

# The Highland Fling - Saturday 26 April 2008

Race Tale by John Kynaston

53miles from Milngavie to Tyndrum

Time run: 9hrs 44mins 45secs

## Pre-Race at home

I was up just before 4.00am looking forward to the day. I didn't sleep too well. Went to bed at 11pm and dozed a bit but looked at the clock at regular intervals through the night! Went to the loo at 3am and then lay in bed thinking about the race until I got up at 4am. I had a bowl of porridge with honey. The rest of the family did well to be up and ready for the 5am departure.

## Pre-Race at Milngavie

We arrived just after 5.30am. I went over and registered for the race and dropped off my bag for the Inversnaid check point. Also spent a few minutes meeting up with friends and wishing everyone all the best for the run. The weather was dry and the temperature almost perfect for running. I decided to just wear my long sleeved top and not carry anything. I could grab a water bottle at Beech Tree after an hour or so.



Murdo gave us a quick briefing. Basically if you stop tell someone! Then we headed over to the start. I made sure I was in the middle of the pack and behind Ian. I could see him looking around to see where I was and I tried to hide but he saw me!

## Section 1 - Milngavie to Drymen

12.19miles in 1hr 43mins 25secs - 8.29 pace

Debbie Cox, previous winner of the race, started us off right on 6am. We ran through Milngavie and set off through the woods. I caught up with Aileen and we ran together for a few miles. It was good to set off nice and steady and chat. Aileen stopped to take off her jacket and I ran on, went past Tim and then caught up with Hugh. We could see Ian about 200 yards ahead so it was good to have him in sight! I wasn't sure where Davie was but I knew at some point we'd meet up as we run at such a similar pace.

At some point it started to rain but the temperature was fine so it wasn't a problem. As the miles went by I was aware that we were running at around 8min a mile pace which was too fast but I wasn't catching Ian so decided to keep going.

Once we went over the first style Hugh set off quicker now the hill and I could see he caught Ian

and was running with him. I had a few guys just behind me but was running on my own. I ran steadily along the path past Dumgoyne distillery. I could still see Ian ahead. At Beech Tree I took my water bottle from the girls and continued on. After another mile or so Ian stopped for a 'comfort' break and I caught up with him. We then ran in together to Drymen. We were both aware that we were running a bit quick but keep going. John Kennedy caught up with us along the way. John was doing a training run and decided to join in the fun.

We arrived at Drymen in 1hr 43mins which was a good 12mins ahead of my schedule. I must admit I was a bit concerned as one of my aims today was to try and get to Beinglas in a similar time to last year but with enough left to run the last 12miles. Had I blown it in the first 2hrs?? It was raining quite heavily at this point so Katrina and the girls quite rightly had decided to stay in the car for a few more minutes before getting out in time to see me. But because I was so early I missed them!! I wasn't too concerned as I had enough water and had taken some fruit bread at Beech Tree.

### **Section 2 - Drymen to Balmaha**

7.00miles in 1hr 19mins 57secs - 11.25 pace

Overall - 19.19miles in 3hrs 03mins 22secs

As I left Drymen I rang Jo to let them know to go straight to Balmaha. I was running with Ian at this point and we made our way through the forest and onto Conic Hill. When we got to the open area a group of 5 or 6 runners went past. I thought it was strange as I knew we were going a bit fast and they were passing us. We reckoned there was a good chance we'd be seeing them again. It was still raining but other wise good conditions to run in. The wind was behind us so they felt good as well!

As we walked up Conic Hill I did a little video clip. I had decided to try and do a video diary during the run so watch out for that coming soon! Ian got into the act as well and gave me his opinion of how things were going.

We were passed by another runner walking up Conic Hill faster than us. Near the top we saw Murdo McEwan taking photos. As we went past he reminded us that we were racing each other but there was a long way to go so we were happy running together. I had decided to take it easy on the way down into Balmaha as part of my plan to save my quads so was quite happy to let Ian run ahead. Half way down Davie caught me as well so the answer to my question of where was he was answered.

I ran into Balmaha in 3hrs 3mins which meant I'd increased the gain on my target time to 14mins. I was feeling good and looking forward to the rest of the run. I feel that up to here is the warm up and now the main heart of the run starts.

I stopped for a couple of minutes - time to have a drink and take my pot of beans to eat on the way.

