

Mad March 20 Mile

Today saw me venturing into unknown territory. Although I have got up to 15 miles cross country in training, I have never done over 13 miles in an actual road race. So I travelled down to Christchurch to take on the Mad March 20 miler organised by the Bournemouth based Zoom Tri. Registration was slick, there were plenty of porter loos, weather was good (probably to warm actually!) and the free t-shirt was a real quality running shirt. So everything was pointing towards a good day all round! About 300 of us who were doing the 20 miler set off at 10.15am then the 10 miler people joined us 15 minutes later, they only had to do one lap in comparison with our 2. The course was mainly winding country lanes which were great as there was no staring at the road in front of you for miles as it disappeared into the horizon. This was much more interesting. Water stops were frequent (every 3 miles to be precise) and were manned by really friendly marshals. On 4 stops they had energy drink as well as water which were very much appreciated.

Further more, my race went as follows my plan was just to get round with no injuries, energy in the tank and to experience my first ever 20 miler. To do this successfully I had planned to run at a 10:30 pace, keep my HR low and take every water break offered. I also had in my head that I would try not to walk any of the course. I went off plan straight away though as I averaged 9:30's for the first 3 miles, so I reigned myself in a bit and concentrated on keeping my form. The first 10 mile lap went fairly quickly without being too taxing on my body. Getting on with the second lap seemed to be becoming more mentally challenging but I soon overcame this quite well. I purposely kept positive all the way round by chatting to other runners and smiling for the marshals. Interestingly I remember there being one hill on the first lap but felt as if I was running up an incline for the whole of the second lap. At around the 15 mile mark I still had good form when many around me were really feeling the heat, causing them to walk up the hills or to shuffle on with bad form. This is where I started to reel them in. I felt strong in the last part of the race, but in the last mile I thought I had sped up to around 8 minute miles but was sorely shocked to discover I had in fact dropped down to an 11 min/mile! This is when I realised I was staring 'THE WALL' in the face. I only had taken 3 gels with me and went slightly too fast over the whole course, so I know this can be avoided next time by carrying more food and dropping the tempo off slightly. At one of the junctions one of the marshals shouted out and asked me "if I was the guy from 220 magazine!"

I proudly replied "YES!"

And told him "I am part of Andover triathlon". He shouted back "he knew it" and wish me luck for the Ironman.

This was nice and picked me up just as I hit a 'dark place'. I came into the finish not last, not injured, with a bit of energy left in the tank and a time of 3:17.18. This came out at 9:47 average miles. I didn't quite manage my usual reverse split, but the 2 halves were close as I did the first 10m in 1:37.23 and the second 10m in 1:40.23. Overall I am mega pleased with my performance and I now know what it feels like to run 'long'.

I would definitely recommend this race to anyone considering an iron man or as part of marathon training.

Jase