

The Heartlink Coast to Coast Challenge

When a close friend of mine received the very unfortunate news that her young son Jamie had been diagnosed with a 'hole in the heart', I wanted to do something to help. As I've been taking part in long distance running races for some years now, it seemed appropriate to have a go at an endurance run, my friend suggested that I should raise money for Heart Link, based at Leicester's Glenfield Hospital, they are a charity who take care of young children during their stay at Glenfield whilst receiving life-saving operations.

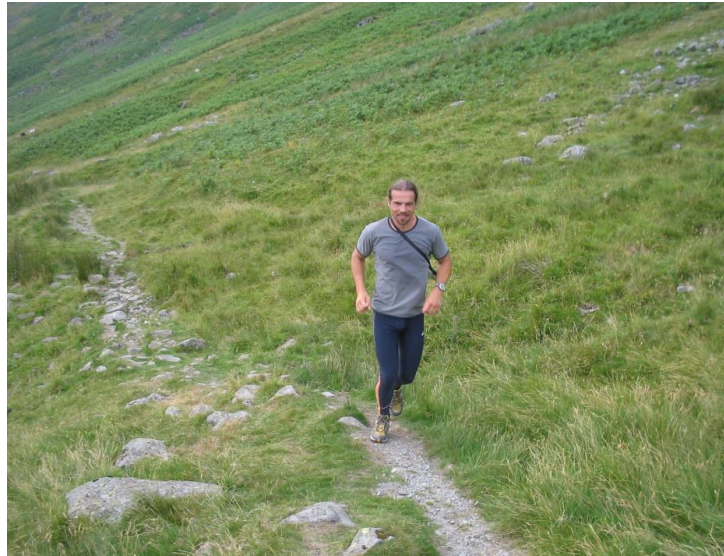
With a couple of good finishes in the Grand Union Canal 145 Mile Race under my belt I wanted to push myself a bit further and really test my physical and mental resolve. At 192 miles the Wainwright Coast to Coast Route from St Bees Head in Cumbria to Robin Hoods Bay in North Yorkshire was the right sort of distance, but in addition to the mileage there is the added challenge of navigating across some of England's biggest fells that stretch across the Lake District into the North Yorkshire Dales followed by a tough moorland finish through the North Yorkshire Moors and many of the hours of running would be spent either in darkness or under the mid-July sunshine.

Any event of this nature is going to depend upon the abilities of a support team to keep the runner comfortable and on the right track, therefore I was delighted when five team mates and seasoned fell-runners Allan Pollock, Dave Thompson, Malcolm Marchant, Tom Ottewell and John Thornhill from the Rolls-Royce Harriers stepped forward to help. Rolls-Royce also kindly provided transportation and High-5 donated enough sports nutrition for the duration of the run. The plan was to finish the event in 60 hours, to achieve this; the route was broken down into a series of individual legs and for each leg we estimated how long it would take to complete. A support runner would carry enough food and drink for that duration, take care of the navigation and carry extra clothing and any other essential that it was felt was needed.



Setting off from St Bees Head at the break of dawn on Saturday 22 July, I found it a big relief that the technicalities of keeping me fuelled and running in the right direction was in the safe hands of my team mates, therefore I could

focus on ensuring I was comfortable, as the slightest ache or pain can develop into a serious concern over such a big distance. The route followed the coast North for the first few miles before swinging East heading towards some enormous hills and the heart of the Lake District, the strong early morning pace was beginning to be hampered by the heat of the mid-day sun, coming off each fell we would arrive at the next village along the route and be forced to pass some very tempting beer gardens!



The team did an excellent job of keeping me going; the support vehicle always seemed parked in the perfect spot, just where you need it! With each leg completed, a small snack was had before changing support runner, restocking the fuel supplies and on our way again. We continued to make good progress it was good to get Kidsty Pike (the highest point of the route) behind us as we pressed on and arrived at Shap adjacent to the M6 by nightfall and a few hours up on our schedule, I was mightily relieved to see off all of the major Lakeland fells in the daylight!



Due to difficulty in route finding, we found it necessary to walk a lot of the first night stage; my feet were becoming badly blistered with no relief despite

changing shoes and socks. Fortunately crossing into the Yorkshire Dales, with less extreme gradients to contend with, we could pick up the pace again, I was amazed that after a prolonged slow section I was able to run at a relatively good speed, but also I found that running had a positive benefit for my poor feet! We arrived at the top of a hill called Nine Standards Rigg at the half way stage which was so high we could see the PowerStation at Ravensglass (West Coast) and the docks at Teeside (East Coast), we kept going despite the onset of another bout of painful blisters at Richmond and gradually clawed back the time lost during the night phase and arrived at the North Yorkshire Moors for nightfall, ahead of schedule once again.



The second night was by far the most difficult phase of the run for the team and especially myself, where I was so tired that everything no matter how small seemed like an effort, but strangely the blisters seemed to hurt less, maybe I was too tired to care or my pain sensors had switched off? Fortunately for me the mission brief at this stage was very simple; follow the guys in front, eat and drink whatever they give you. Luckily for me the guys always remained high-spirited and this kept me going, I was very relieved that we emerged from the darkness still ahead of schedule.

The biggest threat on the last day was from the heat, with temperatures hovering around 30 degrees C, normally I wouldn't entertain running in such conditions but here we had no choice. My team-mates were passing me an alternating supply of High-5 energy drink and water on a minute-by-minute basis; we kept the pace going and finally managing a team sprint finish we arrived in Robin Hoods Bay mid afternoon on Monday, over 2 hours ahead of schedule and the forth fastest recorded crossing of the route on foot! The feeling of water filling my shoes as I ran down the Quayside into the sea and the sharing of a bottle of champagne with the Rolls-Royce Harriers at the waters edge are memories that will stay with me for a long-time! All of this fuss generated quite a bit of interest from the tourists passing us at the Bay Hotel near the waters edge, it was quite amusing to see their looks of disbelief when we told them what we had been up to over the past couple of days!



A big thanks goes out to Rolls-Royce and High-5 for supporting the event and to all the individuals who have sponsored me and therefore helped me achieve the other objective of raising over £1500 for Heart-Link.

Jonathan Kinder