

Glenmore 12hr Race Report

Saturday 1st September 2012 at 12noon
Glenmore Forest, near Aviemore

Introduction

I remember reading about the first staging of this race last year. Basically Bill Heirs and Mike Adams set up an informal but well organised 12hr and 24hr off road race. I immediately thought I'd like to try that one day but as it was planned for just 5 weeks after the Lakeland 100 I thought it might be a bit ambitious this year.

About 5 weeks before the Lakeland race I contacted Bill and asked him whether there might be a place in the 12hr race if I felt I could recover in time. Bill very kindly said there would be. A few days after the Lakeland race I felt I would be okay to run and wanted something to aim for.

I've never done a lap course or a timed race before and to be honest a 1k, 1 mile or track race doesn't appeal to me at all but the reason this one caught my imagination was that it was a 4 mile loop and importantly it was off road with variety.

I never considered the 24hr race as I knew that would be asking too much after the Lakeland 100. I did have a number of friends running both the 12hr and the 24hr so we knew once I'd finished I could encourage all those still running.

Katrina was happy to support and even took on keeping an eye out for Becki (until Ryan arrived at 6pm) and Neal (while Caroline worked on her application form). We travelled up to Aviemore on Friday night after a good pasta meal.

I thought this was a good plan. We could set up the tent; have a good sleep and then a nice relaxed morning before the race starting at 12noon. Others didn't think I was treating Katrina very well. Did I forget to mention it was our Wedding Anniversary??

Anyway we arrived at 10.30pm, set up our tent and were in bed for 11pm. This can't be said of everyone who was running as we could hear lots of folks chatting around the fire until the early hours.

I was up just after 7pm and wandered round surveying the scene that was to become home for the next 36hours. All the tents were spread out around the field so runners could grab what they needed as they went past.

We had some breakfast and then chatted to lots of folks who arrived steadily over the next few hours. We were camping next to Stevie Gildea and his wife and small daughter. I'd not met Stevie before so it was good to get to know him. He was trying to work out which shoes to wear and I don't think he was too impressed when I said I'm wearing my Hoka's! Each to their own.

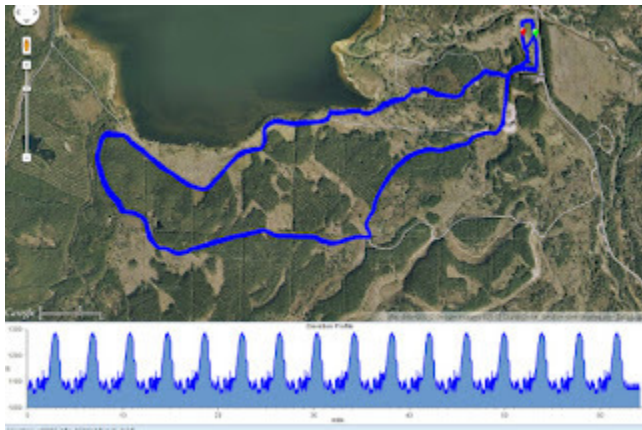
Neal & Caroline and Becki all arrived about 11am so we set up our tables together so Katrina could keep an eye on us all. Neal was doing the 24hr race and Becki the 12hr. Caroline was supporting Neal.

The race briefing at 11.30am was very relaxed which set the tone for the whole race. All the volunteers were superb and stayed cheerful, positive and helpful right through the race. Having been involved with both sides now I realise more than ever how important it is to have positive people who are obviously enjoying themselves. I really does make such a difference.

The route was really good. The first mile was through trees and single file for most of the way. The next 3 miles were on a wide forestry path which was good on the feet as it was soft enough to have some give but firm enough that you didn't slip.

Of the 3 miles on the forestry road the first mile was undulating with lots of running, the second mile was a long steady climb and then the last mile a long downhill with a little uphill just before returning to the start/finish area.

Here is a map and profile of the route. If you don't know my result and don't want to spoil the story don't count how many peaks there are!!



I didn't really have a plan for this race. For those who know me this will be a surprise as normally I'd have my spreadsheet with splits to aim for etc. I decided against that tactic for this race for two reasons.

