

The

Dash

September 2019



Jim Taylor holding up the Tower.

From the Editor

What happened to the summer? Well you have all certainly been very busy. There are some brilliant write up in this month's dash. From Ultra's in Poland to 100 miles of the Pembrokeshire coast and not forgetting Michael Wilding's Ironman account. Apologies for this month's edition being so late I had to change my priorities last week and spent 2 evening producing a Showstopper for a "Bake Off" competition but the good news is that I won! Unfortunately due to the awful weather we have had lately the Fun Run and 5K race to celebrate the unveiling of the Defibrillator at the Sunnyhurst but this has now been rescheduled for the 13th October hopefully the weather will be kinder. Cross country is due to start in October for those who enjoy running through mud and puddles. Once again thank you to those who have contributed this month and remember all articles have an interest for someone. Until next month keep dashing.



Debbie Biscuit

Darwen Dashers Running

Club: Founded 1990

Club Committee

Chairman

Simon Fox

the.dash@hotmail.co.uk

President

Jim Taylor

jimtaylor@uwclub.net

Secretary

Sharon Cocker

shazzyc_work@yahoo.co.uk

Treasurer

Allan Harle

Beginners Captain

Alison Abbott

07971 451431

alison.abbott22@yahoo.co.uk

Fell Captain

Gareth Davies

07954 411637

gareth@sportingnrg.co.uk

Road Captain

Gareth Taylor

07889 633672

gjtt15@yahoo.co.uk

When/where to meet us:

Tuesday

The Sunnyhurst, Tockholes Rd, Darwen BB3 1JX

19.00

All Welcome

Thursday

The Sunnyhurst, Tockholes Rd, Darwen BB3 1JX

19.00

All Welcome

Check our Facebook page for details of runs which are taking place on club nights.

If you have not run with us before, please get in touch before you come so we can arrange for somebody to meet you.

The Dash

Editor Debbie Cash

Contributors Sue

Asher, Gareth Davies, Amy Freeman, Simon Fox, Gareth Taylor. Michael Wilding.

Designer Sophie Atherton



**Darwen Dashers
Running Club**



**On Facebook:
Darwen Dashers
Parkrun Information Page**

All contributions for the The Dash to be sent by 1st of each month to:

darwendashers@gmail.com

Chairman's Chat

So, three months on from completing the Joss Naylor Challenge and I'm still crocked. At first I thought it would clear up and I tried to carry on as normal, even leading a few runs on a club night. It soon became apparent that this wasn't a good idea so I eased off a bit. Still reluctant to accept reality I did a couple of Parkruns as it's 'only 5k so what harm can it do?' Well, quite a bit as it turns out. Finally I got it looked at by my good friend Spud and he informed me that I have tendinitis of the Tibialis Posterior Tendon. Proper rest now and support of the foot. No running. Luckily I can still cycle so I haven't gone completely insane with frustration. There are several things to take from this sad tale. One, we all get injured. I don't know anyone who does sport who hasn't. Two, even an old git like me who has been running for years and years and should know better still does the head in the sand thing instead of rest and treatment so if you have too then don't beat yourself up – it's what we do. But – three, if you want to get back to running then look at the big picture. The sooner you are mended, the sooner you can get back to it. Learn from my idiocy!

I have always felt a bit uncomfortable coming up to the club when I am out due to injury. It doesn't feel right going in the Sunnyhurst for a pint if I haven't 'earned' it. Plus it's not the best seeing everyone coming back sweaty but happy after a good run and you haven't been able to. Hence why I haven't been up on a club night recently. Fingers crossed that this will change in the near future.

In further injury woes George Thompson has had a nasty accident on his bike which left him with a broken hip. He has had an operation to plate it but will be out of action for a while. I hope you will all join me in wishing him a full and speedy recovery. Just to set your minds at rest – I checked and the bike is ok.

As you may have seen on the FB page Andy McAllister is standing down from running the Parkrun championship in December. Despite appeals for someone to take it on as yet no one has come forward. This has been an extremely popular Championship over the years and it would be a great shame if it was to no longer take place. Andy has said that he would give full training and advice to anyone interested. I have passed on my thanks to Andy on behalf of the club for all his efforts.



