

## One foot in front of the other.....a Bob Graham Round

“There’s nothing like it”. How many times had people said that to me? “King for a day” said Rhys, “make the most of it, enjoy your day”.

Easy for him to say. But having had a failed attempt last year during which I felt sick all day, it was not easy for me to imagine enjoying it! However, that said, I’m not one to be defeated by something and I love my long days on the fells. So, once the achilles had settled down to a manageable state over the winter, I took to the fells once again and enjoyed long Spring days out, building myself up for another attempt.

And how I enjoyed the “training”. From Easter to the end of June, we were away almost every weekend, spending days out on the fells and sleeping under canvas at night. The cold winter gave way to a glorious spring and early summer and the confidence grew.



I supported 3 successful BGs in May and June, gradually building up the time on feet to the point where my last long run was supporting the last 3 legs of someone’s BG. I looked back at my last 6 weeks of training and realised that, whereas the mantra for success is “10,000 feet per week”, I’d actually been putting in over 15,000 feet with no difficulty. The achilles was feeling a little battered and a couple of niggles had developed elsewhere, but with a good taper planned, I knew there was time for the body to recover.

And come the day, I was feeling good and ready. The body had recovered (assisted, no doubt, by Kirsten’s banning of alcohol for the last 2 weeks!) and I was straining at the leash. The weather had really turned nasty in July, but I at least had a calm, clear night to start and it was with relish that I headed out of Keswick at midnight, and up onto Skiddaw to start my round.

And from there, it went better than I could ever have hoped for or expected. Superb navigators, great support and company on the fells, the best road support in the business and I just felt strong mentally and physically all day. There was never a single doubt in my mind that I was going to get round in under 24 hours. I was well up on time at Dunmail, almost an hour up at Wasdale and, but for messing around at Honister and spending far too long talking to people...then being persuaded to go off-road from Newlands and getting lost(!)..... I’d have been back in Keswick 30 minutes earlier than I was.

But that doesn’t matter. Time is unimportant as long as it’s under 24 hours. I had a wonderful day, in wonderful company. I enjoyed every minute (ok, ok..I didn’t exactly enjoy the climb up Gable in thick mist and driving rain!). I felt so thrilled to be there, so inspired by the people who came out to support me and so grateful for the help that everyone gave me.

How could I not be inspired by a 65-year old fellrunning legend agreeing to come along and faultlessly navigate the two toughest legs, showing me every shortcut in the book in thick clag and driving rain? How could I

possibly fail when I had Bill Johnson navigate me perfectly across a misty leg 2 and his wife, the holder of the fastest time for a female BG, taking video of me at Dunmail and telling me I was going well! Add to that the BG Secretary accompanying me on the final 3 legs, and plenty of other remarkable folk from clubs as diverse as Northumberland FR, Dark Peak, Calder Valley, Tattenhall, Bowland and Pennine supporting me, and I felt privileged and honoured to be out there.

It's a day I'll never forget. I touched the top of Robinson in the fading light and wished the day could last forever. Kirsten trotted with me as we approached the lights of Keswick. Across the fields, a left turn, right over the bridge and up towards the main square. I was aware of people cheering and, from somewhere, I managed a sprint up the centre of the street and straight to the green doors of the Moot Hall to complete in 23.20.

Congratulations, lots of smiles, a bottle of champagne, a bag of chips....and I'm too wired to sit down, my legs don't want to stop. I'm aware that I'm sporting a broad grin and it's not going away any time soon. 10 minutes later, the two cups of champagne hit with a vengeance and I'm struggling to keep my head up and stay awake. Kirsten manages to get me back to the tent and into the sleeping bag, for a restless night's sleep, the adrenaline still flowing and the legs twitching.

The long-distance bug has well and truly bitten me. After a few days of moving awkwardly, thoughts already turn to the next big day out. I've had enough of the Lakes for now, especially with the Summer hordes arriving. Our sights are turned to Wales and I can't wait to get out there and recce the Paddy Buckley.....ready for doing it next Spring I hope.

A huge thanks to everyone who helped me, both last year on my unsuccessful attempt, and this year and a special thanks to Kirsten for organising, supporting, running and believing.



To anyone contemplating a BG, I say: DO IT!! Put the training in, immerse yourself in the tradition of it, support other attempts and be inspired by them....and then relax and enjoy your own big day. And just keep putting one foot in front of the other.....

Rich Gilbert