

## **My First Time** (but where was Nell?)

By Buddy (aka Richard Butterwick)

I'd had a bit of a fumble round the Hot Toddy and I'd experimented a bit at university, and obviously I'd done it a few times on my own, but this was going to be my first time for real.

The Huddersfield 10k was to be my first race as an official club runner. I just hoped I would be able to keep it up and go all way.

Hearing that it was a very undulating course, I looked through last year's results to get an idea of finish times. I spotted in 118<sup>th</sup> place, one Nell McAndrew (we have a bit of history... she warmed me up last November!) completing it in 7:20mile pace. Hmm, fate or what, just my kinda pace. The first time, with Nell McAndrew, now that would be something special.

As soon as I woke up, I glanced at my new sparkling virgin Toddy vest hanging proudly on the wardrobe. I started thinking about the race and suddenly realised I was suffering pre-race nerves, not something I'd experienced before. Would I injure myself on the way to the bus stop? Would the road be flooded at Eastwood? Would Graham & Elise remember to pick us up in Hebden?

So I turned to Paul McKenna (Myra's getting a bit annoyed, as there isn't really room for three!) and had a quick hypnotic Neuro Linguistic Programming session. My doubts and fears were soon replaced by images of success with Nell... that were rudely interrupted by Myra. How did she know?

The actual journey to the race went without incident. Found out some handy info about the Coniston route from Mandy and we even had time for a demoralising preview drive round the course (Huddersfield, that is). Whilst not wildly inaccurate 'undulating' was not the first word that sprang to mind, more like 'rollercoaster'. In fact, there was another unprintable word just before that!

As we packed into the narrow lane for the start I couldn't see Nell, but a plan started formulating. I'd aim for a 7min 1<sup>st</sup> mile and then an 8min 2<sup>nd</sup> uphill mile, which should place me somewhere in the vicinity of the elusive Nell. Then I'd stick to her arse for the ups and downs of the next 3 miles, and if I had the energy at the end, I'd push hard and shoot down the finish funnel.

After a long wait on the start line, we finally got the horn. It was a bit tight at first but it soon stretched out. The first mile's gentle up and downs felt like it went pretty much to plan but a glance at my watch showed that I'd been a bit over eager and was 30secs ahead of schedule. Thinking of the hills ahead I eased off and arrived at mile 2 almost bang on original schedule, but in worse shape. I had seen a Tod Andrew go past, but where was McAndrew?

The next 3 miles were mainly spent overtaking another fellow Toddy, Lee, on the downhills and struggling to find the energy not to lose him as he whizzed by on the uphills. By now it was a case of Nell? Nell who? Hell more like, I'm sure my feet were close to spontaneous combustion on the long steep downhill stretch near mile 4, or was it 5? At that point, I was even seeing little green men pushing prams!

Finally, one last thrust up saw us onto the main road and the last mile was heaven as I finally got my rhythm going. Faster and faster until exhausted I entered the funnel and 'Yes! I've done it.' Over the line and a wave of happiness engulfed me. I picked up my t-shirt and bottle of water, and then saw Lee and we congratulated each other, it was only when he asked what time I'd finished in, I thought to stop my watch!

As the other Toddies powered across the line, a couple said they thought that I might have come first (Toddy). I know it's probably bad manners, but my excuse is that it was my first time. The only way is down now!

Well done to all the Toddies, it was definitely a special first race in my new vest and so much better doing it in a group.

Nell doesn't know what she missed!