

**Saturday 24th April 2010**  
**53miles from Milngavie to Tyndrum**



This was my fourth running of this great race and was easily the hardest! It wasn't a disaster but just not as good as I'd hoped and planned for. Anyway here is what happened ....

**Pre-race at home**

This year I'd decided to use the drop bags so Caroline, who was marshalling for the event, kindly offered me a lift to Milngavie at 5am. To make it easier she came for a meal and stayed the night. We left on time and arrived at Milngavie at 5.30am.

**Pre-race at Milngavie**

Once I'd registered and made sure my drop bags were in the right cars I got ready, chatted to various friends and made my way to the start. I positioned myself near the front as I would be starting with all the other Male Super Vets, M60 and all the Female runners. Just before the start Debs turned her back to me and said 'This is what'll see!!' How right she was ... but that's to come.

**Section 1 - Milngavie to Drymen (12.13miles)**

I set off in high hopes and feeling good. My preparation since the Hardmoors had been good and I felt if everything went well I should/might be capable of getting under 9hrs 40mins. To do that I felt I need to get to Beinglas in around 7hrs 10mins and be strong enough to push on from there.

So I wanted to start at a steady pace without being silly. I soon settled into a nice rhythm just behind Sharon, Debs and a few others. I reached my first mini mark at 2.16miles at the end of the wood bang on time and was happy with my start.

I caught up with Sharon, Helen Johnstone and a guy called Norman, who had run the Fling and whw last year. We chatted for the next hours or so. Norman's story is similar to mine and as this was his second year I expected him to be improving on his 10hrs 10mins or so from last year. The four of us ran together all the way to Drymen. We were joined by Clare for awhile but she pushed on after a while. Another Super Vet went past us very strongly a mile or two before Drymen so we let him go!

Sharon and Helen were both going well and I felt fine. We arrived at Drymen just under 1hr 45mins, a couple of minutes ahead of schedule. Caroline was waiting for us with the chip pad. This year we were using the chip system and it was excellent. At each of the checkpoints you put your chip over the pad held out for you, it beeped and you were away.

*Leg time: 1hr 44mins 57secs (8.40pace)*

**Section 2 - Drymen to Balmaha**

The four of us went straight through and continued running together for the next mile or two. Norman's wife met him at the car park before the woods so he dropped back for a while but after another mile or so caught up.

Another good section over to Conic Hill. I was right on my schedule and feeling fine. I wore a short sleeved top with an older long sleeved top over it which I planned to ditch at Balmaha. It was perfect running conditions, not too cold and not too hot.

We reached the bridge before the climb up Conic Hill and Norman & I pushed on. I knew that Sharon is always faster on the downhills so decided to get a bit of distance on the uphill so I wouldn't be too far behind at Balmaha.



I climb strongly with Norman right behind me. I wanted to see how quickly I could descend as I feel I'm always losing ground on the descents. The ground seemed quite firm and my footing was good so I pushed it down with Norman following my every step.

On the way down I had a first! I overtook another runner! Clare, who had left us earlier, was finding the downhill difficult. I expected Sharon and Helen to catch up but they didn't so Norman & I arrived first. Just before reaching Balmaha we caught up

with Aileen Scott who normally likes to go off hard.

Murdo, was one of the officials at Balmaha, had my bag ready before I could even shout out my number. Very efficient. I took my bottle of Perpetuum and energy bars and I was away again.

*Leg time: 1hr 11mins 48secs (10.27pace)*

*Overall: 2hrs 56mins 45secs (9.19pace)*

### **Section 3 - Balmaha to Rowardennan (7.84miles)**

As we ran through the car park I chatted briefly to Aileen who was tucking into her fruit salad. I must admit I thought that would be last time I saw Aileen until the end but how wrong I was but that's to come!

After half a mile or so I caught up with the runner with the dog. We'd seen him in the distance for most of the way to Drymen and Balmaha and now got past him.

Norman was still right behind me. I asked a couple of times whether he wanted to go through but he seemed happy with the pace and we ran together. Clare also caught up and joined us. We stayed together for the next few miles but I did feel that I was holding them back a bit and that I was running faster than I wanted so I let Clare past and she was away and then I stopped for a wee and let Norman go.

It was good to be on my own for the first time in the race and I tried to settle into my own pace. I'd brought my camera with the intention of doing one of my video diary's of the day but because we

were together and if I'd slowed down to do I'd been left behind I decided to not bother. So apologies to anyone who was looking forward to watching it!!

At each of the three mini splits on the way to Rowardennan I was a minute or so down on my plan but because I'd been a few minutes ahead at Balmaha I arrived at Rowardennan right on schedule but I suspected that I'd had to work a little too hard to get there.

Phil Tipping, another friend, was one of the marshals at Rowardennan and he and his friend wasted no time in finding my bag, refilling my water and sending me off to Inversnaid.

