

## **Edinburgh Marathon 2005**

The story so far, featuring the Footworks Run Club. By Colin McPhail of Footworks.



**Tam The Gun was brought along as the Starting Pistol**

Edinburgh, my hometown, and as I explain to anyone who takes the decision to run a marathon, you will never run an easier marathon than your hometown. You get to sleep in your own bed, drink your usual water, eat your own food and breath your home air. Away marathons are always more difficult due to all the aforementioned and possibly time zone differentials. The pre race training all started in early January 2005 with the Footworks Run Club. A group of enthusiastic runners wanting to achieve “the Urban Everest”. Most of these had never run further than 10k.

As the official coach to our unofficial club I create a random training schedule, which would, if the opportunity arose, allow me to run London marathon, although its not part of the master plan. Our club meets 3 times per week, Monday, Thurs and Sunday, this allows us to meet and discuss training issues whilst also using a varied programme of distance, strength and speed work. There is also another fast and furious group, which meets in the meadows (Alec Macewan) that can be included alongside our schedule, for the runner wishing to get serious results.

The important distances for any marathon are 10k (this is the last 6.2 miles of your 26.2 journey), half marathon (lets you know how hard half the distance is), and then there is the full marathon (reserved for special occasions). I always find the 10k and half marathon are hard races to run but not painful, recovery is fast and they are great indicators of your level of fitness. We now had to aim them all at some events, which would be major milestones in the training programme. First was Alloa Half Marathon, a great test of how your winter training has progressed. Then the Great Caledonian Run 10K, a must because of the size of the event and the hilliness of the course, another great test of training. Finally the Dunfermline Half Marathon, this just has to be one of the best runs in Scotland and its down to Dr John Martindale and his clockwork organisation team. This years Dunfermline Half had a mini Expo where lots of stands provided entertainment and it gave a certain extra buzz to this hugely successful event.

While I was at the London Marathon Expo earlier this year I bumped into John Bryant, the author of 3:59.4 and *The London Marathon (History of the greatest Race On Earth)*. During our conversation it emerged that John was a native of Edinburgh as he lived here for 3 years and shared a flat with an old running mate of mine, Don Macgregor of Fife AC. The time I knew Don he was World Veteran Marathon Champion and ex marathon Olympian from Munich 1972. John Bryant and I had common ground and his suggestion to come to Edinburgh during the Marathon and do a book signing looked like becoming a reality.



**John Bryant signing Tony Backstrom's Book**

My really good friend and training partner Angus Wood, who was accompanying me at the LM Expo, was impressed with the speed at which John and I arrived at this suggestion and, like me saw a great opportunity unfolding before our eyes. Angus had trained hard to run London but picked up an injury three weeks before and had to give up his place. This now meant that Edinburgh was next on his list. Edinburgh Marathon is a good one to run as most of your training is done through spring when the outside temperatures are less likely to cause injuries. Now Angus belongs to a small club in Banbury, Oxfordshire, where they train too fast and too furious, a great recipe for the highly tuned athlete, but this is not Angus, at the moment. If only more attention could be given to the lesser athletes within clubs then they may not be lured into going too fast too far too soon!

Back to Edinburgh and we start to increase the distance of the Sunday runs making them regularly 15-18 miles. Surprisingly most of the group, who all run at differing speeds, cope very well with this increase. Of course there is Alan Swan who ran 3.11 in London helping to pull the front end faster, and Chris Gray, who is aiming at the LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon at the end of the year ensuring the main body of the group is kept sane and steady. Chris is a great friend who suffers from asthma and uses an inhaler to control this. He claims there is only one speed he runs at and likens it to a governed diesel engine, on the flat he's at cruising speed, downhill he increases slightly and uphill he slows down. His whole attitude towards running is based upon being able to cover the same distances at the same pace, time to show him some new tricks. You can't turn a carthorse into a racehorse but you *can* make the carthorse much faster! Then of course we have Diane McDonald who takes the running in her stride and enjoys every moment unfortunately she has no sense of direction and one Thursday evening we lost her. Fortunately Diane turned up like a lost sheep about forty-five minutes after the main group had finished totally unscathed although a little embarrassed. Pippa Stanyard was showing great strength and determination, only to be expected of a George Watson's teacher, after all she has to deal with Edinburgh's finest youth on a daily basis!

