

It's all about the half's.....

There was a time when I trained, raced hard, got PB's and even sometimes prizes. Now the best I can hope for is lurking close to the organiser or dressing in comedy outfits.

None of these options was available on Saturday morning – my return to 'racing'. I love the Wharfedale Half – it's hard enough so that you know you've been in a race, but equally it has enough 1:10 hills and stiles so that you can have a sneaky rest if so required.

The team mobile set off from Menston for the 45min journey to the start in good time (best leave 2hrs just in case.....). The journey there was punctuated by the usual course of conversation – this has become so much the norm that we have now started reducing our pre-race excuses to numbers – we all had excuse no4 (went out last night forgot I was racing and before I knew it I was on the Jagerbombs), Martin bagged no7 (I've had a cold), Jez took no39 (I'm only doing it cos I had a lift), Emma sited an as yet untested no – 147 – Paul packed my bag with everything except the kitchen sink – he's worried I may not make it round), and other Paul (S) had no excuse and therefore should be ashamed..... I had 4, 17, 36 and 74.

We got there in time (by about 2 days) to see the fool-hardy marathoners off – At this point Emma and I seriously thought about setting off for the half with these guys – no-one would ever know.....

But at this point full race preparations had not been completed, there were at least another 3 toilet stops planned, sun cream to apply (just in case) and Lara Croft Gel belts to adjust.

The time came, eventually, I was deplete of all sustenance having eaten my pre-race breakfast 2 ½ days before – no 26 – and we lined up. The hooter went, Abigail and I jumped a mile – whatever happened to 3-2-1-go and we were off? Nick raced off, Andrew, Nige and Helen left dust behind their heels Jez and Martin went their own merry way, so it was Abi and the dream team propping up the rear. After a few mins Abi decided enough was enough and rightly ran on.

It's here that we have to re-iterate the rules. A pact is a pact, and when you say you're going to run together you do – KEITH!!

Back to the race. It was extremely windy. Proper wind, the kind of wind that literally blows you backwards. I was cool with it – just run behind Paul S – he may have come unarmed with pre-race excuses but makes a pretty good wind-break. Emma may have had all the kit required by FRA rules but Paul had forgotten to pack the 'you are actually going forward' bit of the pack. We were a sorry gang at the first check point.

I've done this race on numerous occasions and know that Mastilles Lane is a bugger at the best of times. I was really looking forward to being

blown up it – but hey – that’s racing for you – the one part of the course where the wind is behind is invariably the only part of the course that is sheltered.

We adopted a run/walk strategy and also adopted a guy on a bike who was determined to get to the top without stopping, it was quite wierd walking faster than someone pedalling, but also quite satisfying.

It was at this point that Emma got appendicitis.

I knew we still had a long way to go, downhill – it was all good.

A few sheep to pass, some welcome stiles, and a sudden need from Paul to become uber competitive – like we’re going to win?’ – and we were back.

A quick change and a Magners and we were able to call off the Air Ambulance and cheer in the mental marathoners.

A good day out had by all.