Firstly I didn't know the loop and so I wasn't sure what was realistic. I ran a 4 mile loop on the Braes a few weeks ago in preparation and a 40min loop felt quite hard work. It turns out that loop was a lot harder than the race one.

Secondly and more importantly I really didn't know how my legs would react after running the Lakeland 100 just 5 weeks ago. I didn't want to set a goal too high and be disappointed in not achieving it. I've done that a few times over the last year or two!

So I decided my strategy would be to break the race into 4 laps at a time. I would aim for 3hrs for the first 4 laps (45mins per lap) and see how I felt. If I felt good I could push on and hopefully get somewhere near 60miles or I wasn't going well I could set myself a realistic target and be happy with that.

With this '4 laps at a time' plan I decided to change my top every 4 laps and at the same time have some soup and bread. I would also eat something every lap. Katrina would hand me something at one end of the field and I'd eat or drink it as I walked/ran the field and then handed it back before setting off.

This meant that I wouldn't have to carry anything for the loop. Bill and Mike had also set up a drinks station half way round the loop so that was great.

In keeping with my '4 laps at a time' plan I've decided to split my report into four sections.

Laps 1-4

Neal and I decided to run the first lap together. Neal wasn't sure of his fitness and the fact that he was running for 24hrs I thought this was a sensible idea. I said I was planning on 45min laps which Neal thought sounded fair enough.



As always in ultra races there is a great atmosphere at the start. As there is no need to sprint off it's all very relaxed with lots of chat from runners and spectators.

Neal & I must have been about a third of the way down the field of 50 runners (22 doing the 12hr and 28 doing the 24hr). We ran round the field and up the little hill out of the campsite and onto the twisty forest path. The route was well signposted and easy to follow.

We chatted and ran behind a group of 3-4 runners. I glanced at my watch and said to Neal we are a bit quick so we eased off a little. Once we got onto the wide path we continued to chat and even though I was conscious we were going to be well quicker than 45mins I wasn't too concerned.

When we reached the long uphill and the drinks station Neal said 'Oh I'm going to run all the first lap' and that was the last I saw of him. I could see Donald Sandeman ahead with a few others.

I settled in alongside Terry Addison and we ran the rest of the first lap together. We went past Sandra McDougall and a couple of others. I took in the views and realised how enjoyable this was going to be. My favourite view was of Loch Morich as we descended the long hill. I knew I wasn't going to tire of seeing that.

As we came into the start/finish I glanced at my watch and saw that the first lap had taken just over 35mins. Far too fast but not as quick as Neal! To keep count of laps I decided to lap my watch and garmin. It was only for my interest as I knew that the super efficient Ada and her helpers would be officially counting the laps.

I assumed that there would be a team of counters on a rota but oh no Ada stays there for the whole 24hrs counting everyone's laps without missing a single one. Ada we salute you!

Katrina and Caroline gave me some stick for being too quick but I'd half expected the first lap to be the fastest. I was planning on settling down to a steady rhythm soon.

I ran the whole of the 2nd lap with Terry and his support runner. Bill and Mike were very happy for anyone to have friends or family run with them at any point. Katrina was going to run with me at some point but I was keen to get into my own pattern first.

We chatted and the lap flew by. On the long uphill Sandra ran past us. She looked as though she was going well but I suspected I'd see her again.

I was wearing a short sleeved top and felt just right. The temperature was fine. The main challenge from the weather was the wind. It was quite a strong headwind at some points but as we were running a loop that also meant it was behind us at other points.

The second lap was slightly slower at 37:40 but it was still early on and I felt I was running well within myself. I grabbed a peanut butter and jam sandwich and ate it as I ran round the field. After a quick drink of water I was off again for the 3rd lap.

I was on my own for the first time as Terry, joined by his wife this time, had gone straight through. I'd put on my head cam for this lap as I thought it would be fun to record one lap for my blog. I've had a quick look at the video and I have a feeling the camera was pointed a little too high but I'll put it on at some point if it's okay.

After a few minutes I saw Terry just off the path watering the trees. I ran past and assumed I'd see him again but I never did.

It was good to be running on my own and getting a good look at the route. On the first two laps I was too busy chatting to people that I didn't really take it in. As I ran along the wide path towards the drink station I did a quick MOT and realised I was feeling good.

