

The start was the usual traffic jam for the first half a mile but I soon got going and everyone spread out a little bit. I did my usual trick of starting miles too fast, keeping a good distance ahead of the 1:40 pace maker. I should have known that this tactic would be doomed to failure.

I had looked at the profile of the run online and knew that there was a nasty little hill around 2-3 miles, so I was expecting it and cruised up it. Still felt good and strong, but breathing a little too hard after that hill. I realised I might be going a bit fast when I went through 5km in 24 mins about 1-2 minutes faster than I had planned.

Miles 3-6 were pretty uneventful and I began to enjoy myself, still keeping up the too-fast pace, with most miles coming in under 8 minutes. Then from mile 6 onwards, things took a turn for the worse. It seemed to be all uphill and they were gradual, long, strength sapping hills. Then there'd be a quick, steep descent, then another, long, strength sapping hill. I reckon if they had reversed the course, it would have been a lot easier.

By 10 miles I was struggling (although the 10 mile time of 1:19:45 is a PB in itself, beating my 1:20:19 from last year's Great South Run). The last 5 km took a long time, averaging roughly 8:30 mins/mile, which although slow, felt like a real struggle. And this last 5km was a very slight uphill all the way back on a straight dual carriageway to the Madejski stadium boring, dull and exhausting. For me, the back half of the race was entirely dominated by a gargantuan effort of will to fight down the demons. I so wanted to stop. But I didn't. I made it. Finish time: 1:46:34. I had aimed (over optimistically) for 1:45 and I had come pretty close on what I maintain to be quite a challenging course. Pipped to the line by Paul Wills and Dave Upton as well.

Jon

I ran Reading half with Paul Venus pacing me. I wanted to beat last years 2:15 time but wasn't bothered about any particular time. Things started off well and the hills weren't as show stopping as they were for me last year. This felt great, an obvious improvement. I looked at my garmin at around 3 miles and realised we where on sub 2 pace and felt ok, so the seeds were sown, sub 2 hours was the mission. We caught up with 2hr pacemaker and sat behind him for a fair few miles, lost him when we stopped for a pee and then found him agasin a few miles later. My hips and and joints don't normally hurt while running, it is always after, but at around 7 miles i really started to suffer and realised i wasn't fully recovered from the 20 miler 7 days previously. We kept backing off but keeping in 2 hour pace and eventually came round to the stadium. My form was still good but bones and stuff were really aching. I let Paul go on to get an early finish by a couple of minutes and i still came in at 1:58. Happy with my performance, shaved 17 minutes off last years and a big lesson learnt just as my IM schedule starts. I have cancelled some of my long distance rrunning events as the recovery time bites into effective training time far to much. So i will be following my plan to the letter with a few sportives thrown in. Was great to see so many of us there again and the support was great as usual. Next year Hilary has suggested we hire a box in the stadium so that wives, girlfeinds, babies, toddlers, push chairs, ect all have a home to watch from and the runners know where to look for their loved ones. This may encourage even more of us to have a go and more importantly convince even more of our supporters to come up on the day.

Jase

I got up early Sunday to miss the traffic and got to Reading at about 7-15 ... too early but at least it gave me some time to have a look around and relax (I took 2 painkillers as I had a little niggle with my left quad). I wasn't planning on running too fast and really just wanted to finish as I have never run a half before - I started off with Stuart & Martin running at 1.45 pace but after the first hill

they left me and I just carried on at my pace - I was feeling ok and relished the atmosphere. I was grateful for the first water stop as by this time I was getting hot - even more so the 2nd waterstop. All was going fine running at 8 min mile pace and I heard a friendly shout from behind - I just passed Dave H which gave me a smile and then passed the 1.45 man - :D - about mile 9 my painkillers started to wear off and from there on in it was a battle of wills - really struggled could feel blister on my right arch and my left toes - by mile 12 I had to stop and walk for 30 seconds or so to cool down - really just wanted to stop but managed to walk/run the last mile, got overtaken by the 1.45 pacemaker and made it eventually into the stadium to finish a surprising 1:45.04 - O was really pleased with this as I had hit my goal time. So after collecting my finishers medal and drink etc - I cooled down and walked back to the car, changed and stretched - then drove back to Andover for the SR mile event.

Dan

I'll get the excuses out of the way first in that I really have not had the best build up to this race, a calf injury that has plagued me since January meaning that my training has been sporadic and hit and miss to say the least, a very busy few weeks at work with long hours and then to top it all off a flipping stinking cold last week!

When I entered this race back in October my plans were to knock significant time off my last years finish of 1hr 43 mins, I wanted to be in the mid to latter 1:30's...however as the race drew nearer this plan steadily turned into a just get round and dont do any bad damage or further aggravate the injury since this year is Ironman year. Infact last Monday I attempted a "last long run" and only managed 7 miles before limping home and suffering for a few days...very demoralising.

So come race day I was pleasantly surprised to be feeling fine and raring to go. My number had a red band which meant I was allocated in the 1:30 - 1:45 start section and after the gun went off it took around a minute to get over the line and start running...the first 5k passed with no troubles and I tucked myself in behind Jon Simmonds (although I did not reveal I was there until further into the race) and after 10k I still felt good, pacing seemed ok as I neared the dreaded 7 mile marker where psychologically this was to be the significant point in the race, the point where my calf would start to twinge or not...thankfully the latter and I pressed on. I snuck past Jon and we exchanged a few words on how mutual injuries were holding up etc (its always good to exchange excuses!) and on I went with Jon a few paces behind (unbeknown to me until after the race!)

As I neared mile 11, things were still fine but boy was I feeling the lack of miles in my legs from training, I properly struggled, feeling the wall ever closer but the finish line only a matter of minutes away I thought I'm gonna do this, no injuries and I feel really pleased...and then a number of people started to pass me, "come on willsy" shouted Martin as he comfortably strolled past barely out of breath. I tried my best to keep up with him ( and the lovely blonde who had tagged along who was chatting effortlessly to us both....I could only grunt a few words back!!) At mile 12 Martin and lovely blonde lost me but I knew the stadium was now in kissing distance, just one little climb and I was home...400m to go, keep going keep going I said, watch read 1hr 43...last years time had passed...200m to go....and I heard another familiar voice as Stewart shot past me, I tried for dear life to give him a sprint finish as we entered the stadium but nothing was going to let me catch up.

I crossed the line looking similar to a beetroot, completely knackered and out of breath in a time of 1hr 45 and 33 seconds...no injuries and chuffed to bits!

I will be back again next year...I'm not done with this race!

Paul