

Dundee Marathon July 20th 2014

This is a lovely low-key event that nicely fills a gap in late July when there aren't too many marathons on in the UK. It started three years ago now, tacked on to the back of an established half marathon on the same day. I've done all three of them and am pleased to say, that after initial teething problems, the organisers have now succeeded in getting everything spot-on.

After five weeks in the heat of Spain, where running long distance is out of the question, I was looking for somewhere to have time on my feet – and where better than by using an established marathon event. It's an easy travel up the coast by train from Alnmouth to Dundee and at £29.50 to enter, it doesn't exactly cost an arm and a leg.

The marathon course follows the Green Chain multi-use path in a giant circle around the perimeter of Dundee. I've already described the route in previous reports so won't repeat the details here. Suffice to say that it leaves Camperdown Park in the north-west of the city, in tandem with a simultaneous half marathon event, at 9.30am on the Sunday morning. The route encompasses the full spectrum of trail running from muddy trails, pavements, footpaths and cycle-ways, with the Half finishing on the banks of the Tay at Broughty Ferry, while the Full completes the circuit along the river banks before climbing back up to the finish in the Park. Almost 850 pre-entered for the Half at £15 per head while about 200 of us settled for the Full.

It's by no means an easy course with over almost 1,000 feet of ascent on the way around. The first two miles is entirely uphill through muddy woods; that with the high 94% humidity-level felt like the equivalent of running through an Equatorial Rain Forest on the day. The final three to four miles uphill from the Tay to the Park is an equally challenging part of the course.

After Saturday's thunderstorms, Sunday was hot and humid – perhaps more humid than any UK marathon I've run previously. Vest and shorts were thoroughly soaked through after a few miles and after about 10 miles I was beginning to wish I hadn't bothered. At this stage some of those I was running with were talking about stopping with the half-marathoners at Broughty Ferry and taking one of the buses provided back to the Start. That wouldn't have been any use to me. My train wasn't until 4.30pm and what was I going to do until then? I decide to press on in the humidity hoping that there might be some sort of breeze along the nine miles of cycle path beside the Tay. There was, but it didn't make too much difference to how hot we were feeling.

Having been medically advised to avoid dehydration at all costs, the sensible thing to do seemed to be to simply enjoy the views of the river and the bridges by fast-walking the final miles to the finish. At least this way I got to have the time on my feet that I wanted – (over five hours of it; but who's counting!)

The ambulance services seemed to have their hands full with heat-induced emergencies on the day. Only 134 of us completed the Full while 624 managed the Half. This was no fault of the organisers who provided copious amounts of liquid throughout a very well-marshalled course. A nice touch at the end was Race Organiser, Nicholas Kydd, handing out surplus left-over gels and energy bars. We even got our own separate medal from the half marathoners this year.

Jim Manford
July 21st 2014