However *Alloa Half Marathon* is quickly upon us and this is the first real test of my attempt at coaching. Lot of mixed feelings at the start line and then off goes the gun and it's the next 1hr 50 that demonstrates how this lot have faired throughout the winter. The way they all performed was truly remarkable, it was a first distance race for most of the group, and everyone performed above expectation with a few PB's in the bag. There is a blindingly good hill at mile 11 in this course, which must put so many people in a state of despair. Chris Gray came across the finish line about 10 mins faster than ever before and looked decidedly shaky as we held onto him and Karen Cameron rushed to get the water and hydrate him swiftly. I got quite excited at the performances and knew the training was showing great success.

Somewhere between Alloa and Dunfermline the Navman came onto the scene. This is a GPS (Global Positioning System), which acts as a speedo, odometer, altimeter and loads more. This device, for under a hundred quid, gives you accurate speed and distance information, which is invaluable for the distance runner. There is no doubt in my mind that we have the ability to measure accurately by assessing the duration of our runs and calculating this at our given minutes per mile pace, but we are not accurate with these assessments. Now there are no arguments. The biggest problem with them is waiting to lock into the three satellites required to gain the relevant information, this can take up to 2-

3mins. They also do not work in tunnels so it pays to plan routes without tunnels, rather easy in Edinburgh.



**Navman Fits to your bicep just above the elbow, totally unobtrusive.**

***The Great Caledonian Run*** (Edinburgh's uphill 10K) was another great test, especially at this much shorter distance, where I knew a short Sunday run would benefit the group. It paid off

well and many achieved PB's. This was a fast furious run that was very well accepted. The sheer size of the start area with all its commotion was a great buzz, which will be welcomed back year after year. Most of the group watched the event later that evening on channel 5, great coverage of the race but a terrible time of day to air it, 00.45 on a Monday morning. Still it was great to see the battle of the Hastings unfold into an admirable charity donation £1066.00. This event attracted a field of 5500 runners and certainly felt like the best Edinburgh had seen to date. Thanks to Nova International for bringing the event to Edinburgh along with BUPA.

Next on the cards was the ***Dunfermline Half Marathon***. Organised by Dr John Martindale and his company Interloq. This was a fantastic event with sunshine, warm temperatures massive crowd in a venue that is very crowd friendly and somewhat unique. A field of just over 1000 runners took to the streets of Dunfermline and our budding marathonettes all came home in spectacular times. Now we were all within two weeks of Edinburgh Marathon and had half marathon times which could be calculated up to give us an estimate of our predicted full marathon finish time. A good calculation is to double up your half and add 12 mins if you were 1.25 – 1.30(for the half) - add 15 mins for a 1.30 – 1.40 ---and add 20 – 30 mins if you took longer. This meant my group were all hoping to achieve under the 4.00hr mark. That would be a fine achievement.

During the many Sunday runs I, very occasionally, turned up with what might be termed as Cognac Head, you will realise the significance of this at the end of the story. It's amazing what sweat, fresh air and hills do for a hangover, although this is not recommended, as dehydration requires careful management. This group were totally committed to the training and, as with all training, it occasionally becomes a chore. We trained through frost, rain, hail, wind and sun and most of the group are fortunate to remain injury free. Alas there are always fallers and Jonny Crerar broke with about 5 weeks to go, leg injury. Then big Tony McClusky tried to impress himself, and us, by running a PB at ***Kirkcubright Half*** on the Saturday followed by an excellent run at ***Dunfermline Half*** on the Sunday of the same weekend. Admirable but unfortunately it cost him dearly as he went down with a knee injury as well as a cold/virus with only two weeks to go. Bryony O'Hara managed to pick up a hip complaint at the 3-week hurdle and Claire Donald damaged an ankle with 10 days to go. Poor old Gareth Hughes went down at the first hurdle in January when he damaged one of the all-important ligaments inside the ankle after a bad fall while training. With three weeks to go I was getting some knee niggles with the increased weekly mileage, Karen Cameron was always going down with a Watsonians Flu bug and continual bunionitis!! The week before the marathon Stewart Wilson allowed his socks to slip below the Achilles and make the back of his shoes all red, not to worry that's what compeeds for. So, anyone thinking they are alone with their niggles can take a hike. This lot were all trying to find excuses not to perform to their expectations on the day!

