

We arrived around 10am so had plenty of time to put the tent up and get sorted. There was an area of grass around the outside of the track where you could park or pitch tents, some people had camper vans! I had no intension of sleeping, the tent was for Phil to shelter in and to keep my spare kit and food dry.

My first and only other 24 hour race was Basel in May. I completed 100 miles in 2 hours then stopped. This time my dream goal was 185km which I thought on a good day was do-able. My more realistic goal was to get 100 miles quicker than last time and then keep moving for the rest of the time!

There were 45 starters at 12noon. Every hour the leader board was updated with everyone's mileage which was handy as I find my garmin goes a bit crazy on the track it also provided entertainment looking at everyone else's mileage and how your position changed. I was not racing anyone, just myself but it was still nice to see my position increase throughout the race. The mileage was just in whole numbers so after the first hour when the leaderboard showed 6 miles it could have been 6.0 or 6.9 -I knew it was nearer 7 than 6 as by that stage the garmin hasn't had enough time to get too far out. Nearer the end when the extra bits over the mile were vital to know I asked and was given exact distances.

About an hour into the race they started serving lunch - soup and sandwiches. I got Phil to get me some peanut butter and salad sandwiches as it was too hot for soup. Time ticked by quite quickly, I ran with people on and off. Most people were using some form of run/walk strategy. For the first 4 hours I had a 5 min walk every hour where I took on food, after that I walked 5 mins approx every 40 mins for quite a while.

After 4 hours my distance on the leader board was 25 miles although I knew it was closer to 26miles. I had time targets to hit which started at 4 hours, thereafter I had a target for every 2 hour block. 25 miles was the goal for 4 hours. In August I did a 12 hour race 'Hell on the Humber' which I ran untapered and which was deceptively hilly. I didn't all out race that but worked fairly hard. I figured that the times I hit during that would be about right for the track race as the taper and flat track would mean I should get to the same distances but with it feeling a lot easier.

Around 7pm dinner was served - rice and curry - I ate this walking round the track, the curry was a bit hot really but nice. Pudding was a lovely fruit flan with custard which I had on my next walk then had seconds on my following walk. Had there been any left later I would have quite happily had 3rds as it was really yummy and really hit the spot.

After 8 hours I was 3.5miles ahead according to garmin distance so probably 2-2.5 miles official. I was still feeling good, slowing a little but not drastically. Phil said he was going back to the hotel at 10.30pm so after my 9pm garmin reading (he was writing my distance down every hour as well as my food and drink!)I got him to help me hook up my garmin charger which I wore whilst running. It was just about fully charged by the time he had to go so he was able to help me take it off and put it in my box.

Got to 100km in 10.28 (official) which was a bit faster than planned and in 12 hours had done almost 70 miles (official) so was 3 miles ahead. Part of me was pleased to be ahead of schedule but another part was concerned I had gone too fast and would pay for it later - my 100km split was only 40mins slower than when I raced 100km and was pretty much spent at the end!

At some stage after 12 hours my pace started to drop off more noticeably; I was not doing as well at eating and drinking and when my walk break was over it became more of an effort to start running again. As I was well ahead I decided to have 2 lap walks but still run for around 40 mins; my bladder was unable to synchronise itself with my walk breaks so often I had my walk early! I thought that the longer walk would mean that my fade in pace would be reduced. I remembered back to Basel where I was 'running' at 13mm. The longer I could delay that the better and if walking for 2 laps helped me run at a decent pace for longer that would be good. I also remembered back to my 100km where my pace started dropping off so I started to have walk breaks. After a few walk breaks my pace picked up again.

As well as wearing my garmin I also had a stopwatch with a lap counter. I didn't want to fall into the trap of thinking I was ahead so could slack off so what I did was for each 2 hour block work out how many miles I had to do, divide by 2 to give me what I needed to do in an hour then work out how many laps rounding it up. This gave me a focus for each hour and prevented me from being complacent due to being ahead and would hopefully mean I would stay at least the same distance ahead or maybe gain a lap each hour.

Had a shoe change after 15 hours - that was my first sit down, it was nice! Made a bit of a mistake there as the ones I changed into (which was my cushioned ones; had started in lightweights) were smaller so when I put them on they felt really tight and uncomfortable.

