

## London Marathon 2011 by Jon Pitts

Once again I'm here on Blackheath surrounded by thousands of nutters ready to put themselves through 26.2 miles of London's roads in the Virgin London Marathon.

This year I'm at the "Red Start" which is the holding pen for the fast boys and girls. I look around and I don't see any Italian Elvis's or men dressed as Ballet dancers. I just see seriously fit looking blokes that weigh about 5 stone and look like they have never smelt a pint of beer. If they come close enough to me they will get the aroma of last night's crawl around Covent Garden and the long awaited intro to the smell of second hand hops.

At this point I must say that all endurance coaches say don't do anything out of the ordinary the day or night before a big run. So what the hell it was Saturday night and this is only a training run for an Ultra I'm doing at the end of May. I want to enjoy my weekend, the first break I've had since August of last year.

Back to reality and I'm now at the start. I shake hands with the guy next to me, who looks like a young Brendon Foster and was looking to finish in 2.45. The starting gun sounds and we're off.

My race plan is to be very careful at the start and try not to get dragged along with the speed merchants. I want to do a good time but I don't want to kill myself in the process. I don't need a good for age time of sub 3.15. I already have that in the bag from my run at Nottm last year, which guaranteed me an entry for London 2012.

Regardless of my plan I speed thro my first three miles in just over twenty minutes and realise I need to hold back. The temperature is rising fast and this is my first warm weather run this year. I am more used to the sub zero winter training runs I've been doing for the past four months. I know it is hot because I can smell the tarmac at the drinks station, where the water has hit the hot tarmac and released the smell of bitumen you get in the summer.

I plod on

The miles tick by and I'm not feeling that comfy there are too many runners and it is impossible to get into a good rhythm hot and I desperately need the loo. Still I soldier on and pass the halfway in 1.31.59.

At this point I usually see the lead men on the other side of the road 'sprinting' through mile twenty but I'm a lot quicker reaching this point this year and I am denied that pleasure. Instead I see a very tired looking Liz Yelling being chased down by an Australian and whom I thought was Michael Weir.

I plod on

This Marathon lark can be a bit tedious

I am now approaching mile twenty and I feel second wind coming on as I seem to be passing runners in their hundreds. Sadly I passed Brendon at the side of the road receiving medical treatment from the marathon angels that are St Johns. I think he was Ok but soon forgot about him as the casualties at the side of the road where becoming more and more frequent.

I plod on

22 miles a clumsy runners gets in my way I curse and take my tired legs around him. I look up and see none other than the one and only Stuart Cunningham from N Derby's Running. Once again I have the dilemma of giving local opposition some support [like last year] but thought better of it and showed him the back of an Ilkeston vest and a clean pair of heels.

It felt sweet.

I plod on.

I know the finish is now close as I can see Westminster Clock. My legs are tired but I still feel strong. I up my pace and finish with a burst of power down the Mall with my arms raised for the cameras in a staggering time of 3hrs 5mins 11 secs. Tactically a perfectly paced run.

Stuart finished 8 mins behind me and showed how wrong it is to set off too fast, he went thro half way in a staggering 1.22 and burnt himself out.

Jonathan