Following on from her fantastic performance in the Ultra in Poland recently Amy Freeman has just finished 3rd overall and 2nd Female in the 100 mile Pembrokeshire Coast Ultra. Just completing a 100 mile race is an incredible achievement I think, so to finish so highly is amazing. Well done Amy. We are very fortunate to have an athlete of your calibre representing the club.

Well, that's about it so I will love you and leave you.

Simon



Picture courtesy of Gorce Ultra

from the fell Captain

Since my last report a lot has happened. The Stoodley Pike race took place in early July with just a handful of Dashers having a go on what was a perfect night for racing.

First week in August saw 6 of us descend on Poland for the Gorce Ultra races. Amy and Iain taking part in the 100km race, Claire the 48km race and Sue and Joel the 20km. Unfortunately I had bulged a disc in my back so couldn't race, which was all rather frustrating. Epic performances took place that weekend, in the friendliest place and in near enough perfect weather.

On the Saturday Amy continued her brilliance and came away as First Lady of Gorce, Asher put in a effervescent performance and continues to just get better and better over the longer distances and Claire, despite her nerves, performed superbly to finish 12th in her category. On the Sunday Joel and Sue ran together to complete the 20km race in great fashion. I will leave the racers to tell their own tales but a fantastic weekend was had by all.

I am sure the club will join me in congratulating Amy (again) on completing the Pembrokeshire 100 miler in early September. She finished 3rd overall and 2nd Lady - she really is in fine form and an inspiration to other members of the club. Well done Tiny.

Finally in the Fell Championships I think I am right in saying that both Claire and I are not able to be caught now with only two races remaining.

I am now looking to next year at race selections and ways to increase the number of people competing in the fell championships. If you have any suggestions please get in contact with me. It would be great to see more of us rocking up at fell races together.

Gareth D



Red rose cross country league is approaching.

View www.redrosecrosscountry.co.uk for more information. Please message on facebook if you wish to be entered. The club pays this for you. Therefore only put your name down if you are sure you will run in at least one race.

Sat 12th October, Leigh, Leigh Sports Village
Sat 26th October, Bolton, Leverhulme Park
Sat 9th November, Todmorden, Centre Vale Park
Sat 30th November, Rossendale, Marl Pits

From the Road Captain

We've had two longer distance races since my last report. This has been part of this year's plan to build up a couple of times from 5k up to a half. In the next month or so I'll be inviting everyone to provide me a list of any races they wish to see to help me compile next year's championship races. I did the same last year but I had no response, I've already had one request so far asking for a marathon to be included again so watch this space! With two races to go this year it's looking like Rick Marsden has already won the men's, the women's is a different story, it could be a close battle to the finish.

Cross country is coming up – there's currently an announcement on the Dashers Facebook page asking for names, we can submit as many as we like and then the club pays for the races that you run. There's always room for additional runners in both the male and female as we have to field at least 6 male and 4 females each event – it doesn't matter what your ability is, yes it's tough but it will make you a lot stronger for next season.

The club kit has now been sorted out as I'm sure many of you are aware, Gibson's (Martin & Louise Oldfield) in Darwen now stock all items and you can pop in to collect, there's plenty of different bits of kit that Martin brought us as samples from Dashers bobble hats to hoody's. We also have around 40 vests in the current design that are now selling for half price (£10) as we are looking to get a new design in place to commemorate Dashers @ 30 next year. Reminder anybody wishing to run in cross country will need to do so wearing a club vest.

2019 Road Races Remaining:

27 October - Accrington 10k

17 November - Preston 10m



Gareth T

Meet the committee



So..... that's me..... the one that (usually) stands on the bench outside the pub on a club night when our Chairman isn't present. The tall ginger one. I am your Fell Captain with the responsibility of sorting all things fell like out - the Fell Championships (selecting the races and sorting the league table out), FRA Fell Relays (where we compete once a year as a team against other clubs), encouraging new members to either train or race on the fells and various other tasks that I am asked to do.

I have only been fell running with the club for 4 years but have history in various other sports - triathlon, football and cricket and have always run on the fells and trails but on my own. I now do my best to represent the club at various races over the year and am currently in the midst of training for my third attempt on the Bob Graham Round so I will be regularly seen pounding the miles on the moors or slogging up Lakeland Fells.

