

Tough Guy 2007

Fancy something different...?

On January 28th, I was persuaded to enter the annual Tough Guy event, down near Wolverhampton. I knew a few people who'd done it before and they seemed to enjoy it – in fact, often coming back year after year. It's not cheap, about £50 if you enter early, but I saw a clip of it on Transworld Sport and it looked fun.

So what is Tough Guy? Well, it's like a glorified army assault course really. You start with about an 8 mile cross country run, including one or two minor "obstacles" – a few walls to jump over, a zigzag slalom course contouring a hillside (great for fell runners!) etc. Then the real fun begins at the "Killing Fields"...

January 28th, 11am. Me and nearly 5000 other "competitors" lined up for the start. There was a great atmosphere, many people in strange costumes. I'd arrived early and looked over a few of the bigger obstacles – probably a mistake!

"Still, if these guys can do it, why can't I?" I told myself. I was reassured by the number of people who'd obviously done it before.

The cannon and flares blasted off and the race began. At first there were a few bottlenecks but it soon became clearer. Some of our top runners would scythe through the field – even I was constantly overtaking for the first 3 or 4 miles. It's good to be a runner at Tough Guy – you don't want to be held up too much at the big obstacles later on. This year the weather was relatively warm for January.

So, after the 8 mile run (about an hour and ten for me), we reached the Killing Fields. A series of about 20 different obstacles. The first one was basically a large wooden A-frame but as I descended I forgot why it was called the "Tiger". Cue some involuntary swearing as I received an electric shock! You can avoid this if you have your wits about you. I didn't!

Next there's the "Ghurka Grand National". A series of swampy ditches and crawling under netting. Nothing too bad. But then it's the "Fiery Holes", the "Vietcong Tunnels", "Colditz Walls" etc. Look up www.toughguy.co.uk for more details. I took my time over the various wooden obstacles – but always kept moving. I'd been told that was the secret. The "Underwater Tunnels" and "Walking the Plank" were the worst ones for me – the water was so cold. Absolutely *&%£"\$^% freezing to be honest!!

Towards the end, I got cramp in my right calf, but nothing too bad. I finished in 1:47. The winner did 1:12. The slowest were out for over 3 hours – they had my respect! As I made my way back to the car, having showered and drunk loads of hot tea, still shivering, I didn't envy them one bit!

It was a different sort of experience – not like anything else I've ever done before. Straight after I said "never again", but now, 2 weeks later, I'm quite tempted...
Anyone else?

Simon G.

P.S. As well as photos on the official website, there are loads of video clips on things like YouTube.