My legs weren't sore, stomach fine and I felt really positive about the whole idea of laps and running for the next 10 and half hours.

I could Sandra not too far ahead and by the time I reached the drinks station I'd caught her. We ran the second half of the lap together, chatting the whole way. Remember that the head cam is recording this lap. I think I'll dull the sound and put some music on if I do post it!

Sandra said she was aiming for over 60 miles so I wondered how much I'd see her over the rest of the race. We ran into the start/finish area together. The third lap had taken 37:42 almost identical to lap 2.

I ate a banana while I ran round the tents. Louise was running with Sandra for lap 4 so I decided to get away as I'm not sure I could have coped with the two of them for a whole lap!! Only joking but I'm sure you didn't want me cramping your style anyway.

I ran the whole of lap 4 on my own. I started to rethink my plan a little. I realised that I was going to be well under my 3hrs for the first 4 laps. I felt really comfortable so decided to keep going at this pace for as long as I could and then see where I was.

I fully expected it to get tough at some point but why worry about that until it happens. I was going to get as far as I could as easily as possible. I think I caught up with Donald at the end of this lap and we ran in together.

The fourth lap had taken me 36:09 and the first four laps had taken 2:26:36. That meant I was 34mins faster than my plan. I was very happy with that as it gave me a cushion rather than having to catch up.

This was to be my slightly longer stop to change top and eat some soup and bread as I walked round the tents. I took off my top as I ran to our table. I even got a woof whistle from the event doctor!

Katrina handed me my top but it was inside out!! I'm normally very easy to support but I wasn't impressed with that. I know it was probably my fault as I should have turned them the right way round before the start but it was annoying having to turn it round.

So sorry Katrina if I was grumpy with you!! Ian was standing there watching but I'm sure he would have been worse than me!!

Laps 5-8

For the rest of the race I was on my own except for the laps that Katrina ran with me. I started catching people from about lap 6. I reckon on average I saw about 2-3 a lap. I was overtaken a few times but there were loads of people I never saw at all in the whole 12hrs.

Over the next two laps I broke down the lap into mini-sections. Each one was at a marker sign.

The first one was at a left hand turn after 0.7 of a mile. It was around 7mins of running and gave me a quick marker that I'd started okay. The time depended on whether I'd walked round the field to eat or not.

The second marker was the sign just before the drinks station. On these laps it was about 24mins and then the final mini-split was at a left hand bend before the long downhill. Anything around 30mins meant I was on for a sub 40min lap. As the race went on those times got slower but it really helped me to stay focused.

Another thing I worked out was when to run and when to walk. I had certain points where I was going to run for 50 breaths and then walk. Then run again from a certain tree or rock for another 30 breaths etc. It helped keep me going and consistent.

It was getting quite warm now and I realised I'd made a school boy error!! I'd forgotten to put plasters over my nipples and they were really starting to sting. I knew I'd forgotten to pack but fortunately Lorna (who was supporting John D) had some so she saved the day!

Laps 5 & 6 blur together a bit as I ran them consistently in 38:07 and 39:54. What I do remember though is having a leap frogging competition with Mike Thompson. Mike and I have some good battles over the years.

I remember the Fling in 2009 when we spent the whole race overtaking each other. Mike eventually beat me that day by less than a minute and suspected we might well be close this time as well.

I didn't want to try and race Mike at this stage as there is a long way to go but we seemed to have different tactics. I would get ahead over the first couple of miles, Mike would be stronger on the long uphill, running more of it than I did. Then I'd catch up on the long downhill.

Also if one of us stopped slightly longer at the end of a lap the other would be ahead again. So I reckon I passed him at least 4-5 times. The final time was on lap 8 I think. He said to me, 'I'm finding this really hard now.' So I pushed on and didn't see him again. I gather he withdrew with IT band problems.

I'd asked Katrina whether she wanted to run lap 7 with me. I suspected that I was going to start slowing down so was keen for her to join me while I was still running okay. Katrina loved the loop and I think decided then and there that she'll be doing the 12hr race next year.

I explained that I was having to dig in a bit now so don't expect much chat until we get to the uphill. It was great to share the lap with Katrina and it certainly helped me round another lap.