### **Section 3 - Balmaha to Rowardennan**

7.69miles in 1hr 22mins 47secs - 10.45 pace

Overall - 26.88miles in 4hrs 28mins 06secs

As I left Katrina and the girls I met Davie's wife who said she feels she knows me from my blog! Davie set off with me and Ian soon joined us but Ian stopped for a visit to the public toilet and I didn't see him until the end.



Davie and myself ran nice and steady and we soon caught up with a female runner - Gail. She ran with us all the way into Rowardennan. I had arranged with Katrina to have more meeting points and so on this section I saw them twice which was great as I could take some grapes and then water without having to carry it all the way.

A good solid section into Rowardennan completed in 1hr 23mins - a couple of minutes ahead of the schedule for that bit. So I was now 16mins ahead of my 10hrs 15mins goal. I was still a bit concerned though whether I was going to be able to hold it but time would tell.

I stopped for 5mins and had decided to sit down and get a rest. I ate some pasta which was a struggle to get down. I have decided not to bother with pasta from now on. I drank a smoothie and took some grapes to eat on the way.

#### **Section 4 - Rowardennan to Inversnaid**

7.20miles in 1hr 11mins 48secs - 9.58 pace

Overall - 34.08miles in 5hrs 44mins 56secs

As we came into Rowardennan I'd asked Davie how long he was planning to stop for. He said 5mins so when I took off after 5mins I was expecting to see him. But I didn't so I spent time thinking about 'Where Davie?' Behind or in front? I decided it didn't really matter and I would find out in due course.

After 15mins or so I saw Brian McIntosh in front with another runner so I caught them and we ran together for a bit. Brian seemed to be going well and was working on the strategy of getting ahead of his target pace and holding on. I knew I was running at sub 10hr pace but it all depended on whether I could hold on.

At the first hill Brian and his friend stopped to walk but I carried on running for a bit. Then I started walking. After a couple of minutes I could hear that they were running again so decided to run as well. I thought I'd run up the hill for as long as they did!! Well they kept running, so I did as well. I settled into an easy pace with short strides and just kept going and ran the whole hill. It really surprised me as I'd never run this hill before in a race. I went past a couple more runners and was ahead of Brian and others.

I went past a number of walkers and caught up with another couple of runners. I ran into Inversnaid in 1hr 11mins which was 13mins ahead of schedule and I was now 29mins ahead of my 10hr 15min aim. I've never run this section as quick as that but was still feeling good so hoped it would continue!

I gave in my number and asked for my drop bag but they couldn't find it. They had all the bags laid out in order and #75 wasn't there. They looked in the car and couldn't find it! So after 30secs I just

carried on. It did worry me a bit because it meant I would have nothing to eat until Beinglas. I wasn't sure what happened. I suspect that I may have put my bag in the wrong car!

### **Section 5 - Inversnaid to Beinglas Farm**

7.03miles in 1hr 31mins 32secs - 13.01 pace

Overall - 41.11miles in 7hrs 17mins 05secs

After I left Inversnaid I saw one runner ahead and there were 2 behind so I worked on trying to catch the guy ahead and keep ahead of the guys behind.

This is tough section in that you are starting to get tired but the terrain is so hard to get any pace on. There is a lot of climbing up and down over rocks and tree branches which all add to the soreness in your legs.

I kept my position and then saw a guy ahead running in a kilt. At Rowardennan my girls had told me that the guy in the kilt was running really well so I was a bit surprised to see him. Anyway I caught him and went past.



A few minutes later I slipped on a rock and fell off the path. I caught hold of the grassy bank and had to climb back up! I looked down at my left knee and saw blood pouring down my leg! I felt all right so assumed it was a small cut so carried on. The guy in the kilt asked was I okay which was good of him.

I continued to work as hard as I could on the difficult terrain and wasn't being caught and saw the guy ahead every now and then. About 45mins from Beinglas I started to struggle a bit. I wanted something to eat and didn't have anything. My tactic of not carrying much is fine as long as you do meet you back-up but for various reasons I missed getting food at Drymen and Inversnaid and I was starting to feel the effects of that. I decided to try and hang in there until Beinglas and hope I would feel better with some food.

I got a text from Jo saying they were on their way to Beinglas but I was a bit concerned I'd miss them again so I ran when I was almost there and was so pleased to hear they were there waiting for me!



