

PECO XC Golden Acre Park.

I hate cross country, this is a fairly well known fact. But, Edward was keen to run, it wasn't raining (when I got up), Golden Acre Park promised a bit of a respite from the usual field slogging, and I hadn't got a hangover.....As Ellie would say – it had a lot going for it!

So, I turned up, minus Edward who blobbed at the last minute, very trepedacious at the prospect of my first XC in a long long time. PECO's aren't that scary, hence why I was here. There's a great spread of people, from the ultra fast to the plodders. I saw Jamie H at the start and pleaded that he didn't lap me.....such was the confidence in my ability. But hey, sometimes it's good to jump out of your comfort box, and turn up for the good of the team.

A few eyebrows were raised at my presence and even at the start line people were mouthing across the throng "I thought you didn't like XC!" I don't, and started to wonder why I was actually here.....

Start, run round a little lap, start the big lap. I never know whether it's best to make a mental note of landmarks on the way round on a 2-lap course. Knowing where you are is sometimes good, but sometimes it's best to just run blind. I can't help it though, and started to see the little flag things that went in order M1, M2 etc, until about $\frac{3}{4}$ way round when they became random. So, my mental markers were gone, all I could think was that this was a very long lap and at some point it would actually end, but I was going to have to do it all again.

It's strange what you think about when running, and at the start of the second lap visions of all my potential 'walk-breaks' came into my head.....the first hill at the end of the bottom field.....the bit that's hidden from everyone else just as you do a sharp left.....the point just after the marshall in the dip before the last incline..... Obviously I make mental notes all the way round, consciously or not – I even remembered the holly bush that leapt out just after M12 (random positioning). These thoughts kept me going through the trees, over the tree roots, through the mud, the sand, the endless twists and turns, more trees and kept me entertained to the finish. I'd done it. I'd turned out, run, and miraculously counted for the team.

Now if I, with my fervent hatred of XC can drag myself out of my pit on a Sunday morning, and unbelievably count for the team (have I mentioned that

before?), then so can you. There are loads of more capable runners in our club.....just do it! These races are actually good fun, camaraderie abounds, and the runs aren't too arduous – go on have a go!

A final note – special appreciation has to go to the Jackson family – not only was Mum (Louise) running for the first time along with Dad, Andy, but Harriet (runner in the junior race) turned up at every corner, every straight, and every tree - along with some other juniors who I don't know (sorry, but thanks to you too) - and cheered tirelessly throughout the race. Your enthusiastic support was brilliant!

Well done to all.....I may even get out of my pit next time.....

Sx