

# MARATHON MAGIC

## Tales from Toddies running Spring marathons

### Mel's Manchester Magic

by Julie Wyant

Last year, Mel and I trained together for our Spring marathons with the intention of both breaking 4 hours. Neither of us achieved our goal. This year however, Mel ran her 2<sup>nd</sup> marathon in a superb time of 3.41.58. I went to visit Mel, not only to drink tea and eat homemade biscuits, but also to find out how she did it.

#### Why the marathon?

When I entered my first one (Virgin London Marathon 2011), I had been inspired by listening to other people in Tod Harriers talking about it. I had gradually moved up from 10k to half marathons and had begun to wonder how much further I could go. The time came around for the VLM ballot, and I thought I'd apply. I didn't get in, so I thought that was the end of that. Then the club places came up and I got in.

#### London Marathon

I found training for VLM really difficult because I couldn't decide which training plan to follow. I got lots of very helpful advice from experienced marathon runners but as a novice I didn't really know which bits to follow. In the end I stuck with the Advanced Marathoning<sup>1</sup> (Pfitzinger) book which you (Joolz) lent me, but adapted it slightly as it was my first marathon, and I didn't regard myself as 'advanced'. But then I worried that I wasn't following it exactly, and got myself in a bit of a state worrying about whether I should be. I kept a log which was useful. I didn't have a Garmin then, and Martin and I would go for drives to

measure out some long runs, and I'd write down the mile markers along the way. I was doing Graham's Tuesday sessions and the pack runs, and then we started doing longer runs on a Weds. As the marathon got closer I was convinced the training had been all wrong, and the taper was awful. I just didn't feel I'd done enough.

**MELANIE ROBERTSON F50**

**MANCHESTER MARATHON**

**29/04/2012**

**3.41.58(PB) 5<sup>TH</sup> F50**

On the day the weather forecast was for heat. I've always hated running in the heat and we hadn't had a single hot day training from December to April. I was worried about water. I was still hoping for a sub-4 (my Spen 20 time suggested I could hit this goal) and aiming to run 9 minute miles. I thought it would be congested on the course, but I was in the right pen and there was no problem at all, though I did find the crowds quite overwhelming. The temperature was fine for the first hour or so, and then it started to get uncomfortable. I'd forgotten to put my sunscreen on too. When I picked up some water, I wanted to keep it with me, which was a big mistake as carrying it put my rhythm out and made my shoulder ache. About halfway in, I decided that I just wanted to finish and wasn't that bothered about the time, I just wasn't feeling good. I couldn't understand it, it was worse than any of my long training runs; I just got really slow after

that. Then at about 21 miles I began to feel better, and began to enjoy it, and had a strong finish, finally crossing the line in 4.16.52.

### ***What Did You Decide To Do Differently For The Manchester Marathon This Year?***

I didn't run for a while after VLM, and I started spending a lot more time at the rowing club at Hollingworth Lake. Then the entries for the return of the Manchester Marathon opened in the summer and I knew straight away that I wanted to do it. I was rowing 3 or 4 times a week, and also doing ergo(indoor) rowing and circuit training during the winter months. I noticed I was feeling a lot fitter, and particularly my glutes, legs and core were getting really strong.

For the specific marathon training I followed a plan<sup>2</sup> in a Runners World book<sup>3</sup>. It seemed so simple compared to the previous year. I had no problem sticking to it and thought it worked really well. I particularly liked the Yasso 800s, the idea being that you run



*Mel at London last year*

sets of 800m intervals in a time that is "equal" to your marathon time (e.g. 3 minutes 45 seconds is equal to a 3 hour 45 marathon). I was having no problem running 3.45s or even quicker. I was often doing two exercise

sessions a day, perhaps running to work in the morning and then rowing on the evening. I felt the combination worked well for me. I still panicked a bit during the taper though, thinking I wasn't doing enough. Despite the programme suggesting only easy runs in the taper, I still did a bit of speedwork during the final weeks.

My lead up races went well. I ran 1.46.47 (1<sup>st</sup> F50) at the Blackpool Half, and the Thirsk 10 in 1.18.23. These races confirmed that I was running well and that a good sub-4 was a comfortable and realistic goal.

