

## LONDON MARATHON

The trepidation of marathon training is never more daunting than when the big day draws near. Even for a dedicated sportsperson, fitting in between five and ten miles a day of light running through whatever weather conditions greet you, takes an awful lot of willpower and all your spare time. Being a member of a local running club at Bourton-on-the-Water gave me the necessary experience and running background required to tackle such an event.

I had always thought that what little road running I had done to fit into a lifetime's football 'career' would see me in good stead for any road racing that I may get involved in, when I became more interested in such pastimes. How wrong I was! It was a rude awakening to find that relying on a competitive spirit and enthusiasm wasn't going to be enough to keep up with what seemed like moderate opposition at local races. It was, however, a relief to find that the ability to run hard in races could be achieved with the patience and persistence of 'easy running' for short distances (7-8 minutes per mile for 5-7 miles) building up speed and endurance gradually through several months of dogged determination.

The lighter side of being in a club is the sociability and relaxed approach taken on club training evenings. Actually being able to hold a conversation throughout most of a pleasant evening's run across beautiful Cotswold countryside, and finding your mind taken off distances that were unthinkable beforehand, does eventually become an enjoyable experience. To such an extent that in the event of any niggling disabling injury, missing out on your regular 'fix' can become screamingly frustrating (a sure sign that you are beginning to take the sport far too seriously!)

Having a good cross-section of runners in any club is an excellent way of maintaining the right perspective. At Bourton, for instance, all sorts of varying abilities, shapes and sizes regularly turn up for training and very irregularly bother to turn up anywhere to race! But this laid back approach is probably more therapeutical for the masses compared with the few of us more fanatical runners for whom the shaving off of precious seconds in a 10 kilometre race can mean the difference between the heady sense of great achievement and the proverbial kicking of the cat. The one really great sense of achievement I experienced during 1993 was gaining an entry via the club, via the charity Action Research, for the London Marathon.

Bourton runners have had a long association with the charity and have represented them in several London Marathons in several different fancy dress guises. I was happy enough just to be able to run 'for the fun of it' (!) and have the incentive to train hard enough to try for a decent time.

With the tremendous response of the Wychwood residents, last year you helped me raise £570 for Action Research, a charity that funds medical research into children's and adults' diseases and who have helped fund units at our local Oxford hospitals in recent years.

My dogged determination in training also meant that the cat had a hassle-free weekend when I finished 1,800th in a creditable time of 3 hours, 46 seconds, a time I may not reach when I run this year's London Marathon on April 17th (injury-plagued training), but one that will give me another great sense of achievement if I could once again call on your tremendous support for Action Research. Thank you.

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