

Highland Fling 2017 Report

As usual thoughts of the race were often in my mind in the days preceding.

Dag Hammarskjöld is one of my Swedish heroes. He was one of the first UN sect General and his diary journal 'Markings' is a powerful testimony of his faith. Here is a quote which I find apt for the occasion.

"The way, You shall follow it. Success, You shall forget it. The cup, You shall empty it. The pain, You shall conceal it. The answer, You shall learn it. The end, You shall endure it."

People often ask why do you do it. For me it is more than just a sporting challenge. The marshalling of physical and psychological resources involves spiritual preparation and the whole process becoming a pilgrimage as much as anything.

I had hopes of a good result as my training had been different. Last year had been very tough where I got nutrition wrong and experienced a fatigue that meant I got in just 16 mins. before being timed out but that's another story.

Elisabeth faithfully obliged to take me to the start at Milngavie for the 6am start. It was good to meet my cousin Mary and her husband Tom, both of whom were also doing it. The Fling has now become a major event with about 750 solo runners and 24 countries represented so the start is a much busier place than when I first did it. There is also a 4 person relay race running at same time.

And so it was off on this my seventh Fling. I placed myself at the back end of the 10-12 hour people.

This year I got to the 65 km mark at Bein Glas only a few mins. behind my target time for a 12 hour finish. I had very little nausea and found the Tailwind drink was doing it's work. I could feel approaching cramp but managed to keep it at bay and did not have the bad attacks I've had before. So departing Bein Glas I was feeling good as the first 9 hours had gone to plan. I got in tow with a chap Graham and discussed the pace we needed to make 12 hours. Soon realised that it was unrealistic for me. I now realise I need about 3.5 hours to cover that last 20km. I was not overly disappointed however as I still thought a personal best (PB) would be possible and contented myself with that.

Elisabeth met me 2.5km from the end and urged me to get a move on if it was to be a PB. I duly complied and made it to the famous and hugely long red carpet with a sudden surge of energy to make it in 12:35:12. A mere 1 min 27 secs ahead of my previous best of 3 years. So a very modest PB but a PB nevertheless! A great day, superbly well organised with an enormous army of 240 race volunteers marshalling and

helping doing the most mundane of duties with so much cheerfulness and efficiency. Freely giving their time and money so the rest of us can enjoy the day.

Grateful as ever for Elisabeth being there once again at the beginning and end. As she says they are long days of waiting punctuated with short periods of excitement.

Many congratulations to Mary and Tom who are in a different class and ran superb races. Very proud of Mary who won the Female 50+ category in 10:02 and Tom did a fantastic sub 9 hour time.

Training Notes

- Should have used my HOKAs. I need the cushioning after 40 or so miles. I used Inov8s as I had had a bad fall in the HOKAs beg. of year in wet, rocky trail and felt I needed the grip. However the pain in the sole of the feet experienced in the Inov8s in the latter stages meant for a much slower cadence than I felt I was capable of. This is written several days after the event and I still have some pain when walking so think I may have a sprain.
- Was persuaded at race registration day before to get a different race vest. It probably will be an improvement over time but an 85km race is not the right time to try something for first time. Experienced probably unnecessary pain and chafing which could probably be eliminated had I experimented previously with adjusting straps etc. Elementary not to use kit first time in a race so it was just stupidity on my part.
- I should sip the Tailwind more regularly rather than gulping a lot down less frequently. I suspect frequent small sips gives a more steady intake of energy and less likely to be nauseated. In that respect having the new race pack makes it easier to do this.
- I was measuring my HR but more for observation rather than deliberately targeting a set HR. My average for the run was 141 BPM which I was encouraged by.

Allan Grant

Start

Going over Conic hill before descent to Balmaha.

Red carpet finish