I made more of an effort with nutrition too, trying to eat more protein and using recovery drinks after hard training sessions. I also found I was drinking less alcohol and I think that helped.

### ***How Did You Decide What Your Target Time For Manchester Would Be?***

Having the Garmin really helped me to focus on and analyse my training runs. I was feeling much more confident having such quality feedback. I knew that sub-4 was achievable, and had a secret (so secret I hadn't even told Martin) goal of around 3.45. This was based on the Yasso 800s and tools like the Macmillan Calculator<sup>4</sup>.

### ***Did You Have A Race Plan?***

I knew what pace I had to run to get a time of 3.45. Late on in my training I learned about negative splits but hadn't practised that in training. So on the day of the race I decided to try to run with the 3.45 pace maker if I could, at least for the first half of the race. Secretly I was hoping to be feeling strong and try and run faster in the second half. Accordingly I had stuck with the pace maker's group for the first half, and I had just started to get in front of them when my shoelace came undone. While I re-tied it they went past me again and I had to

catch up. I just decided to stay with them then. They came in a few minutes ahead of schedule. It worked well.

Even though I don't do much fell-running myself I knew about the kit requirements for long fell races and because of the heavy rain and wind chill factor on race day I decided to treat the race as if it was a long fell race, so I was toggged up in a long sleeve baselayer and a good waterproof running jacket, and my inov8 peak cap to keep the water out of my eyes. I never took the jacket off. The conditions really were so bad that some runners were being treated for hypothermia at the end.

### **What Next?**

I'm 50 now, and was 5<sup>th</sup> in my category. But I wasn't that far behind the F50s that finished in front of me (only 7mins 10secs behind 1<sup>st</sup> F50). Perhaps I could have placed higher if I hadn't stopped to tie my shoelace. I've been quite inspired by an American F50 Meghan

Arbogast, although she is an ultra runner and I don't think I want to run more than marathon distance. I know that I can't keep getting better as I get older, but I think I might be able to get a bit faster before I start to slow down.

I might perhaps try some yoga to regain some flexibility and help to avoid injuries, or perhaps pilates. I'd like to return to Graham's speed training sessions on a Tuesday.

I'm intending to not have a big break from running like I did last year, but get back into it fairly quickly. I'm doing the Mull of Kintyre Half Marathon in June and I also have a place in the Great North Run in September, which brings me full circle, as it was being inspired by seeing all the GNR runners when Martin did it in 2005 that started me running. I may then have another go at the marathon in the Autumn, perhaps Chester.

<sup>1</sup> Advanced Marathoning, by Peter Pfitzinger and Scott Douglas

<sup>2</sup> To see a copy of the plan visit <http://endurancesports1.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/marathon-training-plan.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The Runner's World Complete Guide to Running. Gordon & Gotch. 2010

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.mcmillanrunning.com/calculator>

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## **BLISTERIN' BOSTON**

Robin Tuddenham (from Tod Harriers Forum)



"Thanks folks. A big personal worst but a day when times became a bit irrelevant, and it was all about survival!

Running can sometimes take us to places we don't want to go, and there was some suffering out there

yesterday. My tenth marathon and I experienced some firsts, at Mile 5 when you normally feel unstoppable, I was feeling dizzy and uncertain I would make it. But the screaming crowds, and the constant dowsing of water kept me going.

By half way I had revised my target time down to sub 3 in my head, and tried to ignore the

constant stream of fast guys pulling up and walking. The second half is much harder and it just kept getting hotter, with little shade and the promised wind didn't turn up. 🙄

**ROBIN TUDDENHAM**

**BOSTON MARATHON 16/04/12**

**3.04.08**

**(PB 2.35.18)**

Each mile became a test of endurance and by mile 19 as I ran towards Heratbreak Hill I made a deal with myself, ignore the time and just do 2 things, keep running and don't walk, and finish. I stuck to it. At mile 23 it felt like time had stopped, but with 2k to go I felt better and in the last 800m I suddenly picked it up to 5:20 pace ha ha!

Truly a great marathon, with 116 years of history, and must come back and run it in normal conditions. I don't think I have ever run a training session in that temperature let alone a marathon.

