

From Paul Sowden – The Bob Graham – A Day in the Lakes to Remember

The day had finally arrived and I was to test myself for much longer than I had ever run over hills which I had practised on for the last year. I knew the course well, but that was no guarantee I would make it... many factors could influence the outcome. There was little sleep the night before as I waited in excited anticipation with my good friend and running partner, Mark Pearson (yet to be converted to a Harrier!), to run the Bob Graham Round - 42 of the Lakes highest peaks, climbing to 28,500 feet, covering 66 miles all within 24 hours.

The start time arrived, 2.00am, 'take it easy' was my only thought 'this is not a sprint', and soon we were descending Halls Fell to the first road crossing, and the sun had risen. It was a spectacular day... the weather was clear – very clear, high cloud base, no wind, perfect for a little bit of running!!

My mantra for the day was B.T.S. Baby steps - deal with the immediate, let the rest take care of itself. Transitions – work through the changes from downhill to up. Swerve balls - when an obstacle comes my way, let it come and go, don't latch onto it. The running was controlled and flowed throughout the day - my training had clearly paid off, and the pain I was expecting to come never appeared.

The Ilkley Harriers who were involved were absolutely fantastic and played a major role in making it happen. I thank them dearly, without them it would not have been possible. They all got behind the true spirit of the event and their continuous enthusiasm was incredibly infectious:

Neil Smith's navigation in the dark on Leg 1 got us off to a solid start, it was great to have him on Leg 2 too; Mike Baldwin bounding along with a camera on Leg 2 made it feel like we were on holiday; Alistair Barlow on Leg 4 producing ice lollies as we ascended Yewbarrow left me with an uncontrollable urge to kiss him; Brian Melia's secret trods on Leg 4, which gained us time while we felt we were taking it easy. On Leg 5 Helena Deeney and Rachel Hagan kept the pace high and in the dark guided us back to Moot Hall with precision.

Ewan Welsh and Justine Sowden's undivided attention - meeting our needs for 24 hours, providing comfort, food and encouragement at all the road crossings, made it feel like I was arriving at a 5 star hotel... it felt good to be pampered!

The whole day felt like a dream... running smoothly from start to finish... I couldn't have wished for anything more.

A great day out with memories that will stay with me forever.

Thanks again,
Paul