In my work life I am a partner and Director of Sporting NRG Ltd, which is an activity provider for children and young people delivering Bikeability, Duke of Edinburgh, Outdoor Education, Physical Education and Social Care initiatives.

At home, I am married to Claire (the previous Fell Captain) and have 3 fantastic children Isaac, Harriet and Georgie. Slowly but surely we are encouraging the next generation to enjoy the fells with Isaac being a member of Horwich Harriers Juniors.

So, if you want to know more about fell running, fancy a go at a fell race and want some support or can think of other ways we can improve the fell run section of the club then please get in contact with me via gareth@sportingnrg.co.uk

Susie Dasher's Polish Dictionary-

SWIETNY POMYSL; GREAT IDEA

In the dark and dreary months during the winter Iain started cheering himself up by looking for Ultra-marathons abroad that he could go to. The only criteria as I recall was somewhere not too far away, not too hot, beautiful countryside and that they held their races during the summer holidays. Gorce in Poland quickly became top of the list, as it had a brilliant website, amazing pictures of their routes and were really helpful answering any questions that he had.

PLAN; PLAN

Yes, according to Google translate it is the same word! Soon the beginning of the plan started coming together, with Amy, Joel, Gareth and Claire loving the great idea too. With a few evenings together working out the logistics, looking at maps, flights, accommodation the plan really starting taking form. So we all booked in with me and Joel entering the 20k, Claire and Gareth the 48K and Iain and Amy the 102k.

PIEKNY; BEAUTIFUL

We were lucky enough to arrive a couple of days ahead of the races starting to complete a few quick recce's of the courses. During this time we were already totally in love with everything we saw but especially the following-

WIDOKI; VIEWS

The views were endless and in every possible direction, especially from the top of the Gorce wooden tower, which was the check point for two of our races.

LUDZIE; PEOPLE

The people everywhere we went couldn't have been more helpful. Often not able to speak English and us with no Polish we communicated with strange actions and impressions, which usually ended up with a slightly confused but new best friend.

JEDZENIE;FOOD We were mainly powered by their amazing local food and when they say local, they really meant it, often only grown from the field beside you or honey from their own bee garden. The smoked sheep cheese was everyone's favourite and very addictive.

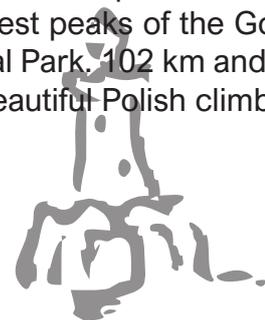
BRAVO!; WELL DONE!

All the races were set off by a traditional band, all in full costume. Throughout the races we were supported by crowds of people shouting 'Bravo!', which was lovely. At the very top of the mountain, they even had a choir singing to us too. We all finished through a river and then scrambling up the bank to the finish line.

20k- Me and Joel had a brilliant time, with a really steep 10k ascent but on the whole a slightly easier 10k decent to finish. Generally it seems like the Polish runners don't talk much to each other as they run but me and Joel did the Dasher's proud by talking to absolutely everyone that would listen. We made it round in just under 3 hours, which we were rather pleased with.

48k- Sadly Gareth couldn't run as he had recently 'done his back in'. I think was the medical term. This left poor Claire on her own, running so far on unfamiliar ground and in a strange country too. She got on her 'Mega-brave pants' and set off solo. As we met up with her at the half-way point, she was absolutely flying and powered on by 'Spice Girls' on her I-pod. She came in strong to the finish and ended up finishing in less than 8 and half hours!

102k- Iain and Amy set off on their race at 4 AM in the morning, so started with head torches and they say they saw the most amazing sunrise possible. I will take their word for this, as I was still safely tucked up in bed. They went up a series of the 5 highest peaks of the Gorce National Park. 102 km and 14000ft of beautiful Polish climbing.



During their race we met up with Amy briefly at one check point to see her going strong but with a knee injury. The injury was sustained by waving at a lovely family driving on their tractor through the fields! The poor family came running to Amy's rescue but as Amy knew communication would be impossible, bravely ran on, so they didn't worry too much. At this point we believed Amy to be second lady but we were unsure how far away she was from the lead at that point.

