

I ONLY WENT FOR THE GUINNESS

After weeks of Sue and Foxy singing or attempting to sing “ **In Dublins Fair City** – The day was finally here. Well Dublin, to the land of **Guinness, Leprechauns, Molly Malone - Here Ware Joggers Come!!!**

Set off nice and early from Wodson Park – picked up en route to Stanstead Airport 2 cold and damp Pickering’s - Wow so many Ware Joggers at the Airport it was quite a sight.

The flight was going well until we crossed the Irish Sea!! Where Colin being the Old Sea Dog that he is, said “the sea down there looks really rough – you wouldn’t get anyone (him included), out at sea today!!” Eek. Hold on tight, lots of turbulence – bumping around and generally feeling sick, me with my head in my hands, the pilot came on the radio to say “due to severe wind conditions he was having trouble navigating the plan in landing!!! He told us that he would have to circle and go round again – so full thrust, take off Mid-Air, more turbulence, been thrown here there and everywhere, everyone looking worried, holding onto the arm rests for dear life, John Warrington praying. The pilot finally landed the plane! Hooray!! Cheers and clapping rang out from all the passengers on board, to say we were all relieved was an understatement – Even the two stewards strapped in the back near where I was seated had never been on a flight like it before. We all stumbled off the plane, I thanked and shook the hand of the extremely young Pilot.!!!

Our excellent Irish tour manager Pascal ushered us all through Dublin customs and onto the bus that took us to the Hotel, unfortunately the driver of the bus could not stop outside the entrance of the hotel due to the one way system, hence we were dropped off with about a mile to walk – trust me to be the only one with a suitcase with no wheels, fell through the hotel door knackered – couple of Guinness’s later for medicinal purposes you see to calm my nerves after the whole flight experience, I felt a new, invigorated person, had a look round the hotels excellent gym, pool, sauna and jazzauzi. My plan was to go for a short run, maybe 3 miles, on the Sunday with Kenny and spend a bit of time in the gym.

The next few days and nights were a haze of Guinness, Guinness and more Guinness, I love the stuff!! – Bewleys Café/Restaurant, in the most exquisite building, offered excellent coffees and speciality teas; the most wonderful home made soup and excellent hot chocolate muffins, which were out of this world. Then onto Nearys and then to round the evening off eating, drinking, and generally being merry dancing, singing, listening to Good Old Irish Folk Music at Oliver John Gourty’s what a great night.

Sunday 26th Oct 2008 – Day before the Marathon

My plans for a gentle jog round the park with Kenny, Jenny and a few others went out the window. – After a catch up with the joggers and an excellent breakfast in the hotel, decided to set off for a gentle stroll along the canal with Sue, Richard and Sue D, to get their running numbers from the Expo Centre. Well, what a hive of activity, excitement and bit of apprehension amongst all the runners from many nationalities:- Italians, Americans, Brits and Irish. The adidas stall was selling some great new design running gear so decided to take a look, I tried on a pair of shorts and a top. Yes, they looked OK so bought them. It was at this point that I had an idea!! What if I asked Andy for his number and just run the Marathon for a few miles, pull out where the Ware Joggers Supporters where and that would be it, yes plan in action, rang Andy after a few “what, your what, arrh eeh. from Andy (yes, he also thought I was off my rocker) arranged to collect his number. On a mission now so must get back to the hotel, rest and re-hydrate, so jumped on the open topped bus (relax me legs)!!! That evening in the hotel all the joggers were a bit shocked at my decision to run, seeing as I’d only done 3miles on the previous Thursday and a few of the handicapped series in the summer-not the best training plan, nevertheless they were as always **very encouraging** and said “just go for it, - if the going gets tough the tough get going”

Monday 27th Oct 2008 – D Day The Dublin Marathon

Woke up good and early to perfect weather conditions for a marathon, cold and fresh, the sun shinning bright, meet all the joggers downstairs for a good hearty breakfast of porridge, toast, egg, bacon, beans and hash browns, I had the works!! All meet up in reception for pictures – great atmosphere, I did however feel a bit apprehensive with the mission ahead of me – but I thought I’d just give it a go and enjoy it!!!

The Start

Left the hotel at 8.15 with all the gang and walked to the start. Wow what a sight, all the roads shut, no traffic at all, runners here there and everywhere, spectators, friends & families of loved ones pushed up against the metal barriers shouting out good luck wishes. The Joggers all huddled together keeping warm at the start. My plan of action was to get to 11 miles where I knew the Faithful Ware Joggers Supporters Club were based. After a few well wishes from the Organisers and a minutes silence for the dearly departed, the gun-shot rang out, we were off, hats, gloves and tops being thrown off by those who thought they would get to hot, shouts of oggey oogey oogey, here we go, here we go, here we go. No turning back now!!!