The two guys behind caught me up with about 2miles to go so I worked hard to stay in front of them. I think it helped me mentally having a short term target to hold on to.

I arrived at Beinglas in 1hr 31mins which surprised me as it meant I was a 4mins ahead of schedule for that section and now 34mins ahead of 10hr 15mins. Things were looking good but I needed food!

I drank a smoothie and was hoping for a rice pudding but it wasn't there. But Allybea came to the rescue and gave me one

of Ian's muller rice - thanks. I also had a pot of beans and took some grapes for the next leg.

After a few minutes Brian, Davie and a few others all arrived so I now knew where Davie was! A bit of a recurring thought here. George, Ian's support asked me whether I'd checked in. I hadn't as the car was past the wigwams so no doubt the official results will show I arrived after them!

I also changed out of my wet top, had a towel down and put on a dry short sleeved top.

### **Section 5 - Beinglas Farm to Tyndrum**

11.95miles in 2hr 22mins 02secs - 11.53 pace

Overall - 53.06miles in 9hrs 44mins 45secs

I set off feeling really good, with a full stomach and knowing I had 12miles to go and enough time to get under 10hrs if things went well. I assumed that Davie, Brian and the rest would have a good stop there so hoped to get a bit distance on them.

This last section is 12miles and so I decided to break it down to 3 mini sections. 3 miles to Derrydaroch, 6miles to Auchtertyre and 3miles to the end.

The 3miles to Derrydaroch passed fine and I ran all the down hills and flat and walked the up hills. Katrina and the girls were at Derrydaroch so I took another smoothie and some grapes.

I saw Allybea as I went under the A82 and headed up onto the path. Last year this section was really hard. I fell on the path and really struggled. I remember walking most of it so I knew that the next couple of miles would determine whether I could break 10hrs. I decided to run for 100 breathes and walk for 50. I got to 100 and just carried on running. I was feeling really good again and kept it going. I walked the top part of the path past the farm not because I needed to but because the path was so muddy that I was concerned I could easily turn over on my ankle.



I could see a runner ahead so set myself the goal of trying to catch me before the road. Once we went through the gate and turned left into the forest above Crianlarich I knew I was going well and had a really good chance to break 10hrs. With 6miles to go I knew if I could maintain 12min miles I would do with time to spare.

Last year the down hills were really sore as my quads were shot but this year I ran the down hills with no problems. My legs were feeling the effect of over 8hours of running but they weren't sore like last year. I ran as much as I could and when I felt like walking on the up hills I set myself the target of 20 breathes before I walked. Most times this took me half way up the hill.

I then saw the runner ahead and went past him on one of the uphill sections. I remember Ian pointing out the sign which says Crianlarich right whw left is the last hill so worked hard up there and ran relaxed all the way down to the road. Davie's wife was at the road which made me wonder whether he was catching! I

decided I had just over 3miles to go and if he caught me now he must be going really well and would deserve it.

As I went past St Fillan's church I did my last video clip and knew I had 47mins to do the last 3miles. For the first time I really knew it was on and it spurred me on. Just before Auchtertyre Katrina was waiting for me at the gate and we walked/jogged into Auchtertyre. I very quickly took off as much as possible, changed into my club vest and set off.

They also told me that Phil (a friend of Ian's) was 5mins ahead but I didn't think that was realistic target so just concentrated on trying to finish as fast as possible.

It was a great feeling running strong, knowing that I was going to shatter my best prediction!! With a mile or so to go I felt I could have pushed it even harder but decided to relax and enjoy the moment!

I went past the railway station, over the stream and round the corner to see the crowd at the finish. I tried to look relaxed and maintain good form!!

So I crossed the line in 9hrs 44mins 41secs. I had ran the last section from Beinglas in 2hrs 22mins.

### **After the race**

I was presented with my medal and champagne and spent time chatting with those who had finished. It was good to see Mark Hamilton at the end. Mark hadn't been able to run and was doing a great job as a marshal.



*With Thomas Loehndorf*

This year Ellen & Murdo had hired a cottage so we were able to get a shower which was great. Silke, Thomas wife cleaned up my knee and put some butterfly stitches on it. Thanks Silke.

We stayed around until about 5.20pm and then set off home.

What a great day. A big thanks to all those involved in the organising and marshalling the event.

A big thanks too to Katrina, Jo, Emma and Hollie for their support during the day. Thanks to for all those who encouraged me along the way.