



E-BULLETIN

15 APRIL 2020

READING ROADRUNNERS



RALLY ROUND RELAYS

Chairman Chat

Phil Reay



Phil joined the club in 2010 and from 2016-18 was the Men's Team captain. Outside of running he works in Marketing, Sales and Business development roles. Phil enjoys long distance running and has completed over 59 marathons, including the ultramarathon Marathon des Sables in 2016.

chairman@readingroadrunners.org

The camaraderie and togetherness of this club continues to get even stronger week after week. Thanks to the committee who continue to work for the club, the captains, the volunteers and all the members who contribute to our club, our special community. In particular thanks to our Social Secretary Liz, and Captains Sam and Jamie for the events this week. The virtual quiz and Dawn-till-Dusk Virtual Relays were both fun - thanks to those who took part and raised valuable funds for our club charity, Parenting Special Children.

Together as a team of 587 people we've already proved we can achieve a lot. As we look to the future with some uncertainty, we can take hope from knowing we can achieve great things as a team, together, united as one. With that, I wanted to share just some of the highlights from the last year or so. It's an adapted version of what I shared at the AGM.

Our achievements can be categorised in three areas:

- 1) The Health and well being of members
- 2) Coaching and results
- 3) Reviewing our Technology adoption across the club.

1) In pursuing the Health and well-being of members we have:

- shared the Emergency Track Procedures
- Appointed a Mental Health Champion
- Delivered Run and Talk sessions
- Appointed a Female Welfare Officer.
- We have 22 trained first aiders at the club.

2) Coaching

- A full review of the coaching set-up happened including athlete forums and surveys. The results are being used in planning future sessions.
- There has been an increase in communication of what sessions are happening and why
- 12 new Leaders in Running Fitness and 2 new Coaches in Running Fitness were trained
- We have the introduction of a new buddy and induction process to welcome first timers.

Thank you to ALL our coaches who dedicate their time to help our athletes and support all members in living a healthier lifestyle. It's not just about the Wednesday or Friday sessions, it's the time to plan the sessions and their commitment to volunteer rain or shine that is impressive and appreciated.

Good coaching is at the heart of results in races, for teams and individuals. Some of the highlights include

- 10 members have earned their England Vests
- the number of PBs is racing toward 400 across the club
- 5 of the Men's club records have been broken
- Improvers section in the results is a welcome addition
- Winning Team Trophies notably the club retaining the Ridgeway Relay Trophy as well as league wins in the TVXC and Hampshire Cross-country Leagues.
- Outstanding performances across the club in the Virtual National Relay Championships.

3) Technology

We have

- Introduced online payments for all our socials
- An online process for booking London Marathon coaches.
- Launched a club Instagram account with over 350 followers
- Launched a Reading Roadrunners Races Facebook page.
- Almost doubled our Twitter following to 750
- Hosted virtual team events
- Sent out eNewsletter bulletins.

And it doesn't stop there!! We also have:

- A top class team of event directors and race committees who year after year manage Bramley 20/10, Shinfield Races, Summer Relays, Mortimer 10K, Track Fridays, Our Cross Country events, the Vets league, organisation of our Endure24 teams.
- A new look and feel to our website with new articles posted on a weekly basis with more people contributing all the time.
- Raised over £10,000 for the 2019/20 club charity, First Days, and already raised an impressive amount for 2020/21 club charity, Parenting Special Children.
- Produced a monthly results section.
- Provided a massage service at track
- Managed a track bar on a Wednesday evening providing a wonderful social setting for many.
- Our excellent team of people on front desk who welcome us every week
- The team who manage our kit who will be soon providing kit from our newly appointed manufacturer 2XU, lowering the cost of a club vest to members.
- Had a number of fantastic Socials including a hundred members at the Christmas Party, A day at the races, a brewery tour and more.
- Had our accounts audited and verified and are in a strong position.
- Marshaled various events including London Marathon, Wokingham Half, Reading Half, TVXC.
- Provided catering for many events.
- Introduced Age Category Club Records
- Advocated for equality especially in Cross Country events.
- Updated our Cross Country rules.
- Equalised the age categories in our own club championships

We have so much as a team to be PROUD of, so much to thank each other for. Together, we've achieved a HUGE amount. TOGETHER we CAN get through this challenging period and we WILL continue to achieve more in the future.