Amazingly, to add to the excitement, at this check point a wedding was taking place with people galloping around on horses and waving axes!

Amy came in very strong but with some real challenges, all in the last few miles, with her becoming first lady, to then being overtaken, back to first, overtaken again. Somehow, even after all those challenging miles, she still managed to summon up a sprint finish, with the second lady, less than 1 minute behind!

The crowd went wild and Amy had to straight away talk to the crowds over the microphone shoved in her direction by the organisers.

Iain also came home strong, looking calm and collected, 7th in his age category and when he heard Amy had won he still managed a celebration dance for her.



PREZENTACJA; PRESENTATION

The presentation took place on the final day, with a massive stage, lighting, numerous presenters, including a 'Sheep herd whistler', who seemed to be a local celebrity and of course giant log podiums! As we couldn't really understand much of what was going on, we were pleased to find out that Amy's class would be the last up, this giving Amy the chance to sort of work out what was expected of her.

When she went up the audience were almost as excited as we were, so pleased that they had an 'International winner!'

This meant Amy had to give a speech, which she did brilliantly, saying what a beautiful country they had, a fantastic race, wonderfully well organised and with a great competitor with the second lady so close behind. Amy on the high up winning log, was still only the same size as the second lady on her lower down log!

As Amy also won her age category too, she was armed with prizes galore, many of which she had to leave behind in Poland as there was no way it would all fit into her luggage on the plane back.

ZAPROSZENIE; INVITATION

The 'Town boss', who we presumed must be their Mayor, was able to give a speech in English thanking all the Dashers for coming over to race and had the whole audience give us a huge round of applause. He said 'this year we have 6 Dashers from England but next year we will 600!', *so there's the next challenge to you all!*



Sue Asher



486 hours in 51 Weeks - 148 runs, 99 swims and 115 rides...

“I could do that...” I said.

“I say that every year. Don't I?” I said it again as my youngest son Charlie and I chatted to Lea Pea in Bolton town centre as we watched the 2018 Bolton Ironman UK triathlon for the 10th year in a row.

I got home and said to my wife Debbie “I'm thinking I might like to do the 2019 IMUK before I turn 50?”

She said “Yes, do it!”.

I texted my pal Ady Shorrock “I'm thinking we should do the 2019 IMUK before we turn 50?”. Ady declined...

23rd July 2018 came... I struck whilst the iron was hot and entered as soon as registration opened. Once I'd hit send on my entry there was no turning back... The training started in earnest!

....

I'd dabbled with Triathlon and Open water swimming a few years earlier but family and work had meant I didn't have the time available to make a decent fist of it. I thought I'd be better being average at one sport, than rubbish at three. I bought a couple of Ironman training books Don Fink's “Be Iron Fit” and Joe Friel's “Going Long”. I perused the internet for more training plans, then I read up and started to plan out the next 51 weeks left to train before the 14th July 2019.

I messaged and cornered all the people I knew who had already completed long distance triathlon events: Paul Taylor, Jonny Bromilow, Martin Oldfield

, Ben Johnson and Mark Bleasdale and asked their advice. They were all brilliant and encouraging and gave me lots of advice.

My usual Fell and road running routine was immediately changed to two bike rides, two runs and two swims a week. I returned to SwimFit under the tutelage of the fantastic Matt Donnelly after a five year hiatus. I reduced my running to a single off-road run with Mr Sparkle's Merry Dancer's at Dashers and a weekend long run with my road running mentor Ady Shorrock. I stepped up the bike rides with my Bike riding mentor Craig Greenhough and initially a mid-week spin class to break the turbo-trainer monotony. The training weeks built up from around 6 hours to eventually 18 hours. As the weeks passed I increased the sessions, 3 swims and extra bike rides with a run tagged onto the end (Brick session). These get your legs used to running off the bike, and your body and brain used to the initial jelly-legged sensation you get from this.

Race day

My alarm rang out at 2:40am... I sprang out of bed like an excited Jack-in-a-box! Ablutions, teeth-cleaned, liberal application of body-glide, race clothes on and downstairs for my pre-tested race breakfast of big mug of milky coffee and a big bowl of porridge with banana.

