

# The CCC August 2009

The atmosphere in Chamonix was amazing as the banners went up and more and more lycra clad runners arrived in the town. There were four events :

**CCC®** [Courmayeur-Champex-Chamonix] : 98km and 5600m

**UTMB®** [Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc®] : 166km and 9400m

**TDS** [Sur les Traces des Ducs de Savoie] : 105km et 6700m

**PTL** [La Petite Trotte à Léon] : + 240km, 18000m

A total of 5300 runners took part in these events the biggest being the Tour with 2300 runners.

I was to do the CCC along with 1800 others running with Jeff Lea from Achille Ratti we set off on the Friday morning at 10.00am from Courmayeur.

## Preparation

A jog around the Lakeland 50. Doing reasonably well, finishing in the top half of the field in around 14 hours.

A two week Alpine holiday in Chamonix including climbing Mont Blanc (not a good idea) 5 days before. Lots of happy hours at the Jekyll Bar.

## The route.

A run around the Mont Blanc massif starting in Italy and returning to France via Switzerland with five 750m climbs and one 300m.



## The Weather

Red Hot during the day misty and freezing cold on the climbs in the dark.

## The Food

Every check point was the same manned by hundreds of volunteers. There was plenty of water, noodle soup, salami, bread, cakes, cheese, banana, oranges and best of all Coke – never drink the stuff normally but on these events it's the business. Helps settle the stomach and give you energy. We supplemented this with a few gels and sports beans that we'd carried. The secret is to get enough fluid on board.

## The Lows

Having to queue up on the narrow paths for two and a half hours at the start even running downhill!

Jeff getting cramp just as we'd got going due to the heat (thankfully cured by Crampex tablets and the weather cooling down as we went into the night).

Climbing up the Bovine in the dark it was really disorientating, very steep (what happened to those nice zig-zag paths that are in the Alps) we could see head torches what appeared to be vertically upwards. Then we entered the mist and the head torches disappeared it got very very cold we weren't sure whether we were going the right way. Just wondering when the check point would appear when it did

Being so tired that you can't even run downhill.

## The Highs.

The atmosphere is just amazing beginning with the music at the beginning.

The crowds lining the streets cheering and clapping, as though you are a hero doing something really awesome. As Jeff said "it's like being in the Tour De France".

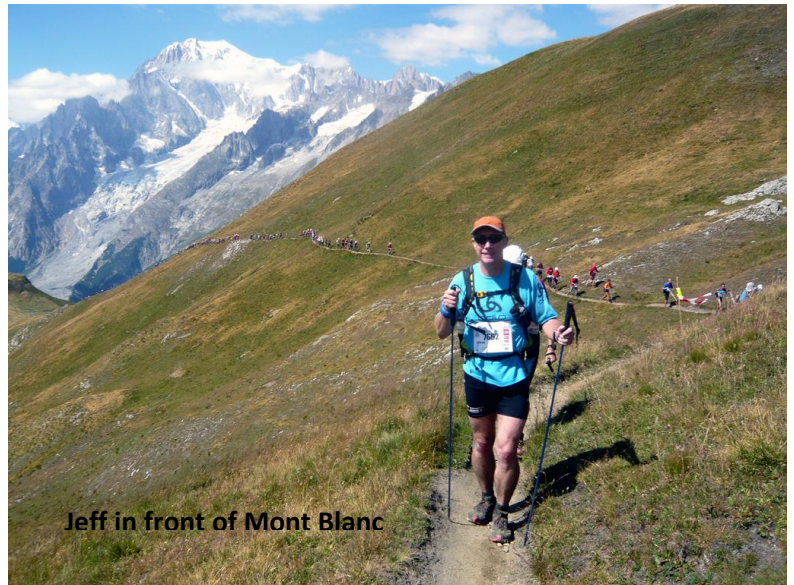
The scenery is amazing as you go up Val Ferret there are amazing views of Mont Blanc.

The headtorches snaking up the hill in front of and behind you.

Climbing up the last hill as the sun is starting to rise and Mont Blanc comes into view again. Saying to Jeff "come on one last hill it's all in the head".

The finish is the best bit, the crowds lining the streets cheering and clapping. Jim Smith & Richard Blakeley, Clare K and Nick coming out to meet us.

Being so thankful I wasn't doing the full tour.



## STOPPING

Wearing the red gilet with pride.

## WHY

At the time I said never again but then you think well if I'd trained properly I could have done a lot better. This Ultra running is really a head game you don't think about the whole event you break it up into little chunks. Literally thinking about the next checkpoint or the next hill and mentally ticking them off as you go along.

The most important thing is not to waste time at the checkpoints. On every hill we were passed by people only to pass them as they sat in a check point. By doing this we gradually worked our way up the field to finish 821/2 out of 1800 runners. So on the whole quite pleased myself and maybe in 2011 I'll give it another go and be better!