Katrina was wearing her Hoka's and the pair of us enjoyed the long downhill in them. I know they are not to everyone's taste but I've done all three of my ultras this year and I just love them.

For me they are particularly good on the rocky down hills. I feel I can relax, lean forward and run down smoothly.

Just before the end of the lap Katrina ran ahead to get my fruit pot ready to eat. Lap 7 was the first one over 40mins but seeing that I was expecting them all to be around 45mins I was still well ahead of my rough plan. Time for lap 7 was 41:52.

As I set off on lap 8 I knew it was going to be a bit slower. I quickly accepted that and gave myself permission to walk on some bits where I'd been running. I figured that if I had one slower lap to recover then that was fine.

My only fear was that, that was me accepting slower laps for the rest of the race. So I ran/walked the flatter section and walked the hill. For the first 7 laps I did run for 30 breathes after the drinks station and I was pleased then at by the time I got there I was feeling better.

I pushed it as hard as I could down the hill. I saw John Duncan ahead so called out to him. He was listening to music so didn't hear me. So I shouted really loudly and he nearly jumped out of his skin!!

That gave me a good laugh and ran in solidly for 43:57 for lap 8.

I was expecting to be a lot slower than that. It was a big encouragement as I thought I could keep that going for the next 4 lap block.

I changed my top and yes this time it was the right way round! On the previous lap I'd asked Ian for the Everton score and he said it was 0-0 at half time. I was hoping for a second half goal to beat WBA.

At the end of lap 8 I saw Ian sitting in my chair, drinking coffee from my Everton mug and telling me Everton had lost 2-0!! I must have been feeling good as it didn't bother me too much!! He also told me all the other results but I didn't take any of them in!

I had another cup of soup and bread as I walked round the camp site. I must mention Melanie who was supporting Fiona and Pauline. Every time I went past their tent she shouted an encouraging comment. One lap she was in the tent when I went past and I really missed it! So thanks Melanie and everyone else who cheered all the runners as we went past.

So the second 4 lap block had taken me 2:43:50 still well under my 3hr target. So the first 8 laps had taken me 5:10:26. I was almost 50mins up on my rough plan. I was still being cautious about whether my legs would hold out but it was looking good and I had plenty of time in hand.

Laps 9-12

I realised that the next 4 laps were going to be key to how well I did. I thought if I could run each of them around 45mins I'd still be well up and have a real chance of running around 64miles which beforehand I'd thought was at the very upper range of what I could do.

I know I said I didn't have a plan but I did think if things were going well then over 60 miles was what I'd like to do.

I didn't want to get too ahead of myself so decided to concentrate on one lap at a time. Laps 9 and 10 went really well in 45:07 and 42:32 respectively. I revised my targets at my mini-split points and was spot on each time.

At the end of lap 9 I saw Neal standing with Katrina. Sadly he was having some real issues with his stomach and had to stop after about 36 miles.

It was a bit cooler which helped and even though my legs were sore they were responding well. I was still passing some people but I don't remember too many going past me which is always a good sign.

I was still eating and drinking something at the end of each lap. I can't remember what I had when but I ate fruit pots, coke, jelly, sports drink as well as a succed tablet every few laps.

I was still going really well on the 11th lap running and I was definitely thinking that 16 laps is my target. I figured that if I could get to 12 laps with 50mins to spare I could do the last 4 at 57mins per lap and still make 64 miles. I thought that was going to be possible.

On lap 11 I started to have second thoughts. Most of the lap was fine but as I ran down the long down hill at the end of the lap my quads were really sore. Instead of running all the way down without stopping I had to walk for a bit. Maybe only 2-3 mins but it concerned me that if I have to walk some of the down hill my 16 lap target was going to be in danger.

I finished lap 11 in 45:24 which was fine but I knew that the next lap was going to be a real test of how my legs coped.

As I set off on lap 12 I realised that I was going to have to try and manage my quads. If they got much worse then I was going to really struggle. I decided to keep going with my run/walk sections.

Katrina had wanted to run with me on this lap but I felt I needed to be on my own to work out how I could cope and where I could run and where I would have to walk. I don't think she was too happy as she was cold and wanted to run to warm up. I suggested she could run the opposite way round but she didn't fancy that.

