

A 42 mile race starting at the dead of night was not exactly what I had in mind when last October my friend asked if I fancied a night out in the Peak District...

The High Peak Marathon is limited to 49 teams (4 per team) and starts and finishes at Edale. It is renowned not only for its length, winter conditions and start time but also for the route over many of the Dark Peak tops north of the Hope Valley across vague, featureless landscape pitted with Derbyshire's notorious "grouchs" and man-eating bogs. I joined three Dark Peak ladies to make up our "Ladies from the Dark side" team.

My team mates had good local knowledge and great navigational skills but these were less critical on the night as the conditions were 'crisp' (where crisp is defined as a frozen water bottle down your thermal to try and thaw the ice so you could get a drink...) and clear (the magical view of headtorchs strewn for miles over the black peat moors like fairy lights). The conditions meant the race was fast underfoot (both men and women's records were broken) with many bogs frozen and the grouchs - for the most part - filled partially with snow.

There is no getting round the fact that running for 42 miles is a painful experience but it was a wonderful one too with some great memories. Running towards the sunrise over Kinder with my team was one of them!

The Sheffield University students who have been putting this race on for the last 40 years were fantastic and their enthusiasm, encouragement and humour greatly added to the night – Santa Clause, Scooby, "lady men" etc. were at different controls throughout the night. The tea, cake and sandwiches at the two feeding stations were also much appreciated (even if the sandwiches were frozen), as was the stew and foot bath at the end. Perhaps my friend does know what constitutes a good night out– it was a great one!

Full results still to come

Men's team 7hrs 51 – new record

Carnethy Ladies 9hrs 40 – new ladies record

Ladies from the Dark Side 10hrs (11<sup>th</sup> team 2<sup>nd</sup> ladies team)