Before the big day the main group tapered down well and we all ran a slow 5 miler on Thursday while discussing what time people would be going to the Expo to collect their timing chip and number. The Expo was held in a big tent in Holyrood Park and all competitors for both full marathon and team relay were expected to visit the venue to collect their pre race instructions. This is a great idea for the organisers because they save on a pile of postage, charge exhibitors an arm and a leg and increase the events profits. The weather for the Expo was intensely warm and all the forecasts were talking about 12C on Sunday with light rain and occasional heavy showers as the day progressed. Great temperature but not a good rain forecast. One good thing about the Expo was the number of visiting marathons selling their events, it's always good to meet the organisers and discuss certain aspects of each individual marathon before deciding the ones to take part in.

The Expo was attended by celebrities such as Fauja Singh (94 year old who holds the world marathon record for over 90's), Hugh Jones (Winner of London in 1982), Chris Moon (runs with an artificial leg and hand after being blown up by a landmine in 1995) and of course John Bryant the author of 3:59.4 and The London Marathon (History of The Greatest Race on Earth). John was my guest and was here to do a book signing at the Footworks Shop in town. I thought it might be a great idea to have him visit us out at the Superfeet stand where we were helping out and he could sign a few books for anyone interested. I don't know about you but I take every opportunity to purchase books on running and speak with the authors. It gives me a great collection of things to talk about and opens my world even more.

The local radio station, Radio Forth, agreed to interview John, but unfortunately this was blocked by the organisers of the Expo. Strange not to accept a free hand at something which needs as much publicity as it can get. After all Footworks had put a considerable amount of effort into getting John here and had spent a princely sum advertising with Edinburgh Marathon Magazine. I'm sure John was not offended and it only gave me a momentary period of embarrassment!! After all John's buddies Fauja Singh, Chris Moon, and Hugh Jones were all delighted to see him and even more books got signed with a multitude of signatures, what appeared to be a turn down worked well and became a turn up!!



**The Expo Tent far left**

them create an event with the stature of London. Come on HBOS or RBoFS there is more to life than rugby and football, lets get Edinburgh on the map with some real sponsorship.

Well, race day is imminent and we finally get back home from the expo at 9.00pm, not the best preparation for a 26.2 mile run in 12 hrs time but what the hell it only another long Sunday run with a Thursday night added in. Took John Bryant's advice and did some serious "*claret loading*" before gently drifting off for a good nights sleep.

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June**, awoke at 06.30 and did the usual weather check at the window. Stair rods, torrential rain and an air temperature of 8C. Now, I vowed I would never start a marathon in the rain but the entire group were in the same boat, what kind of coach would I be to desert them at this point? We had been making fun of the "sheddable shell" and how it really did nothing for style points anywhere. But now it was looking like the best invention ever a totally waterproof and wind proof jacket made from Tyvec, a material made from recycled plastics and costing only £5.00, hence the name "Sheddable Shell" you wear it to the start then throw it leaving you warm and comfortable, this was superb.

The general consensus of the Expo was mixed, and being a retailer within the town I get to hear the public's immediate response. This was varied but, as I explained to many of these people, it was a first year and all comments should be emailed directly to the organisers otherwise they cannot respond for the future. I am sure voiced comments will reach back but unfortunately most people are too complacent to write comments. It's a shame in this era of communication, and with the convenience of email that more people do not write comments down. I feel sure if the right sponsor comes along we can help

My wife Isla and daughter Jen were both running the Hairy Haggis Team Relay and had to make sure they had everyone, including themselves, at the relevant starting points at the correct times. No mean feat when you consider they had missed the deadlines for the shuttle bus free passes. However it's a lot easier than you think when you know the city as a resident. They had loads to think about and all I had to think about was 26.2 miles, so off I went to collect my good friend and running partner Karen Cameron at 8.00am and cruise down to the start parking as close as possible. Was overtaken by Hugh Jones on a bike once we started the final walk to the start.