I'd bummed a lift to the swim start with training buddy Jonny Rippingdale. Jonny was one of Ben Johnson's coached athletes, Jonny and his Dad picked me up and off we went to meet Ben and the rest of the Johnson Triathlon coached IM athletes under the M65 bridge at Hoghton.

There was a quiet, nervous anticipation in the air for us all. We drove down in convoy and parked up a few minute's walk away from Pennington Flash and headed up to T1 to check our bikes and get into our wetsuits ready for the race.

The daylight was still to break as we made our way up past the lake to the rapidly assembling masses of competitors and spectators, the Swim entry and exit inflatable arches were coming into view for IMUK race start. There was a quiet hum of hushed conversation as we got closer. The emerging light lit up a low mist hovering above the lake and it was very atmospheric.

I walked into T1 and checked my bike, then I headed up to the T1 marquee to change into my wetsuit and put my street clothes into the bag drop ready to meet me at the finish.

I gingerly picked my way barefoot over the gravel paths to the swim start as the Ironman MC and PA system boomed into life. I'm not sure what the local residents make of it at 5:45am! I entered the queue to start the swim, finding a spot just behind the 1hr 5min marker post. It seemed to be a popular time as we were packed-in like sardines. A few minutes to go and the national anthem played. Next the music volume was turned-up to eleven and AC/DC – Thunderstruck began blast out. I'm still getting flashbacks to the start and goosebumps when I hear it now!

The signal for race start was barely audible over the crowd as the front row set off and us further back began to shuffle towards the water quicker and quicker.

Soon it was my turn and a few steps down the ramp and I dived into the water to join the masses and began to windmill my arms and head out towards the huge orange buoys which seemed to stretch out an awfully long way across the lake. A bit of jostling for position and I was soon swimming in clear water and hit my rhythm. Two strokes, left breath, two strokes, right breath, crocodile eyes to spot the buoy, and repeat.

The top end of the lake was soon here and I was heading back to the Aussie exit for lap two. I swam right up to the exit ramp and held up an arm to the assistance guys. They were super-slick and whipped me up onto my feet and I ran off through the barriers back towards the lake for lap two. Same again and I was soon exiting lap two and jogging across the grass towards T1, removing my cap, goggles, noseclip, Wetsuit unzipped and pulled down to my waist. I entered the tent, found my bike stuff and emptied my bag on the floor. Wetsuit off, quick towel dry, Helmet and bike shoes on and I was running again for my racked bike. I unhooked the bike and ran with it to the mount zone and I was riding down the rough track from the lake to the main road.

My bike seemed to rattle unusually loudly along the first few hundred metres of the main road. I soon found out why as I heard the ping, ping of two CO2 canisters hitting the road behind me. That left me down to a single canister and a niggling worry that I was now down to one shot to inflate my tyres if I was unlucky enough to puncture. The upside was the bike stopped rattling. I'd barely been on the bike a few minutes when I totally unexpectedly saw my friends Mike and Dave out on the course supporting me. I was soon up to Horwich and the turning point at The Crown pub to begin the two laps of Lancashire. I was already excited to get on to home turf knowing friends and family would be out on the course.

Chorley New road into Bolton is a good long straight road and allowed a decent pace and I could tuck down on the aero bars and drag it out into the Town Centre. There was a short stretch of cobbles around Le Mans Crescent behind Bolton Town Hall which almost rattled the fillings from my teeth and then we were heading out of town towards the undulating hills of east Lancashire.

The first climb was through the Brightmet area of Bolton, I was pleased to find I was passing the bigger guys as we climbed. Having ridden the loop thirteen times in training I knew the way as we ascended a stiffer climb past Harwood Golf course, then a technical descent into Tottington was easier this time; my training rides on the course meant stopping at crossroads and approaching bends making sure I could stop if Cars approached, knowing road were closed to traffic today meant I could give it a little more gas.

Hawkshaw, Holcombe and Helmshore were a bit of a blur as I raced the downhills and tapped-out the climbs and then as I turned onto Grane road I spotted the familiar face of my Auntie waiting to cheer me through. I knew I was heading for home turf as I bombed along turning sharply at the Grey Mare pub and heading for Pickup Bank, winding down the steep narrow roads heading for Hoddlesden, a nice fast road through Waterside and I was soon heading up Roman road and saw my family and friends on the corner where the Pot-house pub used to be.

