

## **Inglorious, bar stewards - a report from the Lancaster Marathon. Andrew Merrick**

I have more than occasionally found myself thinking about a "match report" in those mid-race moments when you are trying to occupy your mind and not think about the mileage ahead. So i thought it was about time i finally put finger to keyboard.

You know that a course is going to be hilly when ..... it is described as "undulating" in the marketing material; when you look down on wind farms as you drive to the start; when the person next to you on the start line is wearing a Ultra trail du mont blanc t-shirt. Imagine the sort of marathon the organisers of the Otley 10 would be proud to put their name to. The car park was the flattest bit of the entire experience. I had decided however that this was the venue for my final attempt to reach the old git qualifying standard for the London Marathon - helpfully increased to 3:20 from 3:15 for 2014. Having done a few big city marathons, with due respect to the good people of Lancaster, this was a little different in a variety of ways. Our race HQ was a Lancaster Brewery establishment in a leisure park a few miles from (above) Lancaster. With 120 entries (well 117 to be precise) there were no loo queues (which i think allowed me to set a new PB of 6 visits); there was no stress finding/getting to the start, more a polite few yard gap left at the front for those who wanted to claim elite status; there was however some traffic along the way, mainly supporters of the various runners - I saw the same Audi TT about 7 times - with the occasional motor bike having fun buzzing the runners. Racing posed a different challenge too, in big city marathons there are so many people you don't get the impression you are racing anyone in particular and you can be quite controlled about your pace. Its a little different when there are 117 of you spread out over the Lancashire hillsides.....

As to the race itself, all felt good after 16 miles in just under two hours leaving me just over 80 minutes for the remaining 10. I knew i had the hill (most of mile 19) to come at this stage, however this coupled with the wind finally defeated me causing me to finish in an inglorious 3:22..... After I bit of a lie down, I inspected my goodie bag - we had been promised a "surprise from the Lancaster brewery" - to find the surprise was no sign of any beer..... I had to make do with a kit kat and a banana. Once i was able to walk again it seemed appropriate to rectify this so i walked (a bit of artistic licence here) up the gentle hill to the Lancaster brewery and stood patiently at the bar for some time. Even the bar stewards seemed reluctant to hand over their prized liquid but, finally, appropriately refueled by this and a magnificent steak sandwich I began to feel human again.

A challenging race but certainly one which would cause me to look at other (flatter) small city marathons.

ps with the passage of time, it seems appropriate to report briefly on Boston. Another 3:22 here for me in rather different circumstances, the running paled into insignificance with the subsequent events. The support in Boston is fantastic - they do take their event very seriously in a very good way which made the tragedy of the explosions even more poignant. Until that time ~~Ros Brown's birthday weekend~~ David Brown's Boston weekend had all gone to plan. David did finally, at the third attempt, finish the marathon on an emotional day, but rather more importantly found Ros after some anxious post race moments.