

Cateran Trail Ultra Marathon

55miles in a loop from Spittal of Glenshee

Saturday 15th May 2010

After a disappointing Fling three weeks ago I knew that this race was going to be really important to me and I was determined to run it as a good hard training run and not get caught up in times. It was how I felt that was going to be really important and I wanted to enjoy it and finish feeling I had plenty left. I'm glad to say it was mission accomplished!

Pre-Race

Katrina & I left Paisley about 5.40pm and had a pleasant drive to Spittal of Glenshee arriving just after 8pm. A good crowd were already there including Karen, who was organising the race, and George. We were upgraded from the bunkhouse to the main hotel at no extra cost which pleased Katrina no end as she didn't fancy sharing a room!

The hotel staff were superb and went out of their way to make us welcome. Once we'd sorted out our room we joined the rest of the crowd down in the bar and chatted to a number of folk about the race and our plans.

I had a good chat with Richie who looked in good shape. Everyone I spoke to who is also doing the whw was treating the race as a good training run and no-one was planning to push it hard.

I was in bed by 10.30pm and slept okay but once I'd woken at 3ish I couldn't really get back to sleep so was up by 4.15am. The hotel had kindly put on a breakfast at 4.45am. I sat with Jack Brown and his friend Chris Wood, who was supporting him for the race.

Jack had finished just ahead of Neal in the whw race last year and Chris ran 2.25 for the marathon last year ranked 3rd in Scotland! Jack had only decided to enter on Thursday and was planning to run steady. He went on to win the race in a new course record so his idea of steady is very different to mine!!

After breakfast I got myself changed and ready for the off. I met Peter Duggan who had just arrived and had a final chat with Richie who was looking forward to the day.

At 5.45am Karen walked us down the road to the start of the race. After a brief chat about rules and directions we were off.

Section 1 - Spittal of Glenshee to Dalnagair Castle (5.53miles)



Uncharacteristically for me I set off with no splits or time goal. I had deliberately avoided putting any times in place as I wanted to enjoy the route and make sure I ran by how I felt rather than chasing time and pace.

I took my rucksack with waterproof, spare top and hat and gloves. I set off two thirds of the way down the 45 starters and settled into an easy rhythm. I really like these early starts and I was soon running along making sure I didn't push anything.

I had decided one of the best ways to make sure I didn't work too hard was to take lots of photos and video clips of the route which really helped. I'm looking forward to putting them all together in a video diary of the day.

I went past Peter who had his garmin heart rate monitor set to bleep at 120 beats. It was bleeping constantly as he was above that! He was slowing down trying to keep his heart rate down so I left him to it!

I chatted briefly to a few folk including Flip, Rosie, Tommy then caught up with Jane who had run the whw last year. We ran together for a while and chatted about various races and our plans. There seemed to be a line of maybe 12 runners behind us and we stayed this way until the first checkpoint.

I was pleased to see that the route was well marked, though there was one small section when we weren't quite sure if we were on the right path but thankfully we saw one of the many yellow arrows and realised we were right.

We went past Dalnagair castle and then up to the first drop bag where Karen was waiting for us. I hadn't put a bag there as I didn't think I'd need anything after 6 miles.

Leg time: 59mins 43secs (10.48pace)

Section 2 - Dalnagair Castle to Kirton of Glensia (8.91miles)

I was really happy that I'd started easy and the difference running at 10.48 pace rather than 9.45 is quite marked.

Just after the drop bag point there is a long hill up the road so I walked most of it and had something to eat. The group of 10 or so runners who had been behind all went past but once I'd finished my snack and started running again I caught them and headed off.

I caught up with Neil and we ran together for a good while. I'd met Neil at the Fling and it was good to get to know him better. We chatted about all sorts of things over the next couple of hours as we ran steadily along the way.

I was really enjoying the route so far. The views were superb with a good variety of terrain. The weather too was perfect, warm without being too hot. I avoided looking at my watch too much and continued to take lots of photos and soon enough the next drop bag point arrived.

Mark and Sean were there and very efficiently found our bags and sorted us out. Mark commented that he was impressed with my laminated name tag! I had a drink of perpetuem at each drop bag so I stopped long enough to drink that, take the food I'd left and after a couple of minutes was off again.

Leg time: 1hr 27mins 53secs (9.52pace)

Overall time: 2hrs 27mins 36secs (10:13pace for 14.44miles)

Section 3 - Kirton of Glensia to Den of Alyth (11.29miles)

I was with a group of five arriving at the drop bag point but left on my own as Neil had gone straight through and the others had stopped longer.

I set off on the climb out of Glenisha and could see Neil in the distance. After a couple of miles I caught up with him and we again ran together.

I was well into the race by now but keeping to my game plan of running easy. I made sure my breathing was under control and when I felt I was starting to work too hard I eased off. I really did want to get back to my mantra of 'trying to get as far as I could as easily as possible.'

