Donegal Quadrathon Day 4 – the Muff Marathon (yes, really)

Sit rep

Body – a bit more creaky and very chafed under the arms after wearing a jacket yesterday and forgetting to apply BodyGlide. Much taping required.

Weather – wind bending the trees over and rain lashing against the windows.

Clothing – everything, as per yesterday, including freshly washed 100 marathon club Buff.

The day.

Drove to Redcastle where this whole adventure started, for the 7:45 bus to take us back to Buncrana, where we finished the previous day. Huddled inside the building, we watched the rain slanting down as we waited for our 9am start. On the bus there, we saw the 07:45 starters, the walkers and slower runners and envied the fact that they were already out getting the miles in.

By our start, the rain had stopped and we just had the wind to contend with as we made our way south along the coast before heading inland for a bit around 5 miles. The rain did come and go, and when it came, it was driving and unpleasant, but as the course for the day was mostly south then west, it was generally behind us, or at worst, over the shoulder.

I’d swear we had hail at about six miles though.

It was to be a fairly uneventful day, with no steep things, which gave us a chance to concentrate on what we were doing and what we had already done.

There were some very experienced runners, both of ultras and multi day events, but also a lot who had never even done a back to back, so this really was very much new territory for many.

After about 16 miles, we approached a sign saying “welcome to Muff”, which was very nice.

All to soon, Muff was left behind as we turned onto the coast road for the last nine miles back to where we started.

I was now familiar with this road, having driven up it some days earlier, and been driven down it a few hours previously, and so had a good idea of landmarks along the way.

As on each day, the marshals would stop their vehicles at the side of the road to hand out bottles of water and fill up runners own. Occasionally they would have a biscuit or banana too.

They were unfailingly cheerful and supportive in a way which seems naturally irish and a great boost to flagging spirits.

Not that mine were flagging, as I could almost smell the finish.

Looking at my mile splits, I seem to have got faster in pretty much each of the last ten miles, apart from drink stops, and certainly passed a good few runners, which always feels good.

The 26 mile marker was in the grounds of the hotel, a rather swish affair with a golf course.

It was downhill to the end, so I was able to practice my aeroplane impersonations.

It was 26.5 by my Garmin and my last half mile was at 7:40 pace!

There was quite a bit of emotion at the end, on receiving the fourth medal that linked with the other three to form a sort of cross. I even joined in, a bit!

Then it was off to get official time slip and the long sleeved T shirt. A nicely designed affair and in North East Marathon Club colours. What more could you want?

Today’s time

First Half - 2:09:16

Second Half – 2:05:33

Total Time – 4:14:49

Position 19th out of 58 on the day

Overall position was 20th out of 49 who completed all four days.

In summary, this was a wonderful, low key event. Very much in keeping with our own club philosophy.

It was an enormous challenge to run four marathons in four days, and this was made much more achievable through a combination of great camaraderie amongst the runners, spectacular courses, excellent organisation and very supportive marshalling.

Go on, you know you want to!

Ian Richardson

19 August 2014