

Sub-3

by Jennie Ransome (RRC 464)

I have never written to the magazine before, and I am not usually in the habit of bragging about my achievements, but having finally achieved my dream in London this year, I thought readers may be interested in my story.

Like many others, I came to running late, preferring football and squash in my 20s. I got the running bug in my 30s and ran my first marathon (London in 1995) age 31 finishing in 3:47. I cracked the 3:30 barrier fairly quickly and concentrated on breaking 3:15 in order to qualify for the British Championships and an automatic entry for London. My times improved to 3:13, then 3:09 and I finally dared to dream of a sub-3. However the biological clock was also ticking and after a 3:05 in 1999 I reluctantly cut my training to try for a family. This took longer than planned and I was advised to cut my training further. 10 days short of my 40th birthday I was blessed with the birth of our 2nd child, however I knew I could not return to training 70+ miles/week and I resigned myself to running for fun and health.

Then in 2007 two things happened to re-ignite the hope. First I ran 1:28 in the Wokingham half-marathon (off a 30 mile/week schedule), and secondly I went on a training camp and met with Chris Donald who was to become my coach. He convinced me that the sub-3 was possible and introduced a lot of faster training into my schedule. The schedule kept to <50 miles/week over 5 sessions and fitted my busy life-style. I targeted London 2008; training went well, I did a 1:24 half-marathon and felt good. Then on race day disaster struck – I really wasn't well and shouldn't have started. The details are not pleasant, but I basically spent most of the race looking for toilets and finished cold and wet in 3:19. I recovered in a day or two and my coach suggested entering Blackpool which was only 2 weeks later. Again, I felt good, the conditions were good and I led the women home in 2:52 – ecstasy! – only to discover a week later that the race had been declared over ½ mile short and all the records erased. At first I felt OK about it – at that pace I would still have broken 3 hrs after all; but later I felt very



angry and decided I would have to try again. This time Leicester in October was the target. Training was more difficult in the summer due to kids being off school, holidays and so on, but I managed to fit in most of the sessions and felt well-prepared going in to the race. This time however, conditions were against me – a strong wind against the runners for the whole of the second half saw me finish in a disappointing 3:08.

By this time I had turned 45 and was running out of opportunities. I also wanted to move on to different challenges and knew I may have to accept 3:05 as my PB. But, after a long discussion with my very supportive husband, I decided to try once more.

2009 has been perfect so far. The snow made things hard work but I came through that and ran a PB in the Wilmslow half-marathon, coming in just inside 1:22. Finally 26th April arrived. I'd prayed all week for the wind to drop and it was warm which suits me. The race went like a dream. It wasn't easy (marathons never are!), but I was so focused on my running that I didn't notice the crowds or any of the landmarks. Crossing the line in 2:57:56 was a dream come true and nearly 3 weeks later, I'm still riding on the crest of a wave. I don't know why sub-3 is so important, but it was my dream and I'm proud that I never gave up. I must thank my incredible husband Chris, who never wavered in his support – both emotional and practical.

I'm now looking forward to a new phase in my running career – Comrades 2011 is the target – poor Chris!





Blackpool Marathon

Blackpool Gazette

Fast times for Blackpool marathon runners

28 April 2008

A damp and overcast morning for the Blackpool Marathon and Half-Marathon brightened the day for over 1,900 runners, resulting in some fast times.

Drizzle greeted the runners outside the Hilton Hotel for many personal best times in both the 13 and 26-mile races on the flat and fast coastal course. Runners from throughout the UK and Ireland converged on Blackpool for the events, with competitors from as far afield as Canada (Toronto), Morocco and the USA (Kansas City).

Welsh runner Alun Vaughn took the men's half-marathon title with 1:09.47, with Irish International Rosemary Ryan comfortably winning the women's race by over 12 minutes in 1:15:21.

The Welsh also prevailed in the marathon, with Preston Harriers' Gethin Butler taking the marathon title in 2:34:30 from Wrexham's Daniel Weston 2:35:51. Jennifer Ransome from the Road Runners Club took the women's race with a record-breaking 2:52:02, knocking over 11 minutes off the previous course record.

The Blackpool Wyre and Fylde club had two top-10 finishers in the half-marathon in James Mulvaney (fifth) and Malcolm Eadie (seventh), while St Annes-based Paul Muller was ninth and the leading over-50. Blackpool Wyre and Fylde's Andy Williams was fifth over-40 and 30th overall in 1:23.13, with clubmate Terence Westhead 13th over-45 (70th overall) in 1:31.27. Lytham's Ian Squire ran 1:35.20 for 15th over-40 (111th overall) and Wesham's Simon Eaton was 156th overall in 1:19.58. Peter Waywell of Wesham led the Fylde challenge in the marathon, finishing in 3:07 exactly for 17th over-40 and 85th place overall.

The course began with a small loop to North Pier and back to the Hilton via the Lower Walk, before the racers headed out to Squires Gate and up to Little Bispham before returning to Middle Walk. Full marathon runners completed two laps. Organiser Ron McAndrew said: "It was a fantastic event, especially with so many athletes recording great times. Special thanks to over 240 volunteers out on the course, in particular the stewards from Blackpool FC and Preston North End, and the British Red Cross, and Hilton Hotel."

The event also succeeded in raising plenty of funds for charity. This year's chosen beneficiary was National Childrens' Homes.



Jennie Ransome finishes London 2009, in 2:57:56