Generally I think splitting the race into 4 lap blocks was good. But the negative to it was I found the last lap of a block really hard mentally. Lap 8 and lap 12 were two of the hardest. It was almost as if my mind figured this was the end of a section and relaxed. Anyway I had to dig very deep to keep it going.

When I got to the long downhill it was crunch time. Would my quads manage it? I ran for as long as I could and then had to walk for a while. Then I tried to run again. It was so sore but I kept going.

A second time I had to stop for a walk. This one was a bit longer. Stan (who I'd passed a lap or so before) went past with 2 others. I explained I was okay but my quads were sore.

Up until now I'd ran the small hill just before the finish but not this time. I did though run into the start/finish area in 52:42. My slowest lap so far and I wondered if they would get progressively slower.

I'd completed my 4 lap block in 3:05:45 which I was really happy with. I'd run 12 laps in 8:16:11. I had 44mins in head so could afford to be 11mins per lap slower than 45mins and still make 16 laps.

It all depended on whether I could find a way to run downhill. I had my soup and bread, changed my top to a long sleeved one and took my head torch as it would be dark by the time I finished lap 13.

Laps 13-16

As I set off up the hill I wondered whether I would be able to run 4 more laps. Maybe it would be better to revise the target to 15 as my quads were sore. I decided to see how it went on this lap and take it from there.

I'd asked Katrina whether she'd run with me on the next lap. I warned her it might be slow and to make sure she had some warm clothes.

As I ran along the single track bit my legs felt a bit better so I was feeling a bit more hopeful. On the wider path I tried something I remember chatting to Mark Caldwell about a few years ago. He said he'd read an article in a running magazine from a top class runner who suggested when you tired put it a short burst of faster running.

I had nothing to lose so tried it. As I did so I changed my running style slightly by pushing to one side for 10 paces, then pushing to the other side for 10. It felt easier so I kept it going for ages. Not sure what it looked like but I felt I was running faster with less effort.

As I started walking up the hill I switched on my head torch as it was properly dark now especially in the forest. I stopped for a drink at the water station. I must mention the volunteers at this station. Every lap I paused for a drink and they were so helpful and encouraging. It can't have been much fun being based there for 4 hours at a time but they were superb. Thanks.

I walked the hill and wondered whether my new running style would cope with the downhill. I would find out soon enough and it would be key to whether I could run the last 3 laps under 55mins.

As I set off down the hill with my pushing to one side for 10 and the other side for 10 I realised that it wasn't hurting. I even went past a couple of people. I made it all the way down to the bottom without stopping and there and then decided that I wouldn't be happy with anything less than 16miles.

Even though lap 13 was my slowest at 53:36 I was confident that if I could continue to run all the down hills and as much of the flat as I could I would be able to get round in under 55mins for the last 3 laps.

Katrina joined me for lap 14. She had on her jeans and a coat as I had said we may be walking more than we ran. But it was all change and I was determined and able to run more than we walked! Very quickly the coat came off and she regretted having the jeans on!

As we ran she told me that Neal reckoned I was in 2nd place. Up until this point I hadn't even thought about places. In a race like this you have no idea where you are in relation to the field. If you catch a runner or they catch you, you don't know whether they are doing the 12hr or the 24hr or if they are ahead or behind.

Katrina wasn't even sure if Neal was winding her up as he said not to tell me! Anyway it wasn't the ting that was motivating me. Completing 16 laps was my goal. We ran a lot more than the previous lap and all the way down the hill and finished lap 14 in 51:14. It was quickest since lap 11 so that was just the boost I needed.

It was now 10:01 into the race and the rules were that you had to start your last lap before 11hours otherwise you went onto the small 350m lap round the tents until 12hrs.

I really didn't fancy 55mins or so round that small loop so I was determined to run lap 15 in under 55mins so I could do one last lap. Katrina was going to run the final lap with me and I know she would rather do the big loop than lots of small ones.

I was super motivated especially having thought an hour or so before I'd be happy with 15 laps. I ran as much as I could and caught up with John Duncan again just before the drinks station.

