

Martindale 2016 - Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon

Early July, to be precise 6:45 am at Scotch Corner on Saturday the 2nd, I met Caroline to team up for our second SLMM.

Last year we were placed 19th overall and 3rd mixed vet. We had to do better this year after all, according to Caroline, we were another year older and would consequently have a greater handicap in the Vets category.

The event Centre was at Parkfoot Caravan & Camp site on the shores of Ullswater. From here a half hour walk took us to the start in very pleasant weather where we met my mate Keith Bell who was running in the same category (Wansfell) with his son Ross. With map in hand the wait for our start time soon flew by and we were in the start gate with the clock counting the seconds down. A short sprint up the fell where we collected our control descriptions and proceeded to mark up our map as quickly as possible, taking great care not to make the mistake we made last year which cost us some time on day one.

The day one route took us over the top of Loadpot Hill for our second control on the East side picking up our first control in a stream gully on the way.

A bit of a hike over Wether Hill where the weather was a bit drizzly but the cloud base was above the fell tops so visibility was not a problem.

Steep and rough ground was encountered as we descended the side of Keasgill Sike to control 3 at the junction with Longrain Beck, we were going well and didn't feel the need yet to take on board any food. It was very windy on the top of Low Raise so we didn't hang around after dibbing the control and made the steep descent to control five where we bumped into Keith. They set off after us so they were effectively now in front of us. Shortly after leaving the control we went our separate ways with them taking a high route and us taking a low route to control six then down a very tricky, rocky and slippery track, where Caroline took a wee tumble, to the finish.

The overnight camp was at Bridgend between Patterdale and Brotherswater. We just managed to get our wee tent up before a heavy shower arrived forcing us to give up any attempt to socialize. It also soaked my clothes hanging out to dry on a nearby fence. We passed the time with a cup a soup.

Once the shower had passed we left the shelter of our tent to check our times, collect beer, cola and milk and shared a review of our performance with Keith who was our camping neighbour. They were 10th overall against our 15th placing, analysis showed that the two sections where our routes differed there was no difference so they were just quicker than us over the same ground!!! Intermittent showers kept socialising to an on - off affair and my clothes nicely wet.

We woke up to a dry and windy day and my clothes had dried overnight, well to be honest they were nearly dry. To our shock horror we found we were in the chasing start behind Keith & Ross, so no pressure eh!!! Control cards were issued early allowing us to plan our day two route in the comfort of our tent.

Breakfast for me was a banana and a cup of coffee whilst Caroline produced a sandwich which she had made previously - a picnic on a Mountain Marathon!

Half an before our start time we broke camp and hurried through the fields to the start, located at the bottom of the track leading to Boredale Hause.

Yes you guessed, the first control was at the top a mere 250 metres vertically. After collecting it we set a course for control 2 on the ridge of Bedafell, Caroline said "shouldn't we be going that way", I said "Why" she said "because Keith & Ross are over there" I said "No" and we continued on our course and beat them to the 2nd control. Once passed them we didn't see them again until the finish. Apart from a minor case of uncertainty around control 5, on the West side of Loadpot Hill, we flew around the course in what we both agreed was a good pace until we got to control eight which we inadvertently thought was the finish and started to walk, following the taped route through the campsite. Then some competitors came running past and a quick check showed we had yet to make the finish line, as quick as a flash we were back in running mode to finally finish in 12th place giving us an overall position of 11th over the two days and 2nd Mixed Vet only 7 minutes 16 seconds behind the Mixed Vet winners!!!

I think we may be back again in 2017.

Dave T & Caroline Pollard