We are Team Reading Roadrunners. Keep following the Government instructions. Stay virtually connected, stay strong.

Phil

chairman@readingroadrunners.org

Editor's Note

Ben Fasham

Hello everyone, and welcome to this week's newsletter.

What a fantastic week the club's had, a real balm for the nerves amid the current situation. Taking part in both of the Virtual Relays really felt like an 'event' to me, and just as rewarding has been keeping track of the shared positivity around the Relays on the Club's Facebook page. It comes as no surprise that local clubs are looking on at our activities and taking note!

This newsletter reflects the busy week the club's had; **Sam Whalley** reports on the Women's team's 'PB'-laden Virtual National Road Relays, while I had no qualms about copying over **Jack Gregory's** excellent report from the website which covered the Men's team and age-graded results.

Jamie Smith brings us the news on the Dawn-till-Dusk Relay, which took place on Easter Monday, while **Stuart Hyslop** looks back at the terrifying/awe-inspiring Transvulcania Ultra in the Canary Islands.

Results editor **David Dibben** brings us news of rescheduled/cancelled races and events, while also firing up the calculator to bring us the VNRR results. Competitors in which will no doubt be well advised to follow **Coach Alexa's** mobility exercises, while waiting for **Mark Apsey's** latest recipe to finish in the oven.

Articles are still needed so do please keep sending them in. Next week we have our first Book Review, while we have a first stab at compiling an unofficial Running Playlist. If you feel like having a go at writing something then please do – much like at the track on Wednesdays, this is a great place to try stuff out.



Meanwhile, **Peter Glass** (pictured here, in his Green Vest, in his garden) has asked me to remind runners of the continuing need for vigilance in maintaining social distancing while out for their run. Peter's wife is a vulnerable member of society who nevertheless loves her daily exercise, and would like runners to keep their 2m distance, so that she can continue to enjoy it!

I must say I'm possibly guilty of losing attention a little while out running, so with our increased activities this is a timely reminder.

I hope you all continue to enjoy the weather – if there are any more pictures of Roadrunners in their Green Vests, in their gardens, then do please send them in.

All the best,

Ben

newsletter@readingroadrunners.org

Fixtures update

David Dibben

ROADRUNNERS who enjoyed the hugely popular 'virtual' events over the last week can have another bash next month when the **Barnes Fitness Summer Series** goes 'virtual'.

The first two events in May and June have been called off by the Dinton authorities but you can still run the 5ks and 10ks — and win a medal!

If you missed Ellie Barnes's live announcement, all the details about entry can be found at <https://www.barnesfitness.co.uk/dinton-pastures-5km-10km-summer-series-2020/>

But that's pretty much all the good news on the fixtures front.

The latest coronavirus casualty in the club championship is the **Chiltern Chase 10k** in June. It's the fifth club champs event to be cancelled and, as next month's **Reading 10k** has also been lost, it means there are no more races at that distance scheduled in this year's competition.

General secretary Bob Thomas is taking the realistic view that it could be several weeks before he can make any decisions about where the championship goes from here.

Two new dates for the calendar are:

September 20th: **Newbury Racecourse 5k, 10k and half marathon.**

October 18th: **Snowdonia Trail Marathon.**

Organisers of the south version of **Endure 24** have set a provisional date of the weekend of September 12th/13th in the event of a postponement in June but hopes are fading and it more likely to be held over until next year.

Sadly for Ultra lovers, the **Race to the Stones**, **King**, **Tower** and **Castle** have all been called off until 2021.

RR Wolf Pack runners and Tony's Virtual Pub online

Tony Canning

I'm looking for Wolf Pack runners past, present and even sometimes, to join us every on Wed eve @ 8pm for a chat/beer via SKYPE.

It's not a coaching talk as such but more of a social with some therapy if you want to catch up with others. A beer etc and a webcam are recommended if you can.