Karen's best time to date was from her New York run in 2004 when she clocked 3.51. I knew she was capable of 3.30 but would need a certain push to gain some spare minutes at the start.

We met with some others of our team Stuart Wilson, Niall Cameron, Angus Wood arrived with Hamish (his Brother) and wife, then guess what? Toilets required, lets hope it's not like last year. Baggage check-in was good (somewhat shambolic) and the usual lack of facilities prevailed. I don't suppose the organisers could ever get that bit right, when you have 10,000 people all needing a pre-race piss, maybe they ought to issue specimen bags in the pre race info pack!!

At 08.55am it's still raining but there are some breaks appearing in the clouds, Alan Swan did say it would be bright sunshine by the time we reached Silverknowes, about 13 miles into the run. Time to remove the sheddable shell and wait for the gun. We did go in at the 3- 3hr 30 mark but I suspect everyone was ignoring these slots, as they all appeared to be in the same spot, another minor organisational cock up. However the gun went off bang on 9.00am and roughly 1.5 minutes later we crossed the mat. Not a good start for Karen and I, as we had to squeeze through this slow moving crowd and try to get a steady spot to run in. Up the Cowgate is always a slog but seemed to be even more so today as we fought our way through the crowd. By the time we came into the Grassmarket my watch was reading 9 mins and I still hadn't seen the first mile marker. This was a bit concerning but by 11 mins I realised we had totally missed it and were now looking for the 2 mile marker which was half way along Princes Street. We arrived at this having covered the first two miles at 7min14sec mile pace which was a good steady start possibly a little fast for Karen who's breathing was noticeably laboured.

We passed John Bown one of our club mates before this point and I fully expected him to catch up later as he is a veteran of many marathons and is only in his early 30's. By the time we reached Jeffrey Street Christine Anderson, another good friend, was there to be overtaken. It was here that I decided to up the pace and leave Karen to run her own race, Christine would be good company for her and I got them introduced and said farewell. Christine runs for Penicuik Harriers and has some great 10K and half marathon times under her belt. I thought it would be a good buddy system if Karen were to achieve her sub3.30 goal to leave the pair to run together.



**Above; Christine and Karen at 4.5 m**

We now proceed down the Canongate to the Scottish Parliament and back into the Royal Park missing out the Palace grounds this year. Going back through the start line at this point was great as the crowd of spectators and relay runners was huge. I can see loads of people I knew and even stopped to say hello to John Martindale who organises the Dunfermline Half Marathon. This is turning into an incredibly social run, which is surely what makes the event enjoyable. On the way out of Royal Park I chat to more people on their way to the Relay start and am overtaken by a bloke who I met at the expo the previous day who was powering along targeting below 3.00hrs. Around Meadowbank Stadium and onto Lochend Road, which is always a welcome downhill, I catch up and overtake Bernie Norris, an Australian bloke I met two days earlier, he's a real character reminiscent of the Tasmanian Devil himself with shag pile beard and pony tail, we chat for a few hundred metres and I then proceed to go up the gears and settle down to my pace. The 6-mile mark is about the Raj Indian Restaurant, on the Shore in Leith and 10K is just at the start of Coburg Street. The rain has now eased off completely and the first 10K are out of the way in 41.5 mins, on target for a steady time. It's a little further round the corner when the road diverts onto the cycle path. This is a tedious part of the run as it slowly goes uphill for about 2-3 miles, and you have to negotiate Victoria Park, a relay changeover point. The crowd in Victoria Park all seemed to know me and the level of support was fantastic, now I could see a distinct advantage in starting the relay runners behind the main race. All the relay changeover points would be the same with big support for the main race. Once through Victoria Park its uphill to Cewe Toll and here is Dean Carr marshalling at the bridge. He asks how it's going to which I replied "comfortable at the moment" knowing fully of the pain which waits further ahead. At the Crewe Toll red metal bridge the next new part of the course emerges the course take a sharp right hand hairpin and heads straight down to the Scottish Gas HQ at Granton. This is a welcome downhill and sees a genuine increase in speed as we head along to the roundabout at Muirhouse before heading down past the Civil Service Sports Ground, which takes us to the foreshore at Silverknowes. As we pass the old Commodore hotel there is a chance to see the leading women's group heading back along in the other direction. Its here I stumble into a traffic cone and nearly take out the guy in front. We then chatted for about half a mile and he told me he was running Blackpool marathon next Sunday. What a brave man or is this just stupid? He would be the only one to answer that.

