

Matt's Round

"I'm going to die, I'm going to die, this is stupid, and I'm going to die". The words came in gasps between lashings of hail and rain as the three head torches ahead of me disappeared into the pea soup that surrounded our decent off Skiddaw. I quickly realised, due to my inadequate head-torch, that I did not have the luxury of seeing both where my feet were landing and which direction I needed to go. As I had little chance of getting myself off the mountain I focused on the ever diminishing specs of light ahead. Several falls, freezing temperatures and a somewhat distressing river crossing left me in no doubt that I was drastically ill prepared and ill equipped to be involved in any Bob Graham Round attempt.

So one year later, how have I found myself standing at the foot of the Moot Hall steps for my very own BGR attempt? Leg 1 of JK's successful round changed over time from a harrowing experience to just another good story of triumph over adversity. Swifty's attempt a few months later demonstrated what can be achieved with determination, and besides, I'd had a year to buy some decent kit, recce the route and almost convince myself that anything is possible.

Leg 1

We set off at 21:00 knowing that a successful round would allow for a few hours in the local establishments

½ pint record. The throughout. I set and a T-Shirt saw Helvellyn). As the the recent floods,



and give me a chance of bettering JK's post BG 3 conditions during the night bordered on perfect off in a thermal that was off within 10 minutes, me comfortably through to sun-rise (over footbridge to Keswick park was washed away in Robin, JK and I were forced into an early detour.

Only a few 100 yards, but it wasn't built into the schedule! We ascended Skiddaw with glorious views, a theme which was to continue over the temperature inversion at the summit had us with clouds. A swift descent and an overenthusiastic to a big gain over schedule to Great Calva and my Robin. JK likened my descending to Julie Andrews Music, but I can't be blamed as dusk falling off



weekend, and our feet in the climb from me led first telling off from in the Sound of Great Calva is one

of my favourite things. A steady climb up Blencathra led to more unplanned time off schedule, but with visibility and good times. A team (Mum, Sue, works. Only a quick to load my pacers important Cherries



ground conditions as they were a comfortable pace meant Lantern in the distance led us off Blencathra to the logistics Caryl, Amanda and Jo) waiting for us opposite the sewage stop was required for a change of watch, a bit of coke and back up with sweets and chocolates...and the ever and Berries.

Leg 2 (a bit dark for pictures)

I enjoyed the march up Clough Head, still full of adrenaline, and true to form we shaved more time off the schedule. My first low came on the ascent of Great Dodd as I began to struggle getting food down, but my plan was little and often so I scoffed some more chocolate covered raisins and waited for them to kick in. Quick peak bagging across the Dodds and the chocolate kicking in did wonders

for my morale, especially the practical decent to Watson Dodd. The weather remained balmy and each peak we reached was eerily still. The summits of Stybarrow Dodd and Raise could not have been more different when compared to my winter recce with Robin and Mark where ski-goggles were required (and we didn't get as far as Whiteside). Off the back of Dollywagon was hard going on the knees, and the heat as we descended was ridiculous given the hour. JK found he could get down quicker doing forward rolls but I stuck with the tried and tested method. One of my least favourite ascents of the whole round came at Fairfield but ascending in the dark and descending in the light re-invigorated me. Never previously a fan of the descent into Dunmail, the sight of the cars and the awaiting team made it a pleasure. Upon arrival I was spoilt and fussed over, and after 3 Weetabix (4.30 is a bit early for brekkie) and a brief spell of nudity to trade from leggings to shorts, I headed off up Steel Fell.

Leg 3

Adam and Bryan joined me and Robin for Leg 3 as JK's knees took a well-deserved rest. We shot up Steel Fell and, true for a while I chocolate covered after Sergeants glorious and the without a soul to



to form, knocked a bit of time off the schedule. struggled off the back of the Weetabix, but some raisins (and more sweets) improved my mood and Man I was feeling good again. The morning was mountains were ours be seen and we picked

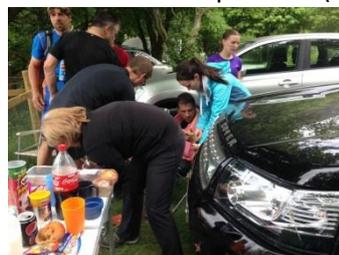
up peaks quickly. As the morning wore on it began to get hotter and perhaps this contributed to my inability to swallow for a time. A low point at the foot of Rossett Pike was slowly overcome with every bite of a



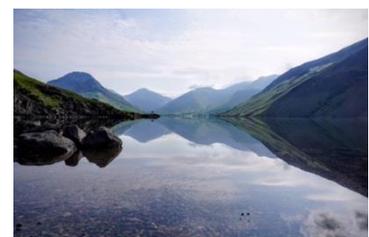
cheese and ham sandwich washed down with cherries and berries. It tasted awful but did the job. A slight miscalculation on Bow Fell led to a brief spell of clambering and a nice change of pace. Then the heat set in. I am sure I took on more than double the water that my pacers did as they went without to make sure I was hydrated. At the end Robin confessed that he contemplated licking the rocks up Lords Rake because he was so thirsty! We saw other people for

the first time on Scafell Pike, then we scrambled up Scafell (difficult but one of my favourite parts of the round) before scree-

both calves on the descent feeling tired and dehydrated. team was amazing. I used up multiple waters, coke, Chicken Chorizo pasta, a change of kit, pack on my neck and had my calves seen to. By the time I left I was right as rain and ready for Leg 4, 1 hr 15 up on schedule.



