

## Great North Run 18th September 2011

I woke bright and early and a tad excited for my first, and perhaps last Great North Run. This culminated in me jogging around the house singing Chariots of Fire only to be told I was actually singing Black Beauty. Undeterred my jog changed to a canter.

Katharine arrived promptly at 8.45 and we then went to collect Annie. The paracetamol were taken just to keep my sciatica at bay. I'm sure you have all done it. We headed to a very busy Newcastle and drove up to the university spotting Smurfs, Batman and Robin. No queuing for us at the toilets and hedge bushes. We had Annie with her works Uni entry! Off we went for our psychological toilet stop. We met with Annie's colleagues and then had to *run* to get their bags onto the luggage bus in time. Climbing our way through the hedges we headed to our "pen" just in time for the warm up! I was boiling at this point so opted for more of a sing and dance.

The Red Arrows flew over making me quite emotional. I looked at Katharine to smile and control myself only to see tears in her eyes. At this point we decided we had best not read any t shirts or we would end up in blubbering heaps before we had started! The excitement was building, the runners were off and I was now bouncing like a small caged child. I was also now cold. As I passed the toilets ...should I? No. I carried on. We then decide to cross over as the left side was moving quicker. Sorry Mo but you would have to miss out slapping my hand.

The start line was in view and we began to trot. 45minutes after the official start we were off. Up and round towards the underpass. Katharine kept shouting me back insisting she should have bought a baby rein to keep me near. I'm just excited I would yell followed by the chants of oggy oggy oggy oi oi oi, I wonder if the elite runners did that? We headed comfortably over the Tyne Bridge to see Julian cheering us on. Waving manically we headed up to Gateshead to see fallen people and an ambulance. Scary as we were only a couple of mile into it. And, shock, horror, people were walking. Smugly we ran on to hear the Blaydon races and Take it easy (Eagles) Of course we joined in at the top of our voices. Katharine was now convincing herself she needed the loo, 'course you don't , you need to keep going, you will sweat it out'. On we went putting the world to rights chatting and making friends.

Now the dilemma came. I was sick of carrying my energy gel. Katharine insisted I should not take it as she knew people who had in races....good runners ...who needed to run fast to the loo! Not sure of the correlation of how well you run to the effects of energy gel on your bowels but she is a nurse. Deciding if the theory was true I wasn't a good runner so being me I listened, laughed, and then took it all, giving Katharine a taste too. We were fine.

As we headed to Jarrow Katharine queried had we passed Gateshead Stadium yet?

Hands were held out offering drinks, lollies, biscuits, jelly babies oh, and Vaseline. I watched as big scoops were taken by big lads and then applied liberally with precision for a good 100 meters or so. Amused no end I looked at Katharine who was sure she was going to vomit! I then spotted a small child with her arm out to clap people's hands and really hoped the Vaseline men considered what they were doing. Feeling fine we soldiered on. The rain came. Heavy, hard and horizontal I was soaked through and did envy the people at home tucking into Sunday lunch. We then discussed the fact that Katharine was fully organised with a full clothes change and I wasn't so organised. Maybe I would be dry out by the finish. With water now stinging my eyes I was politely informed yes I did look like Alice Cooper and my hair looked shit too!

As we were nearing South Shields the Red Arrows were doing their display...amazing.

11 miles done and I felt great. Knowing I could run 2 miles success was not far off. We pushed on 'my knees are hurting "No they aren't I retorted, they can hurt at the end and you don't need the toilet! Not far now down the hill to the last mile whoopee. 'Come on' I grabbed Katharine's hand as she was trying to insist I ran ahead (I think she was sick of me by then) Not taking the hint I informed her I was holding her hand until we crossed the line. I spotted the 800 meter sign ahead as I felt Katharine bounce off people apologising profusely. Heads down keep going. When I looked up I'm sure someone was moving the sign. My schooling wasn't great but 800 meters was never that far.

We then heard a little girl say 'Mammy 13 miles is a long way isn't it? 'Yes it blooming is' yelled Katharine. We spotted Mark, Max and Emma at the last 200 meters Katharine ran to give Max a kiss. Holding hands we crossed the line leaping and bounding. WE HAD ACTUALLY DONE IT. 13 miles of running.... fantastic!

We headed to the meeting place where a much organised Katharine produced a bottle of bubbly and Bob the builder cups. Cheers! Family found we headed to Ocean road for a well earned Curry and Kingfisher beer.

First Great North Run but maybe not the last.

Julie Stoves Robson

Results

David Leat - 1.35.50

Katharine Russell - 2.32.40

Julie Stoves Robson - 2.32.40

Annie Cunningham - 2.40.05