest coffee shop is in Dolgellau) and post-race toffee waffle ice cream in Betws-y Coed (thanks Julia !). Make no mistake, I'll be back for more...

Full results [here](#)

22nd, Nick DALLIMORE/Caroline DALLIMORE, LES CROUPS / MDC, MIXV, Day1 280pts, Day2 245pts, Total 525pts (time 10:41:21)

130th Julia BECKER/Ute MEISTER, SWOC /MDC, FV, Day1 195pts, Day2 145pts, Total 340pts (time 09:57:57)

185th Graeme DONNAN/Tim O'SULLIVAN, LES CROUPIERS, MV, Day1 150pts, Day 2 145pts, Total 295pts (time 10:44:02)

(292 finishers)

Tim O'Sullivan