

## 32nd Intercontinental Istanbul Eurasia Marathon

17th October 2010

By Andrew Hayward (RRC 11915)

My girlfriend Michele and I (both Ranelagh Harriers) decided to do the Istanbul Marathon after being persuaded by Rupert Holden, a member of my other (lunchtime) running club in the City of London (Raven Racers). Ranelagh's Alison Dicks and Jar O'Brien came to do the associated 15k.

The marathon entry fee was a bargain at £13 including t-shirt! A long journey on Thursday followed straight into a walkabout city tour into the evening, continuing Friday and Saturday. The beauty of not doing any training before a marathon is that it takes away all expectations and therefore stress one tends to put upon oneself beforehand. Due to a calf tear at the beginning of August, having done nothing longer than six or seven miles in months - and not that many of those (my only "long" run was the 11 mile leg I ran in the Round Arran Relay race in Scotland in July - three months earlier) my game-plan was simple - get round within the 5:30 cut-off time. I figured that if I could "manage" the calf tightness which had been plaguing my recent runs and run to 13 or 14 miles, I could walk the rest and get round in about 5:15 - 5:30. Covering the first 14.2 miles in around two hours would give me three and a half to walk the last 12. I'm not normally one to just get round to tick the box and get the medal/t-shirt - rather I try to be competitive, at least in the age group, but I had paid for the entries, airfares and hotel the week before tearing my calf, so I was definitely going to be there when the race was on. Also, having on three previous occasions been in a city when the marathon was on, but not able to compete for one reason or another, I knew it was very frustrating. And, if I got

round, it would be (unusually for me) my only marathon of the year, and would make number 70 marathons/ultra-marathons in total. Michele had a similar plan to just get round in the cut-off time, also having struggled with training. Alison and Jar were there for an easy 15k run and some sightseeing and relaxation at the coast afterwards. So, due to the lack of expectations, I did none of the usual pre-race stuff like carbo-loading, and abstaining from alcohol, and we enjoyed a few beers and a Turkish meal (not known for their pasta, but great on kebabs!) the afternoon/night before the race.

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The pouring rain when we landed Thursday, continued through to Saturday morning (great - just what I needed after getting washed out of the Caribbean whilst there on business by Hurricane Otto a few days earlier!). It brightened up a bit Saturday afternoon, and we nearly saw some sunshine, but it started feeling a bit close by the evening. At 2:30-4:00am there was an amazing thunderstorm that almost shook us out of bed. Looking out of the window at 3:00am I saw lightning strike a mosque across the road, with deafening thunder immediately following. Not much sleep! Race morning I had no breakfast, and had not been able to get any Powergels anywhere, but was not too concerned as I felt I should be able to run 13/14 miles and walk the rest. I drank a couple of Powerades, and psyched myself up for what I knew would be a painful few hours.





feeling bad, although worryingly a sign showed the temperature at 20°C already. At around six miles the 15k runners peeled off towards their finish, and we turned to run along the Golden Horn and began the first of two out and backs. I saw Michele after the turnaround who was only a few minutes behind me, so that was encouraging.

At ten miles, the Garmin showed 85 minutes – still bang on 8:30 pace, and now starting to think that maybe I actually could hold on to it for another three or four miles, and therefore be able to make the cut-off time. At this point some kind runner offered me half a banana, which I obviously looked as if I needed, and that was gratefully accepted. Mile 11-

Rupert (who was looking to get a PB of sub 2:59) had booked a taxi to take the five of us to the start (no manky buses for us) and after that storm, I was surprised to see a clear sky at 7am! Driving over the Bosphorus Bridge was fun – except for the poor taxi driver - they closed the bridge right after we crossed, and before he could turn around to get home! An hour and a half waiting around before the start watching the elites warm up was pleasant, but things were starting to warm up ominously. The baggage buses were really easy and efficient – so different to Berlin!

The race start was 300 metres over the bridge to Asia - a fantastic first mile, coming back across the bridge into Europe again, with sunshine and clear views both ways along the Bosphorus. Watching (and avoiding) people streaming the other way onto the bridge with picnics was amusing if somewhat annoying – it is the only time in the year that it is opened to pedestrian traffic.

In view of my lack of training, I deliberately started at a comfortable pace that I felt I would be able to hold for a while, although I was very nervous that I was going to have to stop through calf tightness (or worse) or just lack of any stamina training. I looked at the Garmin at mile 1 – that pace was bang on 8:30. However, already thinking of excuses and justifications, I decided that if I couldn't finish, I had already run "all the way from Asia to Europe"!

The two races started on different sides of the dual carriageway, but soon joined together, and Michele hooked up with Alison and Jar for the first 5k. A tough climb, followed by a crashing descent to sea level where all gains were quickly lost again covered the next couple of miles. We passed the Besiktas stadium at 5 miles and I wasn't

12 was a long, tough drag uphill, and by now it was starting to get very warm. The thing that kept me going was looking at the amazing two thousand year old double tiered aqueduct (which carried water from the Belgrade forest for Constantine's city of Constantinople) going across the top of it, that took my mind off the pain.

