

## Lausanne '17

By Sev Konieczny



On the 22nd October, a small contingent of 10 Roadrunners showcased the green vest in Lausanne, home of the Olympics and its museum.

It was in 1993 during a trip to Japan promoting the town that some enthusiasts came up with the idea of a live sporting event during the opening of the Olympic museum. And so Lausanne marathon was born.

Forward 24 years and it is while drinking a post-parkrun coffee that Lausanne was chosen as an ideal Autumn break. Mountains, clean air, easy access, relatively cheap flights, culture and a reputable race in an iconic location would all prove irresistible.

La Tour de Peilz – a picturesque Swiss town and start point of the half marathon as well as half way point of the marathon. A live band provided some entertainment yet as they sang local resident, Shania Twain's tune "that don't impress me much" we begged to differ. It was indeed an impressive display of precision and logistics - three distances starting from different locations at different times.

We copied the Swiss model to sort out our own logistics, all expertly monitored by timekeeper John Bailey. Meeting points in strategic places, usually in the vicinity of a bin- the bigger the better- so we could easily reassemble.

First on the start line at 10:10am in Parc de Milan were the marathoners. Flying the flag for Reading was Lorraine Bailey with 2 loyal parkrunners, Adrian Wadham and Aleid Busser. Their 42.2 kilometres race went out to La Tour de Peilz and back, finishing in front of the Olympic museum on a red carpet specially laid for the occasion.

That same red carpet would later become the highlight of Andy Atkinson's race. What a triumphant finish!

Lorraine recalled enjoying a brilliant event. She had to dig deep, however, as she became isolated at stages owing to the much lower numbers running the marathon. She soon picked up the pace as she was cheered on by her clubmates at the halfway point, readying themselves for the start of their event. She was serenaded by the live band as she ran by! Adrian and Aleid zoomed past, cruising to the finish in extraordinary times of 4.09 and 4.30 respectively. An incredible end to their marathon careers.

All three were met at the finish by number one supporter Fiona Ross. Running the shorter distance- 10km- due to return from injury she crossed the line earlier, completing it in a time of 57.38, a birthday PB ( I believe)

Fiona had been the second of the green vests to run. Cheered on at the start by the rest of us (half marathoners), it was a case of quick wave, cheer, obligatory selfie and off with us on the free train from Lausanne to La Tour de Peilz, in time for the start of the HM. The journey was a delight for the eyes; an explosion of autumnal colours on the left, along the vineyard of Lauvaux, with Lake Geneva (or Leman as the French & Swiss call it) on the right and the Alps further in the background. Magical! Except that we would need to run back to Lausanne or more precisely Ouchy (yep, official place name). Ouch!

Until the morning of the race, we kept an almost obsessive eye on the weather app. We braced ourselves for a cold, wet and windy 13.1 miles. Storm 'Brian' was battering Ireland and parts of the UK and we were expecting Switzerland to be suffering too. How wrong was the app! It was colder than the 19 degrees of the previous day and we had a few gusts of wind on the course adding further challenge to some of the inclines. But it was not as bad as expected; it was mainly dry with some menacing clouds, adding a dramatic layer to the already breath-taking views.

There was one moment when the skies darkened, the clouds lowered and burst into a heavy shower just as the participants of the last wave were about to start. I joined Veronica Andrew and Liz Atkinson under a porch to shelter from that spell of bad weather until the last second of our start at the very precise time of 14.09. Both were in high spirits having just experienced a comical speed dating moment involving a Swiss and a French runner, and Liz. Time was indeed of the essence and so fleeting moments only could be enjoyed between them!

As Liz, Veronica and I passed the start line, Fergal Donnelly was already well on his way to Ouchy in a controlled and composed stride. This was Fergal's last training run before his PB breaking attempt in Walton on Thames a week later and he ensured that all delicacies of the marathon buffet at the refuelling stations were sampled, at least in the early stages.

Not far behind him, in the purple wave was Helen Pool. Recovering from her PB efforts the week before in Manchester, Helen approached Lausanne in a relaxed and pressure free manner. A true tourist in holiday mode who came to enjoy the ride.... and still managed to bag herself another PB!

Lausanne HM known for its small but fast field is a point-to-point race along the famous (and on the day closed to traffic) "route du lac" offering stunning scenery from village to village. I guess the happy distraction, the safe route, the fresh air, not to mention the training beforehand made for a memorable run.

Mark Andrew's training for the event paid off nicely and he was extremely pleased with his achievement though he was even prouder of Veronica for finishing strongly -18 minutes ahead of her predicted time.

A visit to the Olympic museum on the eve of the race had put us all in the right mindset. With motivational quotes, cognitive training but most of all creative photo opportunities, we were made to believe we were athletes (in case we were ever in doubt).



It certainly worked for me as I achieved my first sub 2.20 . An extremely proud moment for a come back race in what I can only describe as not-as-flat-as- you-would-think type of course almost 3 months to the day of that dreaded injury.

The museum memorabilia and interactive displays were all very inspiring and so were the people.

The crowd was mostly present in the villages & towns we ran through cheering us on with tons of “allez! allez!” to the sounds of the cow bells.

And there were our fellow runners. John will happily tell you that he owes his 3 min PB to a competitor who passed him at kilometre 8. It took John 3 kilometres to reclaim the lead. Standard race scenario you will say but what is remarkable is that the competitor in question had disproportionate limbs for an abnormally small structure (the correct description of person suffering from dwarfism).

Memories were made that weekend either on the run or at “le petit Chalet”, host of our celebrations of 12 finishers, 3 PBs and a birthday.

That evening, most of us swapped the green vest for the Lausanne marathon complimentary T-shirt, another reminder of the peachy run we have had.



I can highly recommend a city break with a race thrown in for good measure. I certainly can't wait for the next one.