However at this point the course measurers have added a couple of sections in, which make you turn round and face the followers so you can find out who's catching you up. It makes very sociable running because a very high percentage of the runners behind knew me as customers, and I like to chat even if it's just to say hello. I spied John Bown who was obviously running well as he only appeared to be about a minute behind and then as we head down onto the promenade my very good friend Colin



**Colin Crabbie Jubilant**

Crabbie is heading the other direction and is around 7 mins ahead. We exchanged a "high five" and bid each other good luck. I ran with Colin about two years ago in the *Raytheon Glenrothes 10K* where he very politely kicked me into touch with a 38-minute time compared to my 40-minute sprawl. We have always done a considerable amount of mickey taking since then as I suggested he was running too fast when training and should maybe save the speed for the race!! He is a fast runner and is also built a bit like a racehorse suggesting that if he

can keep the body from breaking he should easily obtain a sub 3.00hr marathon; this was his

first attempt at the distance. At this point I made a bet with myself that Colin would finish in 2.50. I

then see, heading towards me and about 2 mins ahead, my training companion Alan Swan, he looked to be having a great run and was certain to finish with a very respectable time. Just before the Crammond turning point I spied Martin Geisler (ITN News reporter) out walking the kids, both Martin and his wife Teresa are keen runners and are currently training for New York Marathon later this year. Martin and Teresa carry the Footworks logo wherever they run and are great ambassadors to the sport, good luck to the both of you in New York, lets hope this is the first of many marathons.

Pass the half way stage in 1hr 31mins and as I approach the 14-mile mark I have this horrible thought. I am looking towards Ocean Terminal at 18 miles, it's a straight line along the coast on the flattest terrain you could possibly find, I start to think of the speed the body will start to deteriorate in the next 4 miles. I guess secretly I'm hoping the chassis holds together but every step towards the 18-mile mark starts to feel harder. As I pass Lothian Chemicals on Lower Granton Road I hear a car blasting it horn frantically heading in the other direction. It's my wife Isla ferrying her relay runners to the relay changeover points. Then another friend passes blasting their horn, Ken Carruthers ferrying his wife Liz to the relay changeover point. That helps to pass some time and takes my mind off the rapidly deteriorating body. As I pass 16 miles my thoughts turn to the end of Portobello Promenade, which is the start of the return leg. Anything to keep my mind off the aches, which were now clearly there to stay. Passing Newhaven harbour I throw my empty water bottle into the crowd and caught one bystander's eye, I quietly ask him very politely if he wouldn't mind putting it in the bin. I then get complimented on the cheesy grin, which I wear most of the time when running a marathon, helps to keep me relaxed.

***This year the course enters the Docks*** by the Chancelot Mill gate near Next Generation; this keeps the course, and its entry to Ocean Terminal, very flat. The Royal Yacht Britannia is sitting there dressed overall and just before we run past it there is another relay changeover point which has a wildly cheering crowd, which is much needed at this stage. As you approach this huge crowd the noise gets louder and louder, lots of shouts for Footworks which is encouraging and helps to keep the focus.