In the Fling three weeks ago I tried a different tactic of pushing harder at the start and I really paid the price later. I was determined to run this race more sensibly.

Neil was working a bit harder than me so when he stopped to replenish his water from a support car I continued on and was on my own again. I could see a runner with white socks not too far ahead so decided to see if I could catch him by Den of Alyth which was about 5 miles away.

Again I didn't push but ran at my pace. I had a phone call from Ian B asking how things were going. It was good to be able to report I was running steady and really enjoying it.

Just after that Peter caught up with me looking very pleased with himself. He said that in the end he'd switched off the heart rate alarm and ran comfortably. I must say he was looking strong and we ran together for the next 3 miles or so into Alyth.

We slowly caught up the runner ahead and came into the checkpoint together where Lee was waiting for us. Once the marshals very quickly found our bags and encouraged us on our way

Leg time: 1hr 54mins 50secs (10:10pace)

Overall time: 4hrs 24mins 27secs (10:17pace for 25.73miles)

Section 4 - Den of Alyth to Blairgowrie (5.40miles)

This part of the route is an extra bit to link it all together so Karen had marked it with arrows which was really good.

Helen J was at the checkpoint. I set off as Peter was sorting out what he wanted from his bag. Helen soon caught me with Bill H which was just as well as I wasn't sure which side of the river to run on. Helen looked at the maps and decided we needed to keep the river on our left.

Peter soon caught up so the four of us ran together to Blairgowrie. I ran a fair bit of the Fling with Helen before she left me for dust after Inversnaid but I was feeling better today and we ran together for the next 10 miles.

We walked up the long hill out of Alyth but Peter was inching to run and once we left the road and got on the train he was away not to be seen again until the end.

I'd chatted to Peter before the race and as we ran it was clear that he was in two minds. He wanted to run it sensibly and finish with plenty in reserve but also realised that a sub 10hr time was possible and he wanted to go for it. The second option won out but I hope he doesn't regret it as he looked pretty sore at the end.

Helen & I enjoyed running together and spent the next couple of hours chatting about all sorts of things including how she met Mark, her job and interest in Active Schools. It all passed the time and soon enough we arrived at Blairgowrie, where Katrina was waiting.

I'd decided to ditch the rucksack as I'd not been needing my waterproof or hat & gloves. I decided to stick with my long sleeved top as it was a bit chilly when the wind blew.

I sat for a few minutes and then set off again on the next leg of the route.

Leg time: 57mins 06secs (10:34pace)

Overall time: 5hrs 23mins 36secs (10:24pace for 31.13miles)

Section 5 - Blairgowrie to Bridge of Cally (6.85miles)

Helen, Bill & I set off together. Bill had run the Fling a few ago but had shot off with Lucy and the front runners and paid the price, dropping out at Rowardennan. He was keen to run more sensibly today. He thanked me for my blog and said it was one of the reasons he started doing ultras so that was nice to hear.



Bill soon dropped off to run at his own pace and Helen and I pushed on. We were both happy with our pace and continued our non-stop chat as we continued to enjoy the route, the day and our run.

I was feeling really pleased because I was still running easy and felt I had loads left. The difference between how I felt after 34mile in the Fling to now was light and day and I now which one I prefer.

I decided my experiment with going off harder was over. For me it's vital I run the first 20miles or more as comfortably as possible if I'm going to enjoy the last third of the race rather than endure it!

As we ran into Bridge of Cally I sensed I was going just a bit stronger than Helen but didn't really want to push on so we ran into the checkpoint together. Just before the checkpoint Katrina and Ian were waiting for us which was a bonus. It was good to see them.

At the checkpoint we were told we were 10th & 11th and that Helen was first lady so that was good to hear. I wasn't really sure what position I was in as it hadn't been a priority but I thought if I could hold on to 10th I'd been pleased with that.

Leg time: 1hr 19mins 16secs (11.34pace)

Overall time: 6hrs 46mins 54secs (10:43pace for 37.98miles)

Section 6 - Bridge of Cally to Kirkmichael (8.06miles)

Helen wanted a bit longer at the checkpoint so I said I was going to get going and thought she may well catch up with me.

So I was now running on my own for the first time for a ages. I took time to think about how I felt. I was still running well. I was tired but happy with my pace and for the first time thought about a finishing time.

I had 8miles to Kirkmichael then 2miles to Enochdhu and 6miles to the end. So 16miles to go. If I could do that in around 3hrs I'd finish in 10.15 so that became my goal. Again I didn't want to put any pressure on and if I was nearer 10.30 no problem.

The route to Kirkmichael followed the river valley and was undulating but I was able to run a fair bit. One section goes over heather type land it was harder to run. I caught up with a lady who was training for the Edinburgh half marathon who was going well.