At 12 miles we joined the coast road along the Sea of Marmara, and the second out and back, which was basically the whole second half of the marathon (this was tough as there was very little support until the last kilometre). After a while, I saw the leaders coming back the other way on the other side of the road, and thought I would try to keep running at least until Rupert passed. After a while I saw him looking reasonably strong but not flat out, when he was around the 30k mark and I was at about the 25k (15.5 miles) point. He looked a bit disappointed, and shouted over that he was off pace for sub 3:00. Then I thought I would try to keep running to the turnaround point.



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The organisers did an amazing job closing the roads, so much so that we had the surreal sight of several businessmen in suits obviously trying to get to the airport from their hotel, walking their luggage along the side of the road which was the marathon course, and then handing it over a wall and climbing over to where taxi drivers could get them from an adjoining road. The turnaround never seemed to come, and I thought we must be almost in Greece before it finally came at around 28k. After that, I saw Michele again who was about fifteen minutes behind me at this stage. I felt comfortable for the first time that we would both now make the cut-off time. At this point, I worked out in my head that if I could keep going to 20 miles, I might just be able to finish with a three something instead of a four or five something, so I gritted my teeth and pushed on. I got to 20 in 2:50 – amazingly still bang on 8:30 pace. I was now struggling with fatigue and the heat, but managed to push on to just past the 32.5k sign - 20.4 miles on the Garmin – just under 10k to go. It was now about 24°C, and I ran/walked the last six miles in 10 minute miles.

An amazing finish, turning off the coast road up a hill into the Topkapi Palace grounds (no spectators so I walked that bit) and out the gate at the end to the last steep climb up to the Hippodrome, in front of the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque (crammed with people, so I ran that bit) and man-



aged to push on off the top of the hill, following the 100m countdown markers from 500m, finally stopping the watch on 3:54:29. This was exactly 57 minutes slower than my marathon PB, but nonetheless, in view of the lack of training must go down as one of my toughest but most satisfying races. Michele did much the same as me over the last part of the run, but walked a bit more from 30k, and finished in 4:36:13.

We were both extremely pleased with our runs off very little training. It goes to prove what I've always known about myself – no speed, but pretty good on stamina. Rupert slowed slightly once the pressure was off, and therefore enjoyed his 3:10 finish. Alison and Jar ran round the 15k together in

81:15 and showered, changed, and came back out to the finish to cheer us in, which was much appreciated.

We all relaxed afterwards with a few beers and rubbish food. As Rupert said, he went from “my body is a temple, to my body is a dustbin, in a few hours”! I would thoroughly recommend this race; well organised - plenty of drinks/sponge stations, easy and efficient baggage buses, closed roads, and a spectacular city to run in.

Istanbul Eurasia Marathon results:

Men

1	V. Kiplagat,	KEN	.....	2:10:39	CR
46	Rupert Holden	Raven Racers.....		3:10:08	
332	Andy Hayward	Ranelagh H., Raven R. & RRC....		3:54:29	

1040 men finished

Ladies

1	Ashu Kasim Rabo	ETH	.....	2:27:25	CR
122	Michele Gibson	Ranelagh Harriers	.....	4:36:13	

234 ladies finished

15 km results

Men

1	A. Woldegiorgis	ETH	.....	45:43	
666	Jar O'Brien	Ranelagh Harriers	.....	1:21:15	

1984 men finished

Ladies

1	E. Chebet	KEN	.....	48:44	
69	Alison Dicks	Ranelagh Harriers	.....	1:21:15	

712 ladies finished

**Great Eastern Run, Peterborough  
10th October 2010**

*by Kym Wheeler (RRC 13072)*

Wall to wall blue sky, not a cloud in sight. What a wonderful start for this day which is classed as ‘auspicious’ in the Chinese calendar due to the numbers 10:10:10 – the 10th day of the 10th month of the 10th year of this century. The organisers of the race added another 3 tens to the event by starting at 10 seconds past 10 minutes past the 10th hour.

Chris and I arrived our usual hour before the race start and parked in one of the car parks on the outskirts of the town centre, using our free car park permit that was supplied in the race pack. We were not the first – already the car park was half full. I shouldered my bag and headed towards the Cathedral Square where the event was to start. Lots of portaloos surrounded the Square, a stage was set up at one end and the city council had turned off the fountains that usually spurt up from the pavement. The place was buzzing already. We quickly found some of our Club mates and enjoyed a brief chat before going to check out the actual start area. Barriers lined the street down the Long Causeway pedestrian street, crossing the main road, bright signs giving time brackets back to 2 hours. I nipped into the Wetherspoons pub to sample their facilities before we headed back to the Square.

