

What a Difference a Week Makes.....

Last week at 8.30 am I was in Palma, contemplating a half marathon in near perfect conditions, with weather that subsequently turned into the ultimate pool-lounging conditions.

This week, at 8.30 am, I awoke to gale force winds, driving rain, and weather that turned into sheltering-behind-any-small-rock- available conditions.

Talk about the sublime to the ridiculous!

But that's the fell-running season for you. Anyone thinking that a trip to Pennistone Hill will be accompanied by glorious sunshine and dryness underfoot patently hasn't been there, ever, at any time of year.....

So with the memory of sunshine well and truly dispelled, Edward, Keith and I sat in the car, watching the rain drive down, not only thinking, but verbalising our absolute desire to just go home and post a DNF. Only Keith's insistence that we run made us continue.

Edward ran in the Junior races; as usual, brilliantly organised, with enough chocolate in the goody bag to keep a 12yr old occupied (almost) for the duration of the senior race.

Keith and I had signed up, with a surprisingly few other Harriers, for the senior race. I ran this a few years ago, and like childbirth, all memories of route, pain and outcome had been removed from my conscious self. As happens, without the aid of gas and air, 20mins in it all came flooding back. It was a true bog-fest. Having given my Walshes to the more able member of my family, my trail shoes coped almost as well as my self-motivation with the mashed peat, levelled at a 1:10 incline.

The false horizons were to be expected, but what was worse was the wind, which was not only trying to blow you down hill on the up bits, but sucked away your breath on the along bits. This coupled with random thigh swallowing, cunningly disguised bogs made the cross to the descent quite hard to say the least.

Then, at last, it was down.....And hey surprise surprise we were in the lea of the hill, so no help from the ferocious wind! But, we were confronted by slabs

of paving, at which point I was thankful for my trail shoes which at least afforded a grip of sorts.

Now Withins is one of those races where you can see a stream of runners in front of you, which at the beginning instils poetic thoughts and visions of awesome photography. Towards the end, when you're cold and tired, the vision of runners snaking in front of you to another horizon (admittedly below you) is a little soul destroying, but not as depressing as crossing the bridge and being greeted by 30 or so walkers sat eating their picnics and taking photos of the 'nutters'!

Needless to say, the end came in sight, we'll forget about the hands above head climb and the run up through the car park with the ignominy of everyone else leaving whilst you're still trying to finish, the end is the end. And what a welcome sight it was. Coffee. Check the Juniors results. Off.

So Palma or Pennistone?

So different. So brilliant in their own ways. Both an achievement.

But sometimes a true measure of performance is not how fast you do it, or what place you finish, but by how much you increase your body weight collecting mud, peat bog, bracken and other moorland detritus on the way round. By this token today I did brilliantly.....

Don't you just love running?!?