The section over this was really well marked with posts every 100 yards or so.

The miles ticked by and I dropped down into Kirkmichael. My water was starting to run low and I was ready to see some people and get my drop bag.

I arrived at the checkpoint at Kirkmichael to realise it wasn't the drop bag that was a further two miles away. Ah well two miles isn't too far!

Leg time: 1hr 32mins 23secs (11:28pace)

Overall time: 8hrs 21mins 16secs (10:53pace for 46.04miles)

Section 6 - Kirkmichael to Enochdhu (2.43miles)

I regrouped a bit and settled into the run to a place that I have no idea how you say! As I left Kirkmichael on the road there was a signpost for Eno alongside the river so I assumed that was way to go.

I ran along the river for a while but then the path disappeared and there were no CATERAN trail signs. I realised I should have stayed on the road so I fought my way through the trees, over a field and fences and got back on the road.

I probably ran a bit extra but at least I was back to track! As I approached the last checkpoint I saw a runner ahead so thought I may even get into the top 10!!

Mags and Mark were waiting for us at the checkpoint. I drank my perpetuem drink and Mark refilled my water bottle for the final 6miles to Spittal of Glenshee.

Leg time: 30mins 27secs (12:32pace)

Overall time: 8hrs 51mins 43secs (10:58pace for 48.47miles)

Section 6 - Enochdhu to Spittal of Glenshee (5.94miles)

I soon caught up with Dave who was runner ahead and pushed on up the hill. Whenever I talked to anyone who had done the route they all said the same, 'make sure you leave something for the final hill.'

I thought it was going to be 5mile of solid climb but it wasn't as bad as that. Yes it was a long hill but there were some flat bits and some downhill bits that you could run as well.

The was in sight now and I kept going as strongly as I could. The scenery was great with hills all round and I good path to follow.

As I set off up the final hill Mark came running down to see how Helen was getting on. He told me that once I'd got to the top off this long hill it was all downhill from there which sounded good.

I climbed and climbed and climbed some more and eventually the top came and went. I could see the hotel at Glenshee in the distance and set off down the hill. I'm not the best downhill runner and once again I struggled to run down the rocky path.

I did the best I could, hoping that I had enough of a lead not to be caught on the way down. Plus 10hrs 15mins was looking good so I pushed on.

Then with less than half a mile to go something strange happened that I've not had before. Both hands had this weird tingling sensation. Plus I was feeling a bit off balance. I continued on but I wasn't sure what was happening and had to slow right down.

I decided to take a salt tablet. I'd taken 3 so far but realised I'd not taken one for over 3hrs. Plus I stuffed a hand full of jelly babies in my mouth. Within a minute or so the tingling sensation stopped and I was fine.

Just at that moment I glanced back up the track and saw the white cap of Dave heading towards me. It was just the push I needed to get going. I didn't want to be overtaken this close to the finish!

So I ran in and finished in my official time of 10hrs 14mins 41secs for 9th place.

Leg time: 1hr 22mins 53secs (13:57pace)

Overall time: 10hrs 14mins 36secs (11.18pace for 54.41miles)

Post Race

It was good to congratulate Peter, Richie and others on their runs. Not too long later Helen came in first lady. I had a lovely shower and then watched the steady flow of runners finishing including two guys having a sprint finish!



I enjoyed my complimentary soup and sandwich (roast beef) and several drinks of milk, water, ribena as I was pretty thirsty.

As a bonus Karen told me I'd finished 1st Super Vet. I didn't know they were having a Super Vet category so that was fun!

I really enjoyed the race, the route and thought it was such a friendly well organised event. So well done to Karen and all her helpers. Dario would be very proud of you.

Cateran Trail	2010 actual times					
	Miles		Leg		Overall	
			Time	Pace m/mile	Time	Pace m/mile
Spittal of Glenshee	leg	Overall				
Dalnagair Castle DB 1	5.53	5.53	0:59:43 0:00	10:48	59:43 59:43	10:48
Kirkton of Glenisa DB 2	8.91	14.44	1:27:53 2:01	9:52	2:27:36 2:29:37	10:13
Den of Alyth DB 3 / CP 1	11.29	25.73	1:54:50 2:03	10:10	4:24:27 4:26:30	10:17
Blairgowrie DB 4 / CP 2	5.40	31.13	57:06 4:02	10:34	5:23:36 5:27:38	10:24
Bridge of Cally DB 5 / CP 3	6.85	37.98	1:19:16 1:59	11:34	6:46:54 6:48:53	10:43
Kirkmichael CP 4	8.06	46.04	1:32:23 0:00	11:28	8:21:16 8:21:16	10:53
Enochdhu DB 6 / CP 5	2.43	48.47	30:27 0:00	12:32	8:51:43 8:51:43	10:58
Spittal of Glenshee	5.94	54.41	1:22:53	13:57	10:14:36	11:18