

Thunder Run 2015 – Dorset Doodlers

Two Dorset Doodlers were chatting in the foyer of the leisure centre, I heard the words 'Running, Camping & Fun' and already at that moment my interest piqued. Not long after that I was asked if I'd like to join the Thunder Run team where we would camp together for a weekend and participate in running a relay on a 10k off road route for 24 hours, I didn't hesitate in saying yes and I was already excited.

The Thunder Run weekend started with a day of camping on the Friday. Throughout that day Doodler Base Camp took shape as the team battled through appalling weather to get to Catton Park. We kept one eye on the weather forecast for the weekend whilst we watched the skies empty continuously for hours with lots of wet stuff. When we woke on Saturday morning, the skies were blue, the sun was shining and the forecast promised that that rain would stay away for at least 22 hours of the relay. The crowds who gathered at the pre race briefing cheered at that news.

Before long Dave was at the starting line and the countdown had started, we watched him run off with hundreds of other runners, some competing in teams like us, others in smaller same sex teams some in pairs and others were running this event as a solo participant. The atmosphere was brilliant, and the excitement continued to build as runners who, it felt, had only just left the finish line started coming back through to the finish. Dave came in close to the time he had predicted and then it was my turn to run a leg.

The route took us through part of the campsite as we ran away from the start line, then up into a sharp incline into woods, at the start of the race this was a quagmire as the rain had pounded on the course the day before and then hundreds of runners had already made the ground into mud soup, it was slow progress as you tried to stay on your feet. The course then weaved its way through the campsite, past the other camping teams to much cheering and encouragement and then out onto some grassy trails before returning back to more woodland paths with all the obstacles that tree's present from roots, low branches and tree trunks. The paths twisted and turned with sharp bends and we enjoyed more mud in places, the last 2km took us up high onto a ledge with amazing views and at times driving winds before we descended back down a large hill and weaved once more through the campsite and back towards the finish line. As I handed over the baton to Nick I stopped my Garmin and then watched in horror as I accidentally deleted the run I had just done from my watch.

In no time at all, Nick then Roger, Ingrid, Sandra, Mel & Stuart had already taken their turn, night was starting to fall, the course had dried out through the day. Leg 2 began and with it came new obstacles of low light levels. Leg 3 was the start of a new dawn, I watched the sun come up as I ran and the course was once again illuminated by something more powerful than a head torch, as I ran I wished everyone a 'Good Morning' hoping it would temporarily raise the spirits of any weary runners. By the time the 3rd legs were completed, there was time left for three of us to run just one more leg each. I was in, I could do this and as forecast, the rain began to fall. The final leg was slightly surreal, knowing that this would be the last time you got to run that trail, take that hill and see those supporters who tirelessly cheered you and others on throughout the whole event. As I came into the final stretch I felt quite sad that it was nearly over. I handed the baton over to Roger for our team's last leg, and we watched as he ran off into crowds and we waited for him to bring it home again.

At the last bend before the final straight into the finish the team waited for Roger, as he came around the corner we cheered all held hands and ran towards the finish line together. It was such a great way to celebrate an amazing event, and finishing it together seemed a fitting tribute to a brilliant team who all supported each other over the weekend.