***We pass the Royal Yacht Britannia*** and a spectacular square-rigged vessel of the US Coastguard up to the corner of Ocean Terminal where the most important water station is sited. This is now around 18 miles and water is vital, I was carrying three 60g SIS Go-gels for this stage but was not ready to down them yet. These energy gels do provide a vital supply of emergency fuel and have to be taken before the tank runs dry. Bear in mind that they take around 10-15 minutes before they start to take effect so the timing of consumption is critical. I ran out of gel at Ocean Terminal in 2004 and no chance of doing that again as I had not touched the stuff at this point. My plan was to hang onto it until mile 20 and hope it kicked in at mile 22-23.

Felt obliged to salute the Bank of Scotland at Rennie's Isle as I passed, but couldn't be arsed, sorry George if your reading this!! I got confused shortly after this as some girls were shouting at how good my legs were looking, did them mean strong or were they trying to boost my ego, either way nothing works at this stage, but the chants of "great legs" stayed with me for the next couple of miles! Actually they shouted this at everyone. Maybe they were vision impaired? Each time someone shouts out "you're looking great" you want to shout back "thanks, but you should see it from this side!" Don't get me wrong, this comment is not snubbing the support it's an attempt to make them look a little deeper at the state of the covers that are passing. Couldn't be done so easily without their support.



**Chris Gray (Centre) in the Relay 1st Leg**

Out the docks and onto *Salamander Street*, the most tedious part of the course, which oozes past the sewage farm at Seafield. Never fails to induce a mild dry wretch passing this fragrant landmark remembered even more at mile 19 of a marathon. After the Sewage Purification Plant (to give it its proper name) there is a small incline, which is the first hill in 6 miles, and feels mildly defiant. I actually laughed out loud while going up hill, as there were temporary traffic lights and a queue of cars. The funny part was the BMW which was “too fast and too furious” with a sound system reminiscent of ‘T’ in the park main arena!!! Oh yes, the big exhaust and Burberry Baseball caps driving, a classic prattmobile complete with Neds. The amusing grin that appeared on my face was helping to take my mind off the long haul along Portobello Prom; I cramped up here the previous year and wondered if it was all about to go bad. I was now at the 20-mile point and my watch said 2.19, I could see the film crew’s helicopter hovering in front of Arthur’s Seat and knew the race had been won. Time for the all important energy boost, 3 SIS Go-Gels, this would take the next 1.5 miles to consume and hopefully, with the correct water intake, would supply enough energy to get me home before drying up completely. As we approached the Prom Relay Changeover point I gave my usual vote of thanks to the helpers handing out the water and accepted the encouragement handed out.

*Completely by surprise I spied Fauja Singh* and his translator / trainer with the full support team sitting on the benches at the side of the prom. Having met them previously at the expo on the Saturday we were like old friends and I ran back to say hello and shake all their hands. The smiles these old guys put on were so friendly; it’s hard to understand why there is so much trouble between ethnic groups worldwide. They are a tribute to Hindu’s and the pride of Punjab, I was humbled to meet them and felt it was more important for Scotland to acknowledge their achievements than to chase a PB in a run that will hopefully be there for many more years. This relay team had a combined age of 397 years and was getting a very high profile helping to promote the Edinburgh Marathon. I hope they had such a good time in Edinburgh they all come back next year, I believe Fauja Singh is not running another marathon until he is 98yrs old to claim the record for the oldest man in the world ever to complete the marathon distance. I personally wish him the best of luck and feel sure that if his God wishes him to do this he will achieve it in true Hindu belief.