jumping down to Wasdale. Cramp in saw me hobble into the Carpark But then the support of the logistics 14 of my planned 15 minutes and had and an ice



Leg 4

Robin came off after unbelievable support and navigation, and Bryan, Adam and I were joined by Mark, Swifty, Keith and JK for the march up Yewbarrow. I led for a while until Keith's climbing prowess came to the fore and I fell into step behind him. We overtook another BG attempter on the



edge of her 24 hour schedule (not sure if she made it, but I hope she did). Unfortunately Adam paid for his leg 3 efforts (and perhaps saving himself for his mega Wasdale Tri) bailed out on the climb up Yewbarrow. Red pike was a bit of a drag but I ate well and had lots of water spread out across the pacers. Mark and I popped across to steeple while



the others waited by the hole in the wall, and then we headed to Pillar (zoom in on the picture of steeple and you will see me and Mark waving). Jon leek, originally down to do leg 3 managed to find the guys as we headed to were high with time on our pace had definitely around the original offers from every direction scramble up Kirkfell and hands are down I'm happy,



Kirk Fell and so joined the pack. Spirits side and amazing views all around. My dropped but each peak was on or schedule plus I had food and drink to keep me feeling good. I loved the the climb up Great Gable. Once my so felt strong on those ascents. Then

all that was left of Leg 4 was the steady down to Honister. I lost some time on Green Gable and Blandreth as I wasn't descending too well but knew the important thing was not to do anything stupid to mess it up now. A nice soft downhill to Honister car park and we had 5 and a half hours to do Leg 5. The logistics team were out in force again as I had a short stay to refuel and rehydrate (and change the socks as I had managed to burn through.) My calves and hip-flexors cramped as I sat, but a bit of physio soon had me sorted.



Leg 5

We left Mark had ahead of picked up Dale



Bryan at Honister after fantastic support on 3 and 4 and to run back to Wasdale to get his car (unfortunately as I was schedule he couldn't get to the bunkhouse on time.) We up my Dad and Amanda and headed Head. What followed was an enjoyable steady march with more

talk than I had managed on the previous legs. We had time for a group picture on each peak (unfortunately Swifty was struggling with cramp in his quads so had to shortcut). The views from the top were spectacular and it was especially nice being able to see practically the whole round. We



descended off Robinson gently but picked up the pace on the way to Newlands. One of the first proper tests for my Dad's Walshes ended in failure, as the sole disintegrated on the descent (a complaint has been made, but as yet, no refund has been offered.) A quick coke at Newland after a decision to leave my fell shoes on, and all that was left was to run the 5 miles back to Keswick. It certainly felt longer than 5 miles, and I am glad I could enjoy it with the guys rather than having to race the clock. Having said that, I was surprised that my legs felt fresh enough to stride out on occasion. A slight headwind as we cut across the fields to Keswick highlighted just how kind the weather had been to me



on the fells. I am ashamed that I sprinted off from some of my pacers in the final few hundred metres but I hope they will forgive me as the excitement got the better of me. I completed my final ascent of the day (as I took a bottom bunk) and climbed the Moot Hall steps with the team watching on, comfortably within schedule and massively within expectations.



Acknowledgements

I am extremely aware that without the help of every person that came to support me on my attempt I would not have been able to complete (or contemplate) it.

Mum and Sue

You both dove head-first into the unknown with unbelievable passion and commitment. I know that neither of you slept during the attempt and you invested time and money weeks and months before it. Your support was invaluable and it meant so much to know you were there at the end of each leg.

Caryl

You have been fantastic over the last 9 months (and previously) and have been so understanding about me disappearing to do long runs each weekend and about my ever diminishing number of toenails. During the weekend you drove for 13 hours to come up and go back, you gave up your time when you didn't really have time to give. I will never forget it. On the run down off every leg I looked forward to seeing your lovely face.

Dad

My original inspiration to run. You smashed it. Thank you for all your help in getting and keeping me fit and healthy. Especially as ramping up the miles has ramped up my physio time. It looked like you did Leg 5 at a canter. It meant the world to run in with you, and Leg 5 was honestly a pleasure (even the road.) Also, the ice pack at the end of leg 3 was a life saver.

Robin

My inspiration to run further. Your navigation and support on and before the Bob was unbelievable. As JK rightly said, 'having him in front of you is like being wrapped in a security blanket.' You inspired me to run in the mountains in the first place and facilitated the completion of something I would have never thought possible. Here's to the next one.

Amanda

You somehow managed to juggle logistics through the night with running a leg whilst being pregnant. Your experience and calmness throughout was amazing, and I know that your help was so greatly appreciated by Mum and Sue.

Jo (and Rog)

Your help was unexpected, but massively appreciated. The extra hand/car made logistics so much easier and the bunkhouse really got me out of a fix and was ideal.

Pacers

I cannot stress enough how amazing the running support was, from lugging my gear around, going without for the sake of my round, navigating, words of wisdom/support and capturing it all on camera. I am extremely lucky to have fallen in with such a distinguished bunch of runners. I now officially owe you all one.

Boo and Bella

Thanks for coming!

My round is undoubtedly one of the best weekends of my life so thank you for making it happen.

Soppiness over.

P.s. I only managed 2 pints so JK's record stands...

Cheers

Matt