This gave me a real boost and I speeded up on the climb up past Blacksnape fields.

I put the power down again as I descended towards the Crown and Thistle, a nasty little hill and then another long descent towards Edgworth. Another nasty sharp climb and I was pleased to spot my Merry Dancing buddy Iain Asher waiting at the top cheering and blowing his horn. I was soon racing through the double roundabout and through Edgworth rattling down the main street past the cricket ground along probably the worst road surface in Lancashire, I was lucky not to lose the fillings from my teeth! The spectators were beginning to appear more frequently on the course as the morning wore on and their cheers and encouragement were well received.

Chapelton and Green Arms road soon passed, over to Belmont and towards the Winter hill ascent and a small glimpse into what it must be like as a Tour de France rider climbing Alpe d'Huez. Crowds lined the route parting at the last second like the Red Sea to let you through; a rousing wall of sound coaxing you onward.

The climb of Winter hill seemed easier with the adrenaline from the crowds still coursing, and soon the crazy masked Wrestlers of the Sheephouse Fancy dress party were into view.

There was a full mobile disco with lights flashing and five guys in masks and capes doing a dance routine in the middle of the road.

A careful but full-blooded descent of Winter hill and a drag back through Horwich and back into Bolton and it was onto lap two. Same again... This time I had the highlights of the seeing my amazing friend Iain Asher again, this time running alongside me on the climb out of Holcombe Brook, my family and friends and Dasher buddies on the Pothouse climb, then more Dashers at the top of Marsh House Lane including Mr Sparkle waving the most risqué banner I saw all day. This had me laughing out loud all the way up the hill. I was on the home run and had a fresh impetus this time. I saw Newlyweds Ady and Nicola H, then Mr Sparkle and his banner again with Cath and George Thompson on Green Arms road and the rest was a blur as I had the run in my sights. I felt fast as I passed Bolton school and headed for T2, I passed a traffic speed radar sign and made it flash red and register 33mph as I approached Queens park and the rows of bike racks.

I turned the corner and saw the Bike dismount line with flag-waving Marshall and I stopped a bit short, reluctant to be penalised. I underestimated how wobbly my legs would be after 112 miles on the bike and made hard work of dismounting, but soon I was racking my bike and changing into my running clothes. I bolted out of transition and headed off into the town centre.



I checked my watch and realised I was running far too fast and needed to reign it in if I wanted to pace the marathon correctly, so I wouldn't be crawling the last 10k. I ran into the town centre and the crowds grew bigger and louder.

There were numerous PA's set up blasting music out as I ran towards Bolton Town Hall. As I approached Fred Dinah's statue I could see my family and friends had taken over a section of the crowd on the corner. Again, I had a rush of adrenaline and knew once I'd rounded the town hall I'd be on their side of the road.

I saw Iain and Sue Asher again in the crowd on the next corner and then ran past the finish line turning left for another lap knowing I had to pass this three more times before I could take the right turn into the finishing funnel and run under the arch to collect my medal. I was on the correct side of the road to high-five my gang as I passed then I headed off back the way I came to run the rest of the first loop.

A sharp little climb through Queens park and I was up onto Chorley new road for the out-and-back section and I'd be soon on the next loop. Blackburn Road Runners were manning a water station and my old friend and Road-Runner Karen was handing out drinks. It was great to see another familiar face. I reached the turn-around point and was over half-way on my first lap.

I passed eventual winner Brian Fogarty as he ran up the other side of the road, probably on his last lap. I gave him a shout but he was well in-the-zone! I collected my first coloured wristband and I was back down past the bikes for my second lap. I got another boost to see my family and the Asher's as I headed back around the Town Hall again and then the first signs of fatigue began to bite.

The last energy-gel I had swallowed seemed to hit my stomach pretty hard and gave me a few cramps. I thought a little salt might be required so I picked up a handful of Dorito's at the next feed station. I soon found out this was a mistake as they left me spitting-feathers without any improvement. The second lap was pretty tough going so I dug-in and consoled myself with the fact that I was half-way through the run and only had two laps left.

As I started the third loop I concocted a plan to walk the 30 metres or so through each water station whilst drinking, and then run the 1.5miles in-between each one and chip away at the distance.

