

## 2010 Race Report by Tegwen Howell

Cradle Mountain National Park is a spectacular part of Australia. Which is probably just as well, if you are going to be looking at it for 11plus hours! At the race briefing on the Friday night, the ranger kept going on about the heat ("What heat?") and the sun. This Qlder likes it when it hits 30+C and as for sun ... Having said that, you had to accept that if the sky was clear then the sun could be intense. So ...

The alarm went off at about 4.30am so that I could make it for the 6am start. Covering myself with sunscreen, as instructed. At the start we waited in the car for the bus to arrive and then, before I knew it we were off racing towards Marion's Lookout. People had mentioned the scramble up to the lookout and they were right. But when you got there, the sunrise was amazing. There were bushfires and so the sky had a red tinge to it as you looked across the lake. Took a moment to take it in and then off we trotted (so to speak).

The "path" across Cradle Plateau was rocky and at times a bit hard going. Having crossed the plateau we headed into Waterfall Valley at which point things got "interesting". Not only did the path keep changing from one surface to another but my eyes wouldn't stop watering and my nose was running like a tap. Upon reflection, I think I must have been allergic to something as this problem continued throughout the day and even though I took antihistamines, it got worse every time we entered a particularly mossy area. Of all the problems people had put forward, this one had not been mentioned!

Around Pelion Creek I had to stop and take stock for a moment as it was very difficult to find the track. I am glad I did as I had ventured slightly off to the left and if I had kept going, they would probably still be looking for me! At Frog Flats a Tiger snake crossed the path. Having never seen one I took a good look, though I was glad there was some distance between us. It was also along here that I received a series of funny beeping sounds from my backpack. Apparently there are parts of the park that Telstra does reach and thank you to those who had sent text messages in the previous 48hrs. Sorry, but I didn't actually look at them until I was back at Derwent Bridge.

At Pelion Hut it was time to restock water bottles, complain about the eyes, ask a chap if he was ok (he looked dreadful) and then on again. At Kia, a ranger was there with ice cold water and snakes (not the Tiger variety) to keep the blood sugar up. No time to stop and chat, but a very pretty spot. Heading off towards Windy Ridge I came across a few groups of walkers. All seemed to think these runners are nuts but all gave a word of encouragement which was greatly appreciated as I had been on my own for hours. As I went through Windy Ridge, I again complained about the eyes and the guys said I had plenty of time to make the Narcissus 5pm cut. So again, off I trotted.

By this stage it was largely rocky with tree roots but nothing like "THE" tree roots. So I was chugging along at about 6-7min/k. Not bad given where we were at in the race and what we had covered. Then, disaster struck! My left foot hit a rock very hard and as I tried to keep my balance my right

foot landed on a tree root and over I went. As I hit the ground there was a cracking sound that, at the time, I assumed was my water bottle. As I rolled over to get up, both legs cramped, then I looked down and saw my right knee cap wasn't quite where it was supposed to be. I was so angry that I hit it, screamed A LOT, used some inappropriate language, and then got up. I readjusted the backpack, no water bottles were leaking so I sort of ignored the noise, though my left side hurt a lot, then gathered my composure. Took a look at the watch and thought, this is still doable, so get to it! Took 3 steps, again used some inappropriate language. My race was done. I was devastated, but needed to focus. I still actually had to get to Narcissus (after all, I'd never live it down if I was choppered out). So off I hobbled and eventually reached the hut after the cut off.

One of the lads there was a physio and he said that I had done the right thing. They gave me A LOT of ice, a coffee and said, get that leg up until the rest of the field come in. Within mins of lying down, the knee was swollen like a balloon. Not pretty. It took nearly two hrs for the rest of the field to come in and by that stage other things had taken over as the ferry driver was getting a little jumpy (the boat didn't have lights). Eventually we went down to the ferry and I settled in for the ride south.

However, the fun was NOT over yet! The chap sitting next to me (the one I mentioned earlier) was feeling a bit off so he asked if he could sit next to the window. We are barrelling down south when he goes to open the window, then both of us see this guy on a jetty waving frantically. So we tap the driver on the shoulder and over we go. It turns out it is another runner who had had to withdraw at Echo Point.

Back at Cynthia Bay, husband was there shaking his head! As I pointed out, I was still talking and "relatively" in one piece. However, I DID need a shower. After a wash, we joined others for food and a general debrief as we told stories of our adventures. The next day at breakfast, I got a certificate for reaching Narcissus. This was greatly appreciated and went some way to relieving the disappointment on not making down the lake. The fact that I could hardly walk up to get my certificate was certainly noted and the source of some bad jokes.