

Well I'm back, 5 years after my last cradle run and at age 54 I'm back.

I've entered this great run a number of times over the last 5 years only to fall prey to injury and to a lesser extent illness but this year I passed what I thought was my biggest challenge, I made it to the start line. JUST. A couple of cracked ribs doing a swan dive down the side of Mt. Rowland during the annual Triple Top Run at Sheffield in November looked like ending my dream before it even started. A trip to hospital to confirm my worst fears was followed by what most people would think is a stupid question for the doctor. When can I start running again? After a rolling of the eyes his answer was, when you can stand the pain. I'm thinking, good all is not lost just yet. Next day I went for a one and a half hour walk and slow, very slow jog up my favourite cradle training track. Cracked ribs are painful, very painful but maybe my dream wasn't over just yet. Over the next 2 to 3 weeks the ribs slowly improved and training started to increase at a pleasing rate.

My aim this year was to finish in 12 hours. With a pb of just over 10 hours I thought 12 hours was a reasonable goal. A training run to Windermere in mid December was very encouraging. A time of 2hrs and 8min to the hut and 4hrs 25min return was quicker than any of the 5 previous training runs I had done to the hut, and even better I felt strong finishing the run. I started to think maybe, just maybe I might get under 11 hours. By now my ribs were feeling a lot better and training was going well. About mid January my training was starting to slow a bit so I started to taper. A high protein diet and plenty of rest, things improved and by race day I was feeling good. I was still telling everyone 12 hours but was quietly confident of finishing in around 11 hours.

Talking to Marcel Brown (not sure if I got the spelling right) on Friday night (A cradle runner from previous years and out injured this year and doing the time keeping at Kitchen Hut) he asked me what time I hoped to be at the hut. I said about 6 40am to 6 43am. Official time 6 43 04 so things were going ok. Onto Windermere in a time of 2hrs 11min, about 6 minutes slower than I'd planned and not travelling as well as hoped. Onto Pelion in a time of 4hrs 26min and I knew I was going to need all my official time of 12hrs. Up over the Gap and past Kiora and DuCane and through to Windy Ridge. As I'm sure most runners are at this point of the day are I'm in survival mode by now but still going ok. The Occasional leg cramp was eased by a new anti cramp spray I had found. After Windy Ridge it was onto Narcissus. My time of 12 hours was out the window by now but I thought finishing would not be a problem. Arrived at Narcissus at 3 20 pm and after a drink of coke and a couple of pieces of water melon from the cheerful volunteers I head for the finish thinking I could walk/jog out in about 3 hours.

When I said earlier I thought I had passed my biggest challenge by making it to the start line, I was WRONG. 20 minutes later I knew my biggest challenge was about to begin. Passing out sitting on a log didn't even enter my mind. But that's what happened. Even after 6 runs on this track and doing some alright times you can still get it wrong.

Things are a bit hazy from here on but this is what I can remember. Enter my White Knights.. First Andrew Palfreyman found me sitting on a log in fairyland out to the world. Not long after Greg Swan and Martin Price arrived and offered to baby sit me to Echo Point. Offer greatly accepted , although I must say I was feeling guilty holding up other runners who by this time were more than likely fighting their own demons. Andrew went ahead to ring the ferry from Echo Point while Greg and Martin took control. Greg carried my pack and Martin literally held my hand on some of the more tricky parts of the track. Arriving at Echo point, it felt like hours but was maybe only 40 to 50 minutes later I was handed over to a couple of bush walkers who were spending the night at the hut. (not what they were expecting I'm sure). Michael and Polly put me safely onto the ferry about 30 minutes later for a relaxing ride to Cynthia Bay. Arriving at the jetty I was helped by a number of people,

some of whom I can't really remember. Among others was the local ranger and a nurse whose names I can't remember, not a great surprise as a fair bit of the day is still a bit hazy.

There are a number of people I need to thank. Ian Martin and Greg, I can't thank you guys enough, without you a tough day would have been far worse. Michael and Polly, although they may not read this, thank you. I have tried to ring them a couple of times but at the time of writing they are still "out of range". The park ranger and nurse and others who helped me at Cynthia Bay, thank you and also my beautiful partner Karen for not killing me when she got me home. The organising committee volunteers and sweeps, the time and effort you put in to make this run what it is, thank you because without you this great run would only be a memory.

Now for a Brick a Bat. To those entrants lucky enough to be given a start in this great run, if for any reason you can't make it to the start line let the organisers know. A phone call or email takes little time or effort but saves a lot of work for others and if it is early enough might give another runner a chance to start.

Will I be back? Well that's in the hands of the gods and the committee at the moment. Saturday night and Sunday morning the answer was a definite "NO" but we runners are a strange breed. After having time to think about it and studying the split times I know I can beat this track again. So maybe I might try once more. If I can get a start.

Watch this space!!!

Peter Hoare