That's how you eat an elephant... right? When I saw my family for the third time I had another huge surge of optimism as I knew I only had a single lap left and I had the finish well in my sights.

Still chipping away my run-walk plan had kept the stomach cramps at bay and managing to keep washing gels down with plenty of water. The last lap passed slightly slower than the last three but as I was heading back for the town hall finish line I got another burst of enthusiasm which grew with each step towards finishing. I had real spring in my step by the time I rounded the Town Hall for the last time and I had the bands to take the right-turn to the carpeted path down to the finishing arch. I high-fived my family and friends as I bombed down to the finish and decided to jump and punch the air when I saw the photographers.

12 hours 24 minutes and 19 seconds of racing the event and 51 weeks of training and everything had gone beautifully to plan.

All I needed was the finish line announcer to do his stuff.

He gripped the microphone and blurted out "Michael..... erm Michael ... erm erm... Wild... erm... ing..."

Michael, you are an Ironman".



IRONMAN[®]
UK  **BOLTON**
ENGLAND



1931



Pembroke 100

100 miles is a distance I have some beef with. I completed the Lakeland 100 by the skin of my teeth in 2016, suffering from stomach issues and feeling wretched for the majority of the 38.5 hours I took to crawl around the course. The fact I finished is something I'm still immensely proud of, but I haven't been able to shake the desire to give the distance another crack, to see if I could perform any better with a few more years ultra experience under my belt.

And so I found myself at the start line of the Pembrokeshire Coastal 100, nervously shuffling about amidst the other runners. The race begins on the picturesque beach at Dale in south Pembrokeshire. I'd visited this beautiful area of the country before and knew it'd be a scenic course, more undulating and rough underfoot than you may think but without the navigational difficulties of being in the hills. I'd made a rough timing schedule for a 26.5 hour finish, something I thought if all went well was within my grasp, and Joel was going to use this to meet me at a few checkpoints along the way with Banshee.

After a very brief briefing (pretty much: keep the sea on your left and the land on the right!) we were off, running through the village and out onto the rugged coastal path.

After about half an hour the field had spread out and I was running alone – which I would be now for the whole race.

This first section is pretty easy running and before I knew it I was at the first CP, 15 miles in, half an hour ahead of schedule. With a brief hug from Joel and topped up water bottles I carried on, but slowed down the pace. The sun was shining, I was enjoying myself and the miles ticked by happily and before I knew it I was at CP2, 32 miles in.

The following section of the path seemed very dull – no exciting coves or rock formations, flat paths and the 11 mile section to the 43 mile CP seemed to last forever. The CP was one I'd been looking forward to – Joel was meeting me there, I had a change of clothes, fresh snacks and a dehydrated pasta bolognese in my dropbag. Yum! However on arrival to the CP I found there was no hot water, so no spag bol, and the “substantial food” advertised as being on offer was bacon frazzles, jelly babies and orange segments. Not impressed! Luckily Joel saved the day by giving me his food – two sausage rolls and a fruit smoothie. Quick consumption of these and a change of top and I ran on feeling refreshed and bang on schedule.

The next 30 miles I knew, having covered them last year with Joel and it was lovely to recognise the landscape, which started getting more rugged and interesting too. The miles seemed to fly by and I felt good, and was treated to a gorgeous sunset over the water at Portgain, 55 miles in and over the halfway point of the race. As the sun dipped below the sea, the headtorch went on and I steeled myself for a long, dark night of running alone.

I ticked a few miles off, but then the going got a bit tougher. The terrain underfoot was rocky and rugged – no problem in daylight, but slow going in the dark. I also knew the next CP at mile 64 was at a youth hostel on the coast and the only thing for miles around.

I was overjoyed when I spotted it's light in the dark, only to find that whilst it was near as the crow flies, the coastline wound in and out so much that it was still really far away. I ran and ran and it never seemed to get any nearer, which was disheartening. I started to fall behind my scheduled times and it was hours before I finally arrived there. Luckily on eventual arrival I was greeted with friend-



I started to fall behind my scheduled times and it was hours before I finally arrived there. Luckily on eventual arrival I was greeted with friendly faces and hot soup, and left the CP ten minutes later feeling warmer, happier and surprisingly not too tired.