*Leg time: 1hrs 24mins 46secs (10.49pace)*

*Overall: 4hrs 21mins 52secs (9.46pace)*

#### **Section 4 Rowardennan to Inversnaid (7.24miles)**

I'd seen Norman once or twice in the run towards Rowardennan but he was nowhere to be seen now so I was on my own. I knew Sharon and Helen would be slowly catching but I secretly hoped I wouldn't see them again!

I was just over half way distance wise but knew that this second half was going to be a lot harder. It was from this point onwards that things started to get tough. I worked as hard as I could up the hill and ran a good part of it but I knew I was not running smoothly and it was far harder than I wanted it to be.

I was passing lots of walkers who I said hi to on the way past but I knew I had a long way to go. I'd been eating and drinking regularly and didn't feel that was the issue. It just didn't feel my day and I sensed it was going to be a mental battle as much as anything to keep going and do the best I could.

I hoped that I'd get through this feeling and that somehow I'd feel as though I was running more smoothly. I eventually reached the end of the wide track and on to the single track. My mini split called for 45mins to that point and it had taken almost 48mins.

This was to be repeated for the rest of the run. 2-3mins (if not more) behind my plan. I will do a separate post with lessons learnt from this run and one of them will centre on my mini splits and I felt they didn't help today as I slipped further and further behind my plan.

But I still hadn't been caught by anyone so maybe I wasn't going too badly! About a mile or so before Inversnaid that illusion was shattered when I glanced back and saw Aileen not far behind. I couldn't do much about it so just kept trying to run as best I could and waited for the inevitable!

She didn't catch me for a good while but then suddenly there was Sharon and Helen! With a cheerily greeting that only Sharon can do after almost 6hrs of running they went past skipping away. I decided to get a tow, forget about how tired my legs felt and stay with them into Inversnaid.

Neil Fowler, Kilbarchan club mate, was one of the officials at Invernaid so it was good to see him. Again they very efficiently refilled my water and gave me my drop bag. I had decided to try and keep my stop to the bare minimum and I was in and out in less than a minute.

*Leg time: 1hr 23mins 40secs (11.33pace)*  
*Overall time: 5hrs 46mins 04secs (10.10pace)*

### **Section 5 Inversnaid to Beinglas Farm (6.70miles)**

Sharon was away and the last I saw of her was her hair bobbing away as she disappeared at a rate of knots. I suspected, quite rightly, that I wouldn't see her again until the finish!

One again I was on my own and tried to regroup. I was trying to stay positive but I knew deep down that this was now a battle to the finish. I still had almost 19miles to go and unless I got a sudden boost of energy it was going to be a long 19miles.

I was still running where I could but it wasn't a smooth or fluent action. After 12mins or so Helen caught me and was away. I've met Helen and her partner Mark Leggart a few times, most notably at the Hardmoors 110 last September. Also Helen caught me on the Lairig Mor in the Devil o' the Highlands race last August. As she went past she said she wasn't aiming to catch Sharon as her training hadn't got that well over the winter but she looked as though she was going very well to me!

I wondered when Aileen would catch me but knew I couldn't control anyone else's race. I sensed a runner behind me and turned expecting to see Aileen but I was greeted with the sight of Thomas!! I couldn't believe it. Last year he didn't catch me (he started an hour behind) until after Derrydarroch but here he was a few miles out of Inversnaid.

He said he was 15mins up on last year and feeling good. He asked me how I was and said he felt I looked stiff. I think that was a fair description. I wished him all the best and watched in envy as he took off into the distance. Well done Thomas - another excellent run.

Once again I tried to regroup and stay positive. I wanted to do the best I could from here on in and feeling sorry for myself was not going to help. I stopped worrying about my splits and the fact that I was falling behind my schedule. That didn't matter now. I tried to concentrate on running as much as I could and walking as fast as I could when I had to.

A few minutes after Thomas went zooming past another runner caught me .... Debs. She was running superbly and looked so strong and relaxed. Very kindly she asked whether I needed anything - coke, drugs!! I was really pleased for her as I know she's had some tough runs over the past month or two with all that is involved with moving house and being ill. So I did have the sight of her back after all as predicted but now for long as she too disappeared into the distance. Well done Debs - a superb run. I've got my work out for the whw if I think I can stay ahead of Sharon and Debs!!

By now I was starting to count down. Another 2 miles to Beinglas, then 12miles to Tyndrum split into 4 sections. The end was in sight but it still going to take a good while.

It was good to get up and over the hill at the top of the Loch and then run down into Beinglas. About half a mile or so from the checkpoint I came across Bill Maxwell who was lying by the side of the path suffering with cramp. He looked in pain so I said I'd send someone back to him. A

couple of walkers came towards me a minute or so later so I asked them whether they could give Bill a hand.

When I arrived at the checkpoint I told the marshals and they got busy sorting out getting someone to Bill. I saw him at the end and he did finish but had a tough time with cramp. Geraldine who was one of the officials at Beinglas refilled my water, found my bag, took all my rubbish and sent me on my way.

