

## Claire's 10 Tips for Surviving the Trog

It was with some trepidation that I embarked on the Wadsworth Trog.

I had completed the Yorkshireman the previous year, but still didn't feel qualified to tick the "long fell race" box as it didn't have any of that bog-trotting and tussock negotiation that's customary in a race out on the moors. So, the Trog was to be my first proper "long fell race"... and what a tough race it turned out to be!

So, for anyone with similar doubts as I had about doing a Category "L" race, here are the 10 key tips which helped me survive "The Beast":

- 1. TRAIN.** Bit of a no-brainer, this one, but I really had to put my mind to how I was going to prepare for the longer fell race. Since having Alex three years previously, I had pootled along aimlessly, not attempting to do anything other than maintain a basic level of fitness and stay healthy. But I was beginning to feel ready for a challenge and to do that I would have to increase my mileage and improve my endurance.

So, casting aside the guilt and separation anxiety, I slowly upped my running time from between 20min-1hr sessions to fairly regular 3-3 ½ hr plods.
- 2. RECCE.** Being a "back-runner", I'd always used the "poor navigation skills" argument to get me out of committing to certain races, as I knew I'd always end up alone at some time during the race. But the time had come to dispel that myth too.

During my pootling stage, I took the opportunity to improve my navigational skills and now was the time to test them out.

I reccied the race in two separate chunks, taking the easier loop to the south of Keighley Road first. No problem, straight round with no diversions or mishaps!

Feeling chuffed with my first attempt, I decided to tackle the northern part of the race alone too. Aware that this was by far the trickier section of the course, I asked Phil "Awesome" Hodgson to talk me through it on the map.

Luckily, it was a fairly clear day when I reccied and the outward section over to Cock Hill went smoothly enough. Turning back for the moorland section to High Brown Knoll, I remembered Phil's advice, "When you get to Whinney Stones, look out for the stripey stone to locate the trod". (I'm sure there was a bit more detail than that, but it had slipped my mind at the time).

So I arrived at Whinney Stones – there were hundreds of stripey stones! The only thing for it was to pick one at random, hoping it would be the right one ... Of course it wasn't!

Anyway, to cut a long story short, after a lot of to-ing and fro-ing, and effing and blinding, I discovered the magic route which gave way to a lovely runnable section over to the trig point. Despite all the hard work, however, I was so much more relaxed on race day and confident that, even if I did find myself alone in the clag, I would still be able to find my way back.
- 3. EAT WELL.** I've never really been very good with food, tending to eat whatever I fancy rather than what's good for me. But I've always aspired to eating a healthy diet and having a purpose somehow made this much easier. What's more, I soon began to enjoy a surge in energy which certainly paid off for me on the day.
- 4. WEAR THE RIGHT CLOTHES.** I must admit, I fell down on this one, and suffered as a consequence. Refusing to believe the forecast of mild, clement weather, I instead based my kit choice on

conditions over previous years. Arriving in a sunny, mild Old Town without a t-shirt or pair of shorts to my name, I realised it was too late to do anything about it.

(Note to self: never, ever, leave home for a race without packing every piece of kit to hand!).

5. **PACE YOURSELF.** I never know how fast to set off. Sometimes I bomb off like an idiot, only to burn out after several miles, whereas in other events, I have set off at a steady pace and never really picked up speed. Everyone I spoke to about the Trog stressed the importance of a really steady start, so I made sure I took their advice.

Well, at least I thought I had, until Kath came sailing past me during one of those long uphill slogs about an hour into the race looking as fresh as a daisy! I had been thinking all along that she was miles in front of me and that I was just having a hard time panting along at a snail's pace.

Still, now that she'd put things in perspective, I was able to make some adjustments and maintain a sensible pace for the rest of the race.

6. **THINK POSITIVE.** This turned out to be the most vital tip for me on the day.

On the climb away from Walshaw Dean Reservoir, I hit the wall badly. All I could think of was the miles of hard slog ahead of me and how weak I was feeling by that point. Having only recently taken on board an energy gel and not feeling its benefit, I began to convince myself that I had bitten off more than I could chew and would have to retire at the next checkpoint.

I struggled over the hill to Walshaw and didn't feel much better on arrival there either. However, pride got in the way and I reluctantly set off on the next climb to Shackleton Knoll. On the way up, I gave myself a good talking to (probably out loud by this point, but it was ok as there was only a bloke from Clayton-Le-Moors nearby, and he was looking ten times worse than I was!), pushing all those negative thoughts out of my mind and replacing them with positive ones.

By the time I reached the knoll I felt great again and the rest of the race became much easier (despite the cramp!).

7. **DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE ARE DOING.** As I mentioned earlier, I'd had a good recce of the race and was confident that I knew exactly where I was going. That didn't stop me, however, from wondering whether the route choices of other runners in front of me were better than mine. Several times I found myself veering off in a direction I didn't want to go in, pulled like a magnet by the man in front. I stuck to my guns, though, and was much better off as a result, passing him easily as he struggled across the tussocks of Wadsworth Moor.

8. **REFUEL REGULARLY.** I've never been one for eating and drinking during exercise and had attempted to master the art during my longer training runs, but to no avail. On the day, I had to make myself keep sipping liquids and refuelling with energy gels – the only thing I could force down. This made me feel extremely queasy at times, but paid off as I still had enough energy for one final push up the hill from Nutclough Bridge to the finish.

9. **STRE-E-TCH.** This is a tip I swear by ever since the Yorkshireman. A good 20 minute stretch as soon as possible after completing the race, plus a good few stretches throughout the evening afterwards, equals 20 times less pain the day after ... and the day after that.

10. **CELEBRATE.** Finally, after all that preparation and hard work, it was time to relax, bask in my glory and treat myself to an extra large glass of wine, or two. What's the point in enduring such torture if you don't make the most of it afterwards?

Unfortunately, however, I'll have to save that tip for next time as, once exhaustion had set in, not even the finest glass of Mouton Cadet could force me to stay awake!