



Easingwold Running Club – Advertiser article August 2023

My first ever half marathon – Laura Varney

The start of my first ever half-marathon was a damp squib. It was delayed, so I chatted some more with other Running Club members, sharing knowledge and advice. The gem that stayed with me was from Mike Wallis – focus on the mile you are running, not on the ones to come.

I don't remember if there was an air horn, I was near the back. This was a new challenge, further than I have ever run before and I was very nervous. My biggest fear? Running out of energy before I run over the finish line.

Once started, I settled into a rhythm easily with so many feet tapping out a similar rhythm around me. My nerves began to calm. I was feeling good, but I had no gauge for how this was supposed to feel. I know how I usually feel at each lap of Millfield park run, but that is not helpful today. I have undertaken several 10k races recently too. Today I'm running twice that distance (and an extra bit – thanks Mike).

I liked that the markers were in miles. There was a bigger distance between them. I know that's obvious, but it meant that I could just run for large sections, not worrying about how far I had come or how far I had yet to go, until I saw the next one. For me, distance markers are not very helpful – only the ones near the end.

The weather on the lead up to the event had been shocking. We'd had strong winds, thunder and lightening, bucketing torrential rain and to be honest, when I arrived that morning, the blustery showers that were predicted felt like the best I could hope for. I'm not a fine weather

runner anyway – I did a 10k at the end of June in blistering heat in the New Forest and felt like I was going to explode – so the cold wind and occasional shower on my face helped to keep me cool. There were a couple of flashes of sunshine too.

The town was busy with lots of people cheering on friends and relations. I liked to think some were generously cheering for me too, but it might have been the runner dressed as a Donkey who was running behind me. (I admit that the Donkey overtook me. I'm coming to terms with it.)

Every single step I took after the 10 mile marker was a new step on my running journey. I cannot deny that by this stage I was tiring, but the scenery became dramatic, the river was running along beside the road and under the bridge. It kept going, little movements as if encouraging me to do the same – small steps, keep moving. There was a queue of traffic in a contraflow on the road and I thought of cyclists hanging on to moving cars during the Tour de France, but to be honest, we were moving quicker than the traffic.

Over the hills and back into Ilkley. This bit was exhausting, I'm not going to lie. And I passed some casualties along the way. That was a bit sobering, and reminded me of my own fears at the start of the race, but I tried to put it out of my head, took another sip from my water pack, and kept going.

Two hours, five minutes and thirty seven seconds after I set off, I crossed the finish line. I even managed to put a bit of effort in on the last few kilometres, but I would forgive you if you didn't notice. I'm very proud of my effort and those of all the other ERC members at Ilkley. It wasn't a flat course, but the hills were mainly manageable. I did walk up one or two of them, but there were none that stood out in my memory as having been horrendous. Colin, you were quite right, it is a lovely course. Anyone tempted to give it a go, don't hesitate. I'd recommend it.

Laura Varney