

Wednesday 24th May – Burn Event No1.

Well finally the day we had all nervously been waiting for had arrived... It was time to find out if all the Stump Lane, Long Dog, Short Dog and Sunday trail runs had prepared us for the Burn Event. Surely we would be ok I mean how hard could it really be.

With a 7pm start on a gloriously sunny evening we met in the car park of the 417 Bike Park, received our race numbers from Karen and for once didn't have the usual pre-race discussions. There was no "If I get less than 30 minutes" or "I'm feeling good for a PB" or even "I'm just going to run and enjoy it". Nope the overriding theme was "I hope I just get round" or "Do you really think it's as bad as we are thinking", well our questions were soon answered.

Starting to feel slightly nervous we distracted ourselves by checking out the opposition, commenting on the toilet queue and when to go, how sun cream stings when you get it in your eyes (lesson learnt from Terri) was running after a night being sick a good idea (Obviously not John) and that it really was very hot stood in the sun.

The first tactical decision of the evening was made, we were going to take it easy and let someone else take the glory of winning the inaugural Burn event. It's not that we weren't going to try but when you are stood watching the likes of Dan, Tom, Dan, Peter, Tim and Micky warm up you know in reality your chances are somewhat slim.

All too soon Ben's voice could be heard on the megaphone calling us to the start line. A quick briefing, countdown and bang we were off.

And what a pleasant surprise it was to, no horrible uphill, but a nice gentle downwards slope on a sensible path to the smiling happy face of Carley directing us off to the grass and round a corner. Away in front you can see the hill that needs to be conquered and the guys you generously decided could beat you already three quarters of the way up it. Filled with the memories of hill training and thinking actually this grassy slope isn't too bad we slogged our way up past Sarah (all smiles and encouraging clapping) and around on to the lane..... at which point reality struck. I was on my own... and this was going to be hard.

It was steep, it got steeper and it went on and on (at least in my head). Depressingly and far earlier than anticipated the running turned in to a walk and the Cat Lane mantra of "I just want to get round" played in my head. Halfway up was the number 1 Harriers supporter Sarah Dillon at the water station where I gratefully drank a cup, poured one over my head in a pointless effort to cool myself down and feeling invigorated by the news from Sarah "you are nearly at the top" and with Bens words "the view is amazing" I strode on and even managed to jog to the summit but it was tough tough tough and the BURN was definitely there.

It was worth it, not only was the view amazing but there was also the sight of Steve and the news that "This is the highest point". Now... there is some sort of interesting psychological phenomenon here which needs studying. Steve literally said nothing more than "This is the highest point" but in my head that translated as "it's all downhill from now on" and "You've nearly finished" and so my mind took over my body and flying down the track I went even running up the edges of some of the berms to maintain speed... Now this was starting to be fun. Past Norm who was particularly vocal offering High Fives and pointing out we should be feeling the BURN (clearly he got a lift to the top of the hill).

The downhills are great. Technically challenging as let's not forget this is an off road mountain bike course so there are rocks, lumps, bumps, dips, jumps and grass tracks but they just added to the fun and excitement of the event and the slog to the top was drifting from my mind.

But then I realised that my translation of Steve's words was wrong as Fran overtook me I looked around and saw Leanne, Cat and Terri off in front and they were going up again. All my euphoria of the downhill fun left me and I finally realised (I am a slow learner) that this is called BURN for only one reason. It's bloody hard and you need to work hard and be tough to get round.

I found myself back by Norm (still very vocal) and down over a few bumps to Jenna who gave us more encouragement (and took some action photos). Onwards and downwards then upwards past Sarah again (I told her I never want to see her again on this course) to Iain Williams (always smiling) and Dave Jones with a camera (can't wait to see those pictures). I had been caught by Lindsey Salvage and decided, as a gentleman, I would take it easy and run with her.

By this point even the run up the jumps was a struggle but the end really was close and there was no way we were stopping now. Passing Carley there was the final push back to the carpark and around to the finish ... Some comment from Ben (probably words of encouragement or congratulations) got him the two finger salute as I crossed the line and thank god it was over.

Walking somewhat shakily and dazed I received a medal (love it) and a photograph (I think with Cat Lane) and it's time to cool down, cheer in our fellow Harriers, stretch, chat and get a well-deserved bacon roll.

Things I learnt or reconfirmed;

Pushing yourself in a challenge is one of the most rewarding things you can do.

I am a member of a fantastic supportive running club.

You can never train too much.

Enjoying yourself is the most important thing.

Some people are born to run..... I was born to just give it a go.

I can honestly say 5k has never ever been so tough so Ben achieved exactly what he set out to do. A great challenge, a great course, excellent organisation and marshalling. Would I do it again, absolutely because like childbirth you soon forget the BURN and want to do it all again.

Thank you to my fellow Harriers Dan, Dan, Tom, Peter, Adrian, Tim, Mickey, Martin, Sophie, Neil, Terri, Leanne, Fran, Cat, Lindsey, John and Karyn for running "with me" and to Ade for tail running and making sure we all got back, to the marshals for keeping us going and Ben... For having a mind twisted enough to think up that course.

On a final note there is now a club within the Harriers Club... It currently has only 18 members but you are all welcome. Simply sign up, complete an event and feel the BURN.