

2019 HIGHLAND FLING – A. GRANT

This was my 9th time doing this wonderful race and my feeling is I need not repeat a linear description of moving through places but rather give a shorter description of impressions throughout the day. You have probably heard enough in the past from me of the aches, pains, doubts and various other struggles so will try to go light on them!



That pre-race nervous look



We're off!

As with previous preparations I was ruminating over what food to put in the dropbags and what gear to wear. Dropbags are bags where you put in food / drink you think you will need as you pass through various checkpoints. These are transported for you to the location. I was a bit blasé as am nearly always nauseated 6-7 hours into race and have little appetite no

matter what I take. One thing I have learnt, I usually take at least 3 times as much as I eat so was determined to go light as far as food was concerned. At least the Tailwind drink I would be taking had calories though from experience I only ever could ingest water or coke in the latter stages.

The weather was to be showery but did not predict it to be too wet so I opted for my light rain jacket instead of the heavier but much more waterproof shell jacket. A bad decision as it worked out.

Mental preparation was to anticipate what I would go through. It seems really weird but I knew there would be quad pains and that fatigue would set in. I also knew the route well and how I would feel at each stage. It is as if your body and mind independent of yourself remembers what it has been like previously! I usually suffer from bouts of cramp and for the past few ultras have started to take a small bottle of pickled gherkin juice. Whether it is just in the mind or not it is the only thing that has worked for me in stopping onset of cramps and greatly reduces the longevity of attacks.



Top of Conic hill

As usual Elisabeth kindly took me along to Milngavie train station for the 6am race start from the end of the platform. She would have a busy day with an art exhibition she was displaying at. Her plan was to drop me off, go back to bed for a few

hours and then after the day's exhibition motor up to Tyndrum to see me coming in the, hopefully, early evening.

I remain amazed at the wonderful atmosphere that Johnny 'Fling', the Race Director, and his team create. Over 200 volunteers who always seem to be super encouraging and helpful all along the route in all weathers. Many give up their time and money to serve in this way. Quite humbling



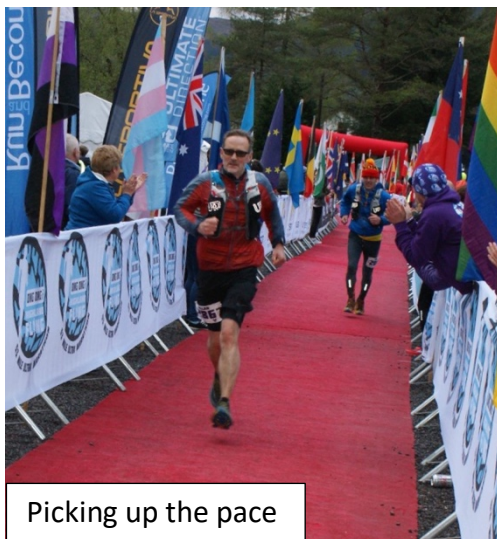
Coming into Balmaha

for us runners and very grateful that they make it happen. It is also encouraging to have several professional and amateur photographers along the way who freely share their pics. Thank you.

Great to have nice chat with some fellow participants along the way including an Englishman, 2 Norwegians and an Italian. The latter developed bad knee pain at north end of Loch Lomond which only enabled him to fast walk. He had no painkillers so gave him some paracetamol. Was good to know he made it in the end.

It rained steadily till the late afternoon. No longer was I trying for a personal best (PB) but was determined to enjoy the day. With a little determination I would make it to the end well before the final cut off. Removing the mental pressure of competing against your previous performances liberated me to enjoy the moments more. There are some wonderful expanses of bluebells along Loch Lomond at this time of year. The light rain jacket had not afforded much protection and my torso was getting very chilled north of Inversnaid (55km). I was carrying a warm base layer so put that on. Easier said than done in the pouring rain trying to put on an extremely tight-fitting base layer when hands were frozen and body stiffening. Probably lost 8 minutes doing that but it was the right thing to do. Come the late afternoon there was a little warmth from the sun which was a blessing. Arriving at Bein Glas (65km) it was great to be met by kindly volunteers.

On the steep climb just up to the woods after Bogle Glen 2 ladies were playing accordions which was a nice encouragement entering the final 10 km. At about 500m before the end Elisabeth as agreed was there to greet me along with a piper. Then it was on to what must be the world's longest red carpet. My shuffling by that point broke into a proper run which was further encouraged by someone shouting 'watch your back'. Someone was behind me! All day I had not minded people passing but definitely not on the final 200m. It was to be a sprint. Where did that energy come from!



Picking up the pace

Time: 13:52:43

SI-Card Number: 8627206

Start Times:

Punching: Sat 06:08:48 [used]

Mini Mass: Sat 06:08:32 (Wave 3)

Mass: Sat 06:00:00

Control	Leg	Elapsed
S Start - Milngavie	00:00:00	00:00:00
1 CP1 - Beechtree	01:15:33	01:15:33
2 CP2 - Drymen	00:54:53	02:10:26
3 CP3 - Balmaha	01:33:56	03:44:22
4 CP4 - Rowardennan	02:03:35	05:47:57
5 CP5 - Inversnaid	01:56:45	07:44:42
6 CP6 - Beinglas	02:25:04	10:09:46
7 CP7 - Bogle Glen	01:52:30	12:02:16
8 Pre-Finish	01:50:09	13:52:25
F Finish - Tyndrum	00:00:18	13:52:43

Time: 13 hrs 52 mins 43 secs. 4th in my age group (MV60) for the second year running. Little did I know but the guy chasing me on the red carpet was 5th! Cannot explain why I was over an hour slower than last year. Not complaining though as it was so satisfying to tuck into the baked potato, homemade soup, beer, tea and other goodies at the end. A great day out and blessed for it.

Thank you for having a read.

Allan Grant

1st May 2019