Even the Kenyan guys suffered, 2:12 winning time! Winner collapsed in a heap at the end for once they looked mortal. More on this in another post to come. And Mel thanks for pointing out the English guy I just beat, recognised his name, he has a marathon PB of 2:30, says it all!

Now time to enjoy this great city."



# CANNONBALL RUNS . . . TWICE!

John Lloyd (from the forums)

## Manchester Marathon



"Well then guys it's over. Here's the story, up at 3 as couldn't sleep, looked outside it was five finger weather. Set off

at 6.30 got into Rochdale and it was time to move to plan B, wear the Newton v2 s I bought as back up, new shoes never ran in em, loved them. Got to the destination it was actually snowing, sleet and horizontal wind. Got my new sparking trainers dirty before the start (not amused). On the start line I told Andi jones, "I bet ya a fiver I beat ya over the first mile" ( I didn't ) however, there were 2 Asians lads that are my new heroes cannonball juniors, OMG they had a Blinder first 100m! Darren Campbell the race starter said they should go to the next Olympic trails. Looked to my left at the start and saw the quality of the field but had still hoped to achieve my target time and thought top 20 was achievable.

What followed was ridiculous, first 10k 37, 10 mile 59, half marathon 1.18. On track then came the horse track, sleet, monsoon., by 18 I started to slow. I thought I would pick up in last 6, but oh no the weather worsened the roads were bendy beyond belief and my gas had run out on my back. I saw Wrighty, SMS other toddies and friends and slugged to 20. At 21 and 22, a little stoppage for cramp, followed by some blurred vision. I battled

through, I was not going to quit. I saw Wrighty again a god send more encouragement, cramp again, I carried on. I crossed the line in 2:55 gutted but released. I then stumbled, fell and the next thing I knew I was on a Bed in the VIP area, being poked and prodded by a doctor. They had wrapped me up in foil like a turkey at Xmas, my heart rate after 20 mins of stopping was 140 bpm, a slight worry. It took me 1 and half hours to stop shivering and make my way back to the car. I didn't want to miss my wife. I was worried if I got that cold how was she ?? She was fine she ran under her target of 5 hours, I was well proud of her. All in all a good experience, poor course management was like cross country at one stage bad start management. Massive thanks for all good luck messages and all help and support with training. Well done to other toddies who took part, respect to all finishers."

### **Cork City Marathon**

"Just got back to hotel now having completed my second marathon in 5 week. On arriving in cork we got off the plane and the weather was shocking. My first thoughts were, oh crap this is going to be Manchester all over again. Sunday same weather. Yet today was glorious and perfect running conditions if not a little warm. As I lined up on start line I eyed up the Kenyan and last year's winner and knew my race strategy was going to mean I wouldn't be seeing them for long.

The first 13 I ran bang on to plan 6:10 per min. Then I dug deep and had a difficult 5 mile period but kept it to about 6:20. then next 5 miles 6:25. I was hanging on for my life for 2: 45. Then got cramp in calf and had to stop for about 1 min, than feet started to hurt but not unbearable. At this stage a bloke shouted "well done first man" referring to my

five fingers, he chuckled I didn't. 2 miles to go

**JOHN LLOYD**

**MANCHESTER MARATHON 29/04/2012**

**2.55.31 38<sup>TH</sup>**

**CORK CITY MARATHON 4/6/12**

**2.51.52 (PB) 17<sup>TH</sup>**

I dug in and finished 17 th in 2:51:52, shaved 5 mins off but not the coveted 2:45. Makes me realise how well I actually did in those terrible conditions. I am left thinking should I have just done 6:18 all round or at least tried?? Don't think that's my style though. It frustrated me watching half marathon boys and relays passing maybe I am built for the half and tens ??? Overall pleased good course although little undulating , well organised and glad to sock it to the Irish on jubilee weekend."

## **MORE TODDIE SPRING MARATHON MAGIC**

*Jonny Medcalf - London 3.34.55*

*Jayne Williams - London 3.45.21*

*Kevin Coughlan – Manchester 3.40.41*

*Richard O'Sullivan Manchester 3.58.13*