*Leg time: 1hr 41mins 25secs (15.08pace)*

*Overall time: 7hrs 28mins 10secs (11.00pace)*

### **Section 5 - Beinglas Farm to Tyndrum (12.09miles)**

Aileen Scott arrived just after me and we set off together. Last year Aileen finished in 10hrs 50mins and so was well over 50mins up on last year. She was going really well and was obviously pleased with herself.

We ran together for the next few miles and it was good to have someone to run and chat with and it certainly helped me. Aileen was running stronger than me and after 30mins or so she pushed on and once more I was left on my own.

I got through Derrydarroch almost on time with my split for that 3.21miles but I didn't kid myself that I was back on track. I knew the next section to the big gate before the forest was going to be hard.

Another female runner went past me before Carmyle Cottage and then I climbed up the hill and onto the track up towards the forest. I tried to run as much as I could but it wasn't easy and every little hill I walked.

Over the next 30mins or so I number of runners went past me. The male race started two hours behind me and Craig Stewart who won the race went past looking very strong.

Just before the nasty farm lan, Super Vet runner, went past going well. He encouraged me to keep going and it may come back! I told I'd not given up but it was hard! Just after he went past I was confronted with a herd of cows blocking the route but they did seem quite dozy and didn't bother me as I went past.

I did wonder though how Debs got past them as she hates (and is scared of) cows. I forgot to ask her at the end.

At the gate a couple of Marco's friends were waiting for him and they refilled my water bottle. Thanks guys. They also told me that Richie had dropped out. I thought something must have happened as he hadn't caught me.

I now had 3.64miles to Auchtertyre and then 2.65miles to Tyndrum. At least another 1hr 15mins but possibly more. I walked all the up hills as fast as I could and was able to run the downhills but it was still a struggle.

I was on my own for most of the time through the forest but then one or two started to catch up. Just as I came to the whw signpost that shows the last hill Andy Cole caught me. Andy is running really well at the moment. In the Hardmoors 55 he was 12mins or so behind me and now here he was going past me. I wished him all the best and he said he was going to push in as hard as he could. Well done Andy who went on to win the M60 race in 10hrs 10mins a pb. Eventually I got to the bottom of the hill, crossed the A82 and set off to run the last mile to Auchtertyre. I ran the road to the farm and then walked a bit before running again. Stevie, my friend from Kilbarchan and whw support, was waiting for just before the farm and walked in with me. It was good to see him and he encouraged me to keep going and finish it off.

I now had just 2.65miles to go and the end was definitely in sight. I was running okay considering and even a couple of people went past me they didn't disappear so I tried to keep a similar distance behind.

I ran most of the way with a short walk up the last little hill. I was catching three guys ahead and once we got onto the path along the river I went past them and did a final kick to the end! Just as I came up the hill to the gate by the Train Station I saw Aileen just ahead. She must have slowed down since Auchtertyre.

I decided to push as hard as I could and try and catch her! I went past just after the river and then ran to finish. It was good to see the finishing banner and get over the line. Katrina had been given the job to take everyone's chip time so it was good to see her at the end.

I was pleased to finish and even though I was disappointed with my time it wasn't a disaster and given me plenty to think about. I think part of the issue is I've set the bar quite high for myself over the past couple of years and I'm not going to be able to keep beating it.

*Leg time: 2hrs 45mins 05secs (13.39pace)*

*Overall time: 10hrs 14mins 09secs (11.37pace)*

### **Post race**

I got changed, sent texts to friends with my time and caught up with friends who had finished. I then helped Katrina with the finish giving out medals and taking runners chips.

One of the nice things was a number of people came up and said how much they enjoy reading my blog . So thanks to you all.

We stayed around to see the prize giving and made lots of noise when friends received their prizes.

Congratulations to Julien Pansiot who was the closest guess in my competition! My daughter Jo was gutted to miss it by 3mins!!

So well done to everyone who finished. Thanks to Murdo, Ellen and all the marshals and officials who made the race very special.

Montane Highland Fling	Miles		2010 Actual				
	leg	Overall	Leg			Overall	
Milngavie			Depart	Time	Pace m/mile	Time	Pace m/mile
Drymen	12.13	12.11	arrive depart	1:44:57 0:00	8:39	1:44:57 1:44:57	8:40
Balmaha	6.87	18.98	arrive depart	1:11:48 0:21	10:27	2:56:45 2:57:06	9:19
Rowardennan	7.84	26.82	arrive depart	1:24:46 0:32	10:49	4:21:52 4:22:24	9:46
Inversnaid	7.24	34.06	arrive depart	1:23:40 0:41	11:33	5:46:04 5:46:45	10:10
Beinglas Farm	6.70	40.76	arrive depart	1:41:25 0:57	15:08	7:28:10 7:29:07	11:00
Tyndrum	12.09	52.85	arrive depart	2:45:05	13:39	10:14:12	11:37