By the early hours I was struggling to get food down. This happened last time. I knew I needed to eat but even eating half a banana was a real effort and made me feel sick. This gave me an excuse to walk a bit longer - often 3 laps whilst the food settled! The service at the aid station was really good. I would ask for a hot chocolate and the next lap they would have one for me! I had quite a few as it was the only way I could stomach calories and I knew I needed them. I tried to take something solid each time I had a walk but even getting down a coconut mushroom was a struggle. It took me 3 laps (15 mins) to get down an apple!

At around 5am I was offered some porridge with fruit. Not long before Jon had said he really wanted to have a no2! I hadn't had one and thought of all that food inside me! I knew that oats are not good for me when running so took some - had the fruit and about 4 spoons of the porridge then the next lap I was ready for my No2! That felt better to be cleared out!

Got to 100miles in 18.33 (official split) around an hour and a half ahead of schedule. I worked out that I could probably walk to the end and still hit my target but I wasn't going to do that whilst I was still able to run. My toilet stops were very frequent, I was losing a couple of minutes each time so I couldn't relax just yet! I continued to work out the laps I needed per hour and focus on that.

At around 105 miles I was totally spent, I had nothing left and was feeling really emotional. Phil was at the hotel, I wanted him back, I couldn't even phone him as he has messed up with his new sim card, I wasn't sure what time he was coming back as there had been a slight deviation from the original plan and car parking! I think lack of food and general tiredness were to blame as well as now being in the position where I knew I could walk to the end and hit my target! A similar thing happened in Basel where I had a 100 mile target, at 90 miles when I knew I could walk it to the end I got emotional and gave up in my mind. I didn't walk to the end at Basel but I did keep stopping and sitting down. For both these times I had set myself a target

which I felt was reasonably challenging so part of the emotion was that I was actually going to achieve that ambitious target.

At 8am it was time to change direction (we changed every 4 hours). The RD was standing by the cone we went round and saw me in a bit of a state so walked a lap with me trying to encourage me and telling me how well I was doing. All I wanted was for Phil to come back and to have a hug. I think he arrived about 8.30am. He wasn't aware of my lack of food so wasn't trying to persuade me to eat like he would have done had he known. Shortly after he arrived I had a brainwave, I realised I hadn't been having much caffeine - I had some Dr Pepper before he left in the evening and several cups of hot choc but that was it. I took a pro plus and had some Ibu (I know I shouldn't and nothing was really hurting but sometimes it takes away the general achiness!)

I was still walking when I saw someone with some jam on toast. I had been having the odd jelly baby and coconut mushroom here and there as that was all I could get down but all of a sudden I really wanted that toast!! I asked at the aid station for some peanut butter and jam toast which was ready next lap. That was the nicest toast I have had in ages.

I had been leading lady since about 4 hours in. The lady in 2nd had been 4 miles behind me for some time before closing in on me. She now had a second wind and was going at a really good pace - she got to within 400m of me. I really didn't care though, the main thing was hitting my mileage target, I wasn't going to race anyone until the last half hour if I needed to and if I had anything left!!

I was now getting quite cold, I already had a jumper and my OMM jacket on! I spent the next couple of laps persuading myself to run again! I hadn't even entertained the idea of running since I had started my long walk but I think the combination of being cold, the toast, caffeine and Ibu meant I felt I could give it a go. There was now only about 2.5 hours to go so it was not too long to deal with.

Running was really not that bad and when I looked at the pace on my garmin I was going a bit faster than before I stopped which was pleasing. Since I was more or less at my target there was no need to push myself, I was more using the running to keep warm so ran about 3-4 laps and walked one pretty much to the end. With 2 hours to go I had 112 miles on the board. Phil said I had 120 in me. I thought that maybe if I was on 112.9 I could just do it but I wasn't going to think about that just yet. With an hour to go I was on 116miles. Again Phil said I could do 120 miles. I really didn't want to let him down as he had been supporting me and it was raining now so not much fun for supporters. I thought that if I was on 116.0 it would be a struggle but not out the question. I asked for an exact distance which I got the next lap. I worked out that 120 was indeed possible.

I got my lap counter to tell me when I was there and then decided to walk to the end as there was only 20mins to go. My excuse was that I had just had a few twinges in my knee and since I had taken Ibu I was worried that might be hiding something so thought it best to walk! Then for some reason with a few minutes to go I got the urge to run again, I wanted to be able to say I was running at the end! I'm glad I did as it meant I got 195.03km which was so much better than 194.8km

I was very pleased to finish with 121 miles, 1st lady and 6th overall.

Helen James