Back to the running after this short meeting and it wasn’t far along Portobello Prom, in fact just after the Swimming Pool that my great friend and running partner Gareth Hughes appeared. I just heard him say “you’re on for a good time if you keep it up” I replied, “thanks Gareth see you when its over” and thought to myself, *the run’s not over till the fat bloke sings!! That’ll be Ian Ladbroke then!!!* God its great to crack jokes with yourself when you’re in this state of disrepair. Last year about three quarters the way along Portobello Prom we turned right up to Portobello High Street and then into Brighton Road, this is where a nasty little twist to the course came into play. All the way out past Joppa to Milton Road East and then a hairpin turn back along Musselburgh Road before Portobello High Street and a left turn into Brighton Road. Well this seemed like an extra mile out at this stage but when we turned back on ourselves this would be a great spot to see who was closing up behind. I searched for people that I recognised but everyone was seemingly in a daze at this point and there was kind of unwritten grimace on every face. The last of my gel got used about two thirds the way along the Prom and as I could not be bothered to put the empty gel bottle back into the biceps holster I veered across to a litter bin and dumped the bottle in it. A loud applause and shout of “well done sir, keep the prom tidy, well done thank you” surprised me a little as I politely waved at this elderly resident and smiled realising that it is a sad fact of today’s society that some people cannot be bothered to use litter bins even when placed in the most strategic positions.

*Left turn into Brighton Road and hey presto me mate Derek Miller* appeared from his house on the right, crossed the road and said “come on lift your knees a bit I’ll keep you company”. Derek works for the Scottish Youth Parliament and has an impulse to want to be part of everything, which is great, but, this was coming up to mile 23 of a marathon and I was none too sure if I was going to hold out for another three miles with a fresh Derek. I spoke to Derek with mutterings of “F\*\*\*\* this Oh f\*\*\*\* I am in a bit of discomfort” but Derek was having none of this and kept saying he was having difficulty keeping up and I was cruising. We arrived at the Portobello High School watering station and I grabbed what I knew would be my last bottle of *Purely Scottish* before the finish, this section is all uphill and we are now past the 24 mile marker. Then there is a right turn and a fairly swift downhill for around 150m, which gives us time to swallow some water and check the watch. Now I start to swear as I look at my watch just after the 24 mile marker and its reading 2.56, I said to Derek “my F”ing

watch has stopped at 2.56” to which he replied “that’s correct you have been running for 2hrs and 56 mins”. I checked the watch again and realised it was still going, “hells teeth,” I exclaimed to Derek “3.10 is possible but 3.15 is more likely”.



**Derek Millar Company from  
Mile-23**

Now there was a real incentive to keep going and as I kept glancing at my Navman I knew that dipping below 8.0 mph was going to spoil my average. On the last uphill in the Mountcastle housing estate I finally dropped to 6.9mph and held onto that all the way to Willowbrae Road. I remember shouting politely to the traffic Wardens to “stop the traffic f\*\*\*\*\*d runner coming through”, I did thank them politely. Derek continued to laugh while suggesting that he was somewhat knackered, and at this stage had only run 1.5 miles. Onto Willowbrae Road and

back up to 8.7 mph as a pipe band plays a stimulating march. This does actually get your speed up, unfortunately within 150m there was

another lonely piper, just before Jock’s Lodge, playing a lament. Just what I needed, a bloody lament!!! Not!! Now I always forget how far Jocks lodge is from the finish but by this time the trance state is on and it’s a case of persisting in hope that your mind will switch off for a further short stage.

At the start of the Dukes Walk, entrance to Holyrood Park and the finish, a handwritten sign says 800m, true reality says that’s two laps of the track and Lord Coe, while chasing Steve Ovett or vice versa, used to do that in a respectable time so it was obviously not far to go. The finish crowd was beginning to appear and the end was starting to become a reality. I saw a sign saying 400m and thought 365 yards would have been more appropriate perhaps 50m further on but the finish had started to unfold. Again Derek started to make me lift my legs and put on a fast finish but this pair of legs was having none of it. Once I was focused on the finish clock, only then could I start to stretch out. I looked from about 200m out and saw 3:14.29 not realising I had about two minutes in hand because of the chip time. I sprinted as fast as I could to get below the 3:15.00. This was a mistake as it put me into a VO2 max state at mile 26.2 of a marathon, resultant effect, vomit, only a small throw but enough to make me realise it was too fast a finish. However it’s a bit like a too much to drink spew, you feel instantly better and try and find your sense of humour which by this time has disappeared up the other end!!