The Course

The first few miles felt good, saw the supporters club at the first point, on the halfpenny bridge over the Liffey, Andy up a lamppost!! I think, taking pictures, loads of supporters and well wishes here, was very encouraging, cheered on and shouts of “keep going”! from the joggers, along the course and into Phoenix Park with the Dublin Mountains in the distance, nice to get out of the City for a bit, took on-board lucozade and water from every water station. Nicola handed me a much needed energy gel sachet (thanks Nic)

11 Miles

At this point yes time to call it a day – however, my plan changed, thought I'd keep going to the half marathon point 13miles, made out to all the joggers supporters club I was loving it, but in fact it was starting to hurt – just kept thinking keep going a few miles more to the half marathon mark 13 miles.!!!

13 Miles Half Marathon

Made it – Push on lets see how many more miles I can get through, shoved sweets, mini mars bars; jelly babies anything that was being offered from the spectators into my mouth, energy for the next few miles.

18Miles

In the distance I could hear the familiar chant of oggey oggey oggey, foxy fast approaching, he overtook me at about 18/19 miles saying “What the hell are you doing up here” keep going, keep going!!!

The Finish

25 miles almost there – legs now completely shot – The crowd just getting me through, the supporters around the course were just amazing, so friendly and warm even that mad preaching Irish Woman, “Your almost there just around the corner” shouts of “keep going” The last .2 seemed to go on for ever, my body screaming out to stop!! At last – Crossed the Finish Line- Elation, I'D DONE IT!!!!!!!!!!!!



Managed to hobble over to the official photographer at the end had a few pictures taken – then saw Sue, hugs and kisses and well done ! We both hobbled through the streets with Maria in tow. Sue tried to hail a cab as I really did not think I could walk any further, my legs were so sore at this point – loads of the cabs had other worn out runners on board, walked on a bit further, Sue saying how come there were so many foreign number plates on all the cars outside the houses and hotels, Maria said “Well were in Dublin you plonker” Sue - she is half Irish you know – to be sure.

Eventually managed to hail a cab back to the hotel – so needed to sit down - what a relief – Upon arrival at the hotel meet John Little who was downing a much needed and well deserved Guinness, he was all nicely showered and fresh looking- blimey I thought he must of done a good time to be back showered and all, he's finally laid to rest the ghost of the sub 4hr mark. Well done John. Excellent.

After a lay down in my room and a much needed shower, we all regrouped in the bar of the hotel, tales of woe flowed from us all for the next few hours, Debbie crying with laughter of her running style as in her words she stuck out her bum and run with her arms, resembling a chicken, because of this she was asked if “she required medical assistance”!!

The Celebration Dinner

All of us in high spirits – hobbled to the nearby Italian Restaurant (yes!! just across the road - could not of gone any further) eating, drinking and generally being merry, pictures being taken and speeches made, John Pickering telling us that for him as a member of the Supporters Club it was a great experience, and that we was looking forward to some well deprived rumpy pumpy!! (Nicola takes all this training very seriously you know!). John Little being the great speaker that he is, thanked everyone and we all raised our glasses to Margaret, once again she had arranged a fantastic trip.

Back to the hotel and crashed out, slept like a baby, dreaming of my achievement

Tuesday 28th Oct - Aah!! Sore aching legs

The next day in the hotel was quite a sight – the walking wounded, many runners looked as though they'd just had hip replacement – the hotel resembled a convalescent home. Lots of the Joggers went off to the Guinness Factory to see how that wonderful black stuff was made – I went into Grafton street, walking and hobbling around were many other runners with the now familiar Dublin Marathon Finisher black top on, we simply smiled and acknowledged our appreciation of a job well done. Onto my last visit to Bewleys, Cappuccino and a hot chocolate muffin, reading the Irish times, looked at the many faces of the runners on the front page!! Little did I know at that time that I, Sue, Les, John Warrington, Pascal were amongst those many thousand faces. Bought a few souvenirs to take home, headed back to the hotel, we all meet up in reception for the return bus to the airport, pretty easy going, the flight back, apart from as we were coming into Stansted - sleet and snow and the near crash landing as problems with the undercarriage!!. We all regrouped and said our farewells to our excellent tour manager Pascal and Jill, then off on the 2nd mini-buses back to Wodson – Snow by this time was coming down thick and fast, at Wodson, hugs, kisses to all the gang and promised to meet up Thursday for photos and Guinness in the bar.

To Summarize

To many of the Ware Joggers the Dublin Marathon meant different things, better time than a previous marathon, overcoming that dreaded under 4 hour mark. For Sue it was in the land of her forefathers Dublin being the City where her late father was from (he died when she was 21) her maiden name of Byrne was on lots of shops, pubs, lots on a war memorial, in the race alone there was 40 runners with the name Byrne listed in the adidas official magazine for this reason Dublin will always be a unforgettable, poignant marathon.

For me I never dreamed I had another marathon in my legs, I had done no training whatsoever. Truthfully though for me if I'd done all the miles of training I believe my knees would have given up, I am so so glad I cant tell you all that I've done another Marathon and The Dublin Marathon at that – To Be Sure

It was all for the CRACK

Report By: Ian Simpson

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