From the stage, an enthusiastic young woman was trying to whip the waiting runners into a frenzy for an aerobic warm up. The queues of people waiting for the portaloos looked on politely and chatted to each other. Finally, a man took the microphone and started urging the runners down to the start funnel.

My bag was in the baggage wagon, I stripped off my tracksuit and gave it to Chris, then headed into the funnel. Somewhere between 1.30 and 1.45, I stopped and let the crowd swirl around me. My Club mate, Nigel Taylor, joined me, then a young girl from Nene Valley Harriers asked us what time we were doing.

“Somewhere around 1.35 to 1.40,” we told her (both of us hoping to be closer to 1.35 than 1.40).

“Do you mind if I run with you,” she asked. “It’s only my second half.”

“No problem,” we assured her. Just before the start horn went, the Nene Valley girl disappeared into the crowd. I saw a glimpse of her some miles later in the race as she passed me.

As we waited for the start countdown, a woman in front of us suddenly squatted down. As she stood up again we saw the puddle by her feet – Nigel and I looked at each other in amazement. We’d heard of last minute nerves.....

The first mile of the race was every man for him or herself as we all surged forward, elbows jostling the person beside us, a few swearwords as feet kicked someone. A traffic island in the middle of the road loomed from the crowd and I nearly tripped on the kerb as I followed a big bloke round it. A few bends in the road, then I saw the 2 mile marker. The first marker had been invisible due to the crowds. I had managed to place myself in about the right start position, I was moving with the crowd, not being overtaken, not doing any overtaking.

The first of 4 water stations appeared. I opted to stay in the middle of the road and as many people were stopping or slowing to taking water, I sped past a lot of runners then the road was open, I could finally settle into pace. I passed John Thomas, jogging along comfortably to win his veteran 70 age group in a time of 1.37 hours.

The weather was warm, the course was smooth tarmac and apart from a down and up for an underpass, it was flat. The local populace were out on the streets cheering on the runners. Some people had a barbecue in the garden; many sat on chairs by the roadside; lots of children held out their hands for ‘high-fives’ and others held up banners with ‘go daddy/mummy go’ written on them.

Around the 7 mile marker I was really enjoying the run. I felt good, my fitness which had been lacking for the last year or so was finally returning and I was cruising along at a good pace. Nigel caught me up and we ran together, shoulder to shoulder as we do on training nights.

“Lovely legs!” shouted a voice from the crowds. More heckling sounded. Nigel looked at me.

“I don’t think it’s my legs,” he commented.

“Nor mine,” I grunted back. The crowds were cheering and whistling. We reached the conclusion that a fancy dress runner must be chasing us down. A minute or so later a man dressed as a bumble bee passed us, little silvery wings, black and yellow striped socks and tutu. He was doing a good pace. I had seen a group of 6 or so of the bees in the crowd at the start. The other bees ran as a swarm near the back of the race, but this one was obviously a worker. He cruised past us, hardly sweating, and finished several minutes ahead of us.

Another couple of miles and I was beginning to slow.

“Go on,” I urged Nigel. He slowly pulled away, but not as fast as I had expected. I was able to keep him in sight, just a few runners ahead of me. The 11 mile marker passed, then it was 12 miles. Now, I told myself. Last mile, you can do it. I put my head down, leaned forward onto my toes and started counting paces, speeding up for the last mile. 1 hour 35 minutes was within reach – maybe.

I passed Nigel in the last half mile, he didn’t have anything left to pick up with me. The last run in, down a footpath, I could hear the tannoy at the finish, round a couple of right angled bends, then on to the grass and the crowds were cheering. Somewhere in the crowd were club mates and family, I heard them yelling my name, surged into the last little bend and under the finish banner as the clock ticked over to 1.36. Peace and quiet seemed to descend as I wobbled on suddenly unstable legs to collect bottles of water, my medal, bag and cotton t-shirt. Bananas were heaped on a table and chocolate covered flapjack. I walked on, heading to the baggage wagon. Nigel caught up with me, a hand on my shoulder, “well done,” then he went to collect his bag.

Was it just me in my after race not all there mode, or was the person helping to sort out the bags not quite ‘with it’? I pointed to my blue bag just behind her, said: “It’s just behind you” but she kept pulling out black and grey bags from the pile in front of her. Finally another woman came over and hauled my bag from the heap and passed it to me. I headed out into the waiting crowds and noise. Somehow, Chris found me and we had a brief chat with another club mate, Scott, who had done a magnificent 1.31 time, then we found a bit of space. I ate a ham sandwich and sorted out my bag.

By the time I had nipped into a queue-less portaloos for a quick wipe down and change of clothes, my sister and family had found Chris and we were ready to head back to the town centre and a café for lunch. All those around me were munching, but I was still on after race stomach shut down. I had a good gulp of Chris’s fizzy drink and released some of the trapped wind from my stomach, to the amusement of my great nephews who had just been told off for making noisy eructations after drinking their cans of fizzy drinks. Now I was ready to eat!