

Great North 10k - 18th July 2010

It was an early start for Jill and I setting out to run the Sunderland 10k and I couldn't quite believe I was getting up at 0630 on a Sunday morning. We were chauffeured to the race by Jill's hubby Adam setting off at 0730 with great running conditions - dull and cool with a light breeze. We stopped off to pick up Jill's brother who was also running - great because we could use his loo. I had followed my usual pre race routine and managed to drink a ridiculous amount of water despite having only been up for an hour and a half!

We arrived at the Stadium of Light (boo, hiss) where we could park, to find ample spaces and a good buzz of runners wandering around. Being one of the Great Run series the organisation was faultless. Lots of loos at the stadium which we could and did use and 30 minutes later just before the starting pens port a loos were again put to good use! No queues either!

We found our way to our starting pen and like the Great North run, it was a staggered start with an impressive line up of elite runners setting off about 10 minutes before the masses. We took part in the aerobic warm up (sudden panicky of did I need the loo again) and before long Michael Gray the ex Sunderland skipper was starting the race. I don't know Sunderland at all and it was quite nice not knowing where the hell I was going! The race started by running across the Wearmouth Bridge which was the first of many gentle inclines - some longer than others. As we went across the bridge, the elite runners were coming back across the other side which was great as you don't usually get to see them when you are competing. Their pace was incredible and there didn't appear to be a bead of sweat in site. After the bridge the course took us through the town centre, around the winter gardens and then back across the Wearmouth Bridge. There was a good turnout of spectators cheering along the route and they were able to move about and cheer from several different points as our entourage did! The route then went along the sea front which had lots of unexpected sweeping gradients. A contra flow system was in place here which I don't usually like as you know the runners the other side are a few miles ahead of you. However, here it was great as once again it was the elite runners passing on the other side - still pegging it and still not a bead of sweat in sight from them although by now we were at the 5km mark so there was plenty from me!

The 5km mark had the first water station and as we continued along the front, there was a run through shower which was lovely and refreshing. We ran around Roker Park and then through it before getting back onto the seafront and the contra flow and another water station. More uphill slopes and the welcome sight of the 8km marker. We were on the home straight with Jill slightly ahead of me but never out of sight. 800 meters to go and there was an unexpected hill which appeared to catch a lot of people out who had already started speeding up for the finish - they soon slowed down again! I was starting to flag a bit but at the 200m mark a cheer of encouragement from Jill's brother who had already finished spurred me on to find a sudden burst of energy for a sprint finish. I caught up with Jill and we walked into the stadium together to pick up our goodie bags from the side of the pitch and back out to meet up with our chauffer.

It was a great race, great route and really enjoyable although hillier than expected. I would recommend it especially if you were wanting to compete in your first 10k. There didn't seem to be a lot of club running vests about but looking at the results of the coastal run which was on the same day, I think they were all there!

Getting away from the car park was a doddle too and we were back home in Broomley by 12.

It was a chipped race and the results were up by 2pm. Jill did well with a time of 54.10 (1130th).

Those of you who know me know that I'm not the fastest but I try hard so I was delighted to get a PB of 54.40 (1207th) but was overwhelmed when I discovered I was 12th for my age and gender!!!! Not sure how many other female old biddies there were in my age group but there were 5000 runners so there must have been a fair few. A pint and tea in the pub well and truly deserved.

Sally Hails