Then I remember to switch off the watch about a minute and a half through the finish. Clock says 3:15.01 watch says 3:14.14 timing *chip was right at 3:13.42*, I have to admit I was a little surprised, as the customary cramp had not filtered in. Obviously the training miles had been better than predicted. I knew two of my friends were ahead **Colin Crabbie** (a mere youngster) finished in 2:56.03 and training companion **Alan Swan** finished in 3:10.35, like me not a PB but a best for current age after all Alan is a few years my junior so he deserved those 3 mins, well done Alan that’s twice now! **Karen Cameron** finally broke her duck and finished 5 minutes ahead of target in 3:25.32 not a bad performance for a 46 yr old “biatch”. **Christine Anderson** finished 2 minutes after Karen in 3:27.34(so I did have them well paired). Our Relay teams led by **Isla McPhail and Jen McPhail** both returned respectable times of 3:40 and 3:30 respectively, great effort on a minimal level of training. The other members of the Footworks run club all finished in style with times any athlete would be proud of **John Bown** 3:21.53, **Niall Cameron** 3:39.50, **Stuart Wilson** 3:50.08, **Pippa Stanyard** 3:50.08, **Angus Wood** 3:43.17, **Gregor McNiven** 4:20.29, **Diane McDonald** without a map 4:24.35. **Big Kev** and **Matt RSA** both finished the same day they started! A special well done must be said for the injured starters who completed the course with respectable times **Bryony O’Hara** 4:01.38, **Claire Donald** 3:42.17, and **Tony McCluskey** 4:02.09. There were a few comments later about the astonished look on my face, when the injured showed up, at the start line. An expression of what the feck are you doing here! **Bernie Norris, the Tasmanian Devil**, my new found Australian friend finished in a highly respectable 3:28.56. Well done Australia.

A big thanks to Toni Mackintosh for getting me to look as high in the sky as possible while some photographer was trying to take a sensible Photo. Me, sensible the official photo's say it all look up number 1468 at <http://www.asipho.net/recent.html?&asievent=0104> and see if you can find a sensible serious photo. That's what I call running, possessed but having a laugh!



Now all that remained was to get the gear bag from the baggage tent, I wouldn't have liked to come in with the crowds as they appeared to be having some difficulty finding gear bags when only about 200 people had finished. This does take a special kind of organisation and I am sure given the circumstances they did a fine job. Once we realised how many of us had comfortably achieved our goal and each of us had done the customary pat on the back for each other it was straight to the Golf Tavern and 3 pints of Caledonian 80 were consumed with a select few. At this point all the pain has gone away and the next marathon is being spoken about. Its now 4.30 in the afternoon and its time to get a shower, freshen up and get to the evening reception.

We all agreed to meet at one of Edinburgh's newest bars, Cargo, in Fountainbridge for a post marathon celebration. The one thing that is compulsory after a marathon, as I discovered in Chicago 2004, is to get out and do something in the evening after the run. This reduces the onset of muscle ceasure from 3days down to 2 and increases recovery rates by an immeasurable amount. Either way the Guinness and Champagne flowed for quite some time before we all poured ourselves into the pizza restaurant next door.

Remember I mentioned back a few pages about occasional Cognac head on the very occasional Sunday run. This is where it becomes significant; during a Sunday run about three weeks earlier Niall had been quizzing me as to my favourite Cognac. I made no hesitation in telling him about the differences between Hennessy XO Fine Champagne, and Hennessy XO Grande Champagne, but did not mention the crazy price of this fine spirit. I thought nothing of it and wondered whether he was a connoisseur of fine Cognac. This is where I go all embarrassed as my first time marathoners purchased me a bottle of the finest cognac in the world and presented it with a card which was totally unnecessary, but a most appreciated gift, this had never before happened to me!! A first for Colin and loads of firsts for the marathonettes (now fully fledged marathon runners). As the night progressed we got louder and louder, eventually leaving the restaurant and some even went back to the bar for more! Alas tomorrow was another working day and I fully intended to work it.

Well done everyone you made my life easy just by turning up, thank you and good luck in the next one I'll try and help you reach it.

Colin McPhail