

London Marathon 2015

-Tony Davis

Another marathon weekend had come around and I was following my usual, well rehearsed plan. This time though as there were 3 first timers from the club I had the additional role of old hand. If we had been a band we could have been call 'Old Git and the Newbies'. The newbies were Tom the wearer of women's clothes, Catherine the shopaholic, and Blain the.....well Blain is the only word that describes him and of course there was a guest appearance from Chris the imposter from Blackpool. I guess that makes me the 'Old Git'.

This time around I was using gels but had not really worked out how I was going to carry them so I decided to look for something at the London Marathon exhibition at registration. Well I came across a stall that I thought had located there by mistake instead of the 50 shades of grey exhibition next door. It was selling an item that look like it could have been used as a blind fold or a restraint or a whip. In fact it was basically a soft stretchy belt make out of a tube of material with slits in design to store gels. Being a tight old git I thought the price was a bit steep but, when I thought of the potential bedroom functions I quickly became the proud owner of a flip belt.

Sometime around midday on the Saturday my first duty as old hand was required. Catherine phoned, she sounded a little tense, and at first I thought something had gone wrong but it turn out she just wanted a chat. Anyway she said she had been out for a short one mile jog to calm her nerves. 'She's taking this seriously I thought. Then she said that she had done it in her full marathon kit just to check it out, 'She's taking this very seriously' I thought. Finally she told me she was spending the rest of the day chilling out in the hotel, 'unbelievable focus I thought. Especially as I was helping my bother in law fix a kitchen light. I later found out she had jogged a mile to Selfridges and Bill had jogged along behind her carrying her coat so she could go in and look around. I reckon the only reason she didn't run the mile back to the hotel was that she was too loaded down.

Early evening I headed to my hotel in London, first making sure I had everything on my list. I knew once there it would all need reorganizing into what I needed to wear, what went into the kit bag and what stayed in my left luggage. But of course I had a list for all of these. Lists work well for me; they calm the nerves and make sure everything ends up in the right place. The one improvement I will be making next time is to have a list of the lists. From my hotel on Saturday evening I went up to the viewing gallery in the Shard. Fantastic views, Tower Bridge, Canary Warf, The Isle of Dogs, the embankment, the house of Parliament, basically the second half of the course was laid out like a model village below. That was only the second half, oh shite.

Once back in the hotel I text the others – old hand stuff again. Tom's reply said he was getting nervous already mainly about voiding his bowels in the morning. I texted back stating if he was getting nervous already there wouldn't be a problem in the morning. But surely that was obvious, then I thought if I was a teacher what would I write on his school report, "Thomas is a rather constipated child who struggles to join the dots". Blains reply was the polar opposite, "I've had nine shits today", it's funny how runners often ending up talking about the practicalities of their pre-race preparation. As for Blain's school reports, "Blain is often misunderstood, we have solid proof he is not completely full of shit".

Discussing the practicalities of pre-race preparation is one thing, demonstrating them is another. Now I more than most, am aware that if you need to go before a race, you need to go, and that is true for ladies as well. Also I don't claim to have any understanding of the complexities of the female

liquid waste disposal operations other than they usually require discretion and an awful long time. But sometimes you just know something is not right. Just prior to the start I was talking to an Eden runner in my allotted start pen. Just past his shoulder half a dozen ladies came up squatted down in a circle not ten yards from me. In full view of thousands of runners they bare their arses and proceed to water the grass. A 22 hands Airedale Shire Horse in the next field didn't manage the same flow. I have never seen anything like it except on internet video clips or without having to part with cash.

Finally the race was under way. It's something you can't really describe, there is too much going on, too much to remember. Those of you watching the TV coverage were treated to a lot of air time for Tom easy to spot in his DAC colours and his gait is some what different. When I saw the highlights later I was struck by how much he runs like Phoebe from friends. In the last 2 miles the 3:15 pacers passed me, I knew I had some time in the bank from the start but not now much. It's a bit odd to actually see your target time disappearing into the distance. As I turned onto the Mall the clock was on 3:15 something but had passed 3:16 as I cross the finish line. It was only on checking my Garmin that I realize I had had just over a minute from the start and so all 5 of us achieved PBs.

It's a long walk through the finish area especially when your legs are screaming stop. What I didn't need at that time was the sight of some bloke's bare arse and squirrels lunch bag as he was trying with difficulty to get his second foot out of his running tights over his shoes. He was holding on to the perimeter fence of the finish area. The other side of the fence families were walking by and they were being treat to the whole nine yards. Well to be fair after 26 miles it might have been substantially less than the whole nine centimetres.

I met up with my relatives and was sat get food and drink into me when I heard a shout. It was Tom. He had waited for Blain who hadn't appeared at their meeting point. With the advent of the tracking system people at home are probably more aware of what's going on than us at the finish. Anyway Tom and I decided he must have gone off in a rage to 'up board' the race, but was struggling to pick up London and throw it across the room.

After that I went to meet Catherine. Margery, my sister in law, who had only just managed to stop giggling about the run to Selfridges could not believe her eyes when she saw Catherine's ear rings and nails. Her ear rings were so big and bright we spotted them coming even before we saw her DAC hoody. You just have to admire her dedication to the cause.

On the train home I text around to see how everyone was doing. I included some supportive words to Blain, sandwiched between great chunks of mickey taking, after all isn't taking the piss the best thing to do under these circumstances. But I have to say that Catherine's reply was probably the best, "I can't walk down stairs, I can't crouch and I'm walking like I have a big poop in my pants". What we didn't realise was that we were on the same train in the same carriage.

Well that's about it, another grand weekend at the London marathon and 3 of us qualified for good for age places so with the club place and other GFA qualifiers there could be another merry band next year.

"What does it matter who wins, everyone who completes it is a winner" Dick Beardsley 1981