This race allowed pacers and outside support – a first for me – and whilst I wasn't going to have any pacers, after the frustrating lack of Bolognese earlier I had concocted a plan with Joel for a little bit of “proper food” outside help. The route passed a few streets away from our Fishguard cottage at mile 74, so I detoured there and Joel, like a legend, got up at 2:30 am and made me strong coffee, a cheese toastie, and administered huge encouraging hugs. Best unofficial checkpoint ever! I took the time to have a rest, brush my teeth repack my bag with exciting new snacks, and leave feeling properly invigorated and refreshed! I was now an hour behind my 26.5hr schedule, but I didn't really care - there was now only a marathon to go and I was still running well and confident I would finish.

Heading back onto the moonlit coastal path, I noticed for the first time how clear the night was, how bright the stars were and fell into as much of a rhythm as I could on the rough cliff top ground with the sound of the waves below me. I was enjoying myself again. I caught up to another runner who was struggling – he'd got lost for an hour before Fishguard and was disheartened.

I ran with him for another mile until the next official race CP (mile 77) deciding not to tell him about how wonderful my unofficial stop had been and how good I felt – don't want to kick a man whilst he's down! Not needed anything extra, I only stopped for a minute at the CP and ran on alone– 9 miles to go til the next CP and only a few more hours til sunrise.

This terrain was unfamiliar (I'd only recce'd up to Fishguard with Joel) and I'd been told that this last section was the toughest – lots of climb and very uneven underfoot. I started to feel really tired towards the end of this section and the fact I was still alone started to grate. I realised I was talking to myself out loud, a running commentary of what I was doing “watch that rock, is that the path?wheres the gate, eat some flapjack and intermittently singing the earworm that had been stuck in my head all night

Therapy?'s Screamer. My headtorch was starting to give me a headache but the first signs of dawn were showing on the horizon as I shuffled into the mile 86 CP. After hot brew and a chat with the marshalls – who told me I was third overall and that the second runner and first lady was only 10 mins ahead – I ran off into the growing daylight.

Not far (comparatively) to go the end finish line, but I now started to flag. The terrain did indeed get tougher, and I seemed to be continually up and down out of cove after cove, on muddy rocky ground or uneven steps. At some point I must have left the path as I found myself in a field corner, surrounded by barbed wire and brambles with no way forwards. Looking back I couldn't see where I had gone wrong, but looking down I saw the path, and first lady Nerys – far down below. I couldn't bear backtracking, so chose to rejoin the path via the most direct route – over the barbed wire and through a dense sea of brambles, which ripped my calves to shreds. I wouldn't be surprised if Nerys, or perhaps the whole of Wales, could hear my yelled expletives as this happened but I did eventually, and bloodily, get back on the route.

This error messed with my brain, and suddenly I'd had enough. My knees were complaining, blood was pooling in my sock from bramble cuts, I had a headache and I also had no idea how far I had gone since leaving the previous CP as my watch had ran out of battery. But I'd come this far, so I would keep on going. Gritting my teeth I forced myself onwards and after what seemed like forever, I heard a shout – it was Joel and Banshee!

They began running next to me and all I could do was repeat “how far to the CP???”.

It was only a few minutes away but it still seemed like a marathon to get there – mile 93 - only to find it was a table with a bowl of frazzles, and no marshalls in sight! I struggled to cope with this, I was tired, everything hurt and frazzles weren't going to solve that. Joel tried to give me food and encouragement but I now wanted the race to be over – so cracked on and said I'd meet him at the finish – only 7 miles to go.

I don't know how I covered that 7 miles, but I did. The last two were on tarmac so I forced myself to run as fast as I could – the sooner the ground was covered the sooner I could stop – and eventually I arrived at St Dogmaels, the end of the coastal path, and the end of the race. Joel met me and led me the last hundred metres to the finish line, and it was done.

100 miles, 26 hours and 18 minutes (somehow I'd made time back on the last section!) and I was second lady and third overall.



Amy

litter Pick 2019



Thank you to all who helped out at the litter pick around the tower. Job well done.



DARWEN DASHERS

RUNNING CLUB



The Beginner's graduation Parkrun at Preston