John was keen to do one more lap as well so said he would try and hang on to me. We walked up the hill together chatting about various things and before we knew we were on the downhill. John said he's strong on the descents and he was.

We ran all the way down together and finished the lap in 50:01. It was now 10:51 so we had 9mins to spare. I said to John we could have stopped for a cup of tea!

Lorna was running with John for the last lap so I pushed on with Katrina. Very sensibly Katrina had changed back into her running tights. As we set off I said to her that I wanted to be under 55mins so all my laps were less than an hour.

I really enjoyed the last lap as I knew it was the last one! At one point I was going to say I'll miss going round again but I realised I was looking forward to stopping and going to bed.

We kept a good pace going until the water station. A final thank you to the guys there and off up the hill. Stevie Gildea went past us still running up the hill. He ran a total of 75miles and ran everything. Very impressive.

We ran all the way down the hill and I even managed to run up the final little hill. I finished lap 16 in 51:40. So the 16 laps (64miles) had taken me 11:42:42. I now had another 17:18 to run round the field.

Final small laps

I decided to run as many loops as I could. I walked the little hill but ran the rest. I ended up running 6 loops and half way up the hill on the 7th when the hooter went to signal 12hrs.

I planted my tent peg with my number on for Bill and Mike to measure the distance of my final lap, then wandered off to see everyone. I thanked Bill and Mike for organising such a great race and went over to Ada to thank her for her encouragement on each and every lap.

Sandra told me she'd won the ladies race. She was rightly very pleased with herself. Sandra decided to run the last hour on the smaller loop. After 15mins or so I felt really cold and we headed off to bed.

I didn't sleep too well as it I felt uncomfortable where ever I lay. At 5.50am I heard the hooter and wondered what it was. I decided to get up as I needed the loo. I discovered Ada blew the hooter to signal when a runner had reached 100miles.

For the next 6hrs I watched and cheered on the 24hrs runners. They were all doing an amazing job. Congratulations to all of them. I also had an amazing massage from Debra.

Bill, Mike and Ada did the final calculations and worked out I'd run 65.37miles. I was very happy with that and as a little bonus Neal was right and I finished 2nd. It meant that Caroline Gibson won my 'Guess My Distance' as she guessed 65miles.

The 24hr race finished at 12noon and the prize giving was at 12.45pm. All the runners received their medals and the 1st 3 of each race men and women received their prizes.



With winner of 12hr race Stevie Gildea and Donald Sandeman who was 3rd

We headed home soon after as we were both in need of a shower and good night's sleep! We had such a good weekend. It was great catching up with lots of friends and making new ones.

So thanks again to Bill, Mike, Ada and everyone else who was involved in the race.

A massive thanks (once again!) to Katrina for her support throughout the race. Not only being there at each lap but running with me for 3 of them. What a great wife!!

We will be back next year. Katrina wants to do the 12hr so either I'll be supporting or we'll need to find someone to support us both!

If I run again I'll do the 12hr. I've decided I only want to do one long race a year and for my long one I'd rather do a point to point than a loop.

Here are my splits for the race

	Distance	Lap		Overall		
	miles	Time	Pace	Total	Pace	
1	4	35:05	8:46	35:05	8:46	
2	8	37:40	9:25	1:12:45	9:06	
3	12	37:42	9:26	1:50:27	9:12	
4	16	36:09	9:02	2:26:36	9:10	2:26:36
5	20	38:07	9:32	3:04:43	9:14	
6	24	39:54	9:58	3:44:37	9:22	
7	28	41:52	10:28	4:26:29	9:31	
8	32	43:57	10:59	5:10:26	9:42	2:43:50
9	36	45:07	11:17	5:55:33	9:53	
10	40	42:32	10:38	6:38:05	9:57	
11	44	45:24	11:21	7:23:29	10:05	
12	48	52:42	13:11	8:16:11	10:20	3:05:45
13	52	53:36	13:24	9:09:47	10:34	
14	56	51:14	12:48	10:01:01	10:44	
15	60	50:01	12:30	10:51:02	10:51	
16	64	51:40	12:55	11:42:42	10:59	3:26:31
extra	65.37	17:18	12:38	12:00:00	11:01	