

North Dorset Village Marathon Report

It's hard to ignore the North Dorset Village Marathon when you live just miles from the start line. Suddenly all your usual running routes have mile and water markers sprayed onto the roads, reminding you that you might only be out for a quick six miler but others are training hard. I have several such routes, a 10 mile evening run, a leisurely Sunday Doddler run, a lunch run and to top it all off I drive most of the route every day to work and back.

The 18-mile marker never fails to grab my attention, just before the bridge between West Orchard and Farringdon. This point means a lot to me. This is where my brother (in his foolishness of youth) decided he should have done some training before running his first marathon. It is also where I start dreaming some lovely colleague will stop and offer me a lift when I run to work on Saturday mornings – it's never happened, but I continue to live in hope, and finally that is the point at which my legs decide just how much further I can realistically go when running longer distances with my fellow Doddlers on Sunday.

It's not really surprising I have never felt the lure of this marathon – it's hilly: I know the course too well. Why not join the relay then? I could hardly refuse, could I? What plausible reason could I give when it's on my door step, I know the route inside out and the weather should be great, it being May and all. So there I was at 6 am, race morning trying to find a pair of waterproof trousers that will fit over endless layers of kit. I found some, eventually, but couldn't manage to do them up over said layers. I left the bigger pair at home for my husband in the vain hope he would bring the children out to support me. Next decision was long sleeves, short or just vest, I'd already decided to wear two coats and pack spare trainers.

I eventually left the house and made my way to race HQ, Stur High, and found my found my team. There were some last minute changes to team Double D, due to illness, but Spencer Mogridge abandoned his tractor and stepped in the run the third leg. The race briefing started promptly at 8.20, Innes the event organizer kept it short and sweet, applause was given for the first time marathon runners, the centurions, and (I could hardly believe it) to the gentle man who has completed over a 1000 and is still running strong. It was at this point my nerves started to kick in.

It was soon time to move to the start line after a quick group photo, and just incase anyone wasn't aware that North Dorset is as equally undulating as it is picturesque, the course started with a swift uphill climb. 275 Marathon runners and 28 rely teams, about 20 Doddlers in total.

Everyone was running for very different reasons, some to get good for age spots for London 2016, others aimed just to get round, while some had injuries and were strapped so tight I feared for their circulation. Our captain Roger Teasdale (along with Spencer and Scott Pound had all run London the previous week) was running to help pace Jane Ward. The race started well and the cloud began to break, the remaining relay runners where then chauffeured along to the change over point with a few stops along the way to cheer everyone on.

The change over went well, we hadn't lost anyone yet, only a bag. My time was getting closer, my nerves were really beginning to bite, which I still can't understand, it was just a bit of fun and I knew the route. Up to Stour Row, my

turn, despite having packed my entire wardrobe, I hadn't packed my sunglasses. I should probably have twigged at that point; that my need for sunglasses meant it was getting hot. I definitely did not need to wear my thermal base layer under my vest.

And off I went, giddy as a cow let onto grass after a long winter in doors. I tried to run steady, tried to pace myself, I fell in behind a group of comfortable marathon runners but my legs just couldn't help themselves, I was off, overheating and wishing I had some discipline. Thankfully as the sun had come out, so had my husband, which gave me the opportunity to strip of the base layer at the Moorside crossroads. Sorry to everyone who witnessed it. My next apology goes to the HGV driver who caught me having a "pit stop" under a well-placed Horse Chestnut tree. Nerves, how you make me suffer! Then feeling more comfortable I set off again, pausing only for sick burps, (proving yet again I had set off too fast) to finish my leg, which was far from easy despite being the flattest section. I was in awe of the marathon runners, still looking strong while I sweated and puffed after running just under 8 miles.

A quick dash to the finish line, the Trailway to watch everyone, (except Tim Brown, and the double D's) come in. Emotion overwhelmed me, so much cheering and goodwill, relay runners helping the suffering cross the line, PB's smashed by over 16 minutes, congratulations Suzanna Baker, can you guess what I did when I got home? Signed up for my first marathon in 22 weeks time, and it's down hill all the way. Thanks to everyone who made it such a great event, special thanks goes to Innes of the Gillingham Trotters, Ian Pollard our coach, and for Matt Clayton cycling around after us with a basket full of goodies and Debbie Broadhurst for being our taxi driver for the day. It's a race that truly deserves it top 5 marathon ranking.