Just SKYPE me on "**g0opb-1**" (0 = Number Zero) with a request to join, or share contact details. Or you can email me your SKYPE id.

Regards & stay well
Coach Tony
g0opb#compuserve.com (# = @)

Virtual National Road Relays – Women's team

Sam Whalley



With race calendars empty, 20 female Roadrunners jumped at the chance to pull on their green vests and represent the club in the Virtual National Road Relays. The wearing of club kit was not even a requirement for this race, but it just felt right, and certainly helped get the adrenalin flowing for what was essentially a 5k time-trial.

The beauty of this race, while being pretty tough to run solo, was its convenience, with no choice but to run loops or an out-and-back from your own front door, including warming up and down, of course. Routes were carefully plotted in advance, taking into account the negative elevation limit of 30ft.

We also thought about the most suitable time of day, the number of road crossings, and any potential obstacles — wheelbarrows, toddlers, barriers — to try to ensure our best performance. In hindsight, some might have chosen differently, and some did indeed have another go, before uploading their fastest attempt. I don't think anyone had bargained for this week's sub-tropical weather either.

Still on her way back from injury, **Gemma Buley** led the women's team home in a great time of 19:21, just ahead of **Carrie Hoskins**, in 19:39 (fourth FV50). Just missing out on a sub-20 were **Nikki Gray**, in 20:01, and **Katherine Sargeant**, in 20:05 (seventh FV50). With **Sarah Dooley** in 20:16, and **Jane Copland** in 20:46, this put the women in 31st place in the six-stage competition, with a combined time of 2:00:08. Apart from Gemma, all of these were also FV35 scorers, and just needed **Mel Shaw's** 21:18 to achieve an excellent fifth place out of 47 complete vet teams — amazing — with a combined time of 2:02:05.

Making up the remainder of the women's 12-stage team were **Chloe Lloyd**, with a huge PB of 21:42, **Julie Rainbow**, in 21:58 (ninth FV55), **Swinda Falkena**, in 22:17, **Liz Johnson**, in 22:45, and **Claire Woodhouse**, in a post-baby PB of 23:29.

The 12-stage team was an incredible 13th, in a combined time of 4:13:37. Well done!

Once the results were in, an FV50 category was added, with four to score. Had we had one more runner in this age category, I think the club could have won! Our three FV50s ran a combined time of 1:01:42, with the winning team of four coming in at 1:36:25. Someone please check my maths!

Another great thing about this race was that there was no limit to numbers. Just run, and the fastest 12 would be counted. So, also running like they had stolen something were **Caroline Jackson**, 23:31, **Claire Raynor**, 23:33, **Claire Seymour**, matching her track 5000m PB, in 23:53, **Angela Burley**, 23:58, **Sam Whalley**, 24:17, **Liz Ganpatsingh**, just days after her three-day Paris Marathon, in 24:48, **Alex Bennell**, 25:44, and **Katie Gumbrell**, in 27:48.

Well done to everyone who represented the club and put in 100 per cent effort. It was so nice to hear about your experiences, pre-race nerves, and near-vomit finishes. That's what it's all about. I hope you enjoyed being part of the virtual team, and, who knows, maybe we will take an actual team to the Nationals next year

Virtual National Road Relays – Men's team & Age-graded

Jack Gregory

The National 12 and 6-stage Road Relays are a staple of the UK racing season, providing a competitive transition from cross-country to marathon/road (and track), while also truly showing which club can boast the most depth of distance talent. Personally, it is an event I have been trying to compete in for years both in my time with our rivals (Reading AC) and more recently since I made the jump to Reading Roadrunners (more controversial than Spurs to Arsenal).

It does though involve some considerable organisation from team captains and also having 12/6 runners available to help you qualify at the Southern, and then represent at the National at Sutton Park in Birmingham. This is far easier said than done as it does often clash with popular road races and seems to be a common time to get injured.

Having seen the success of the club in the Southern 6/4 stage in September, **Jamie Smith**, **Mark Worringham** and myself on the men's side, and **Sam Whalley** on the ladies, had been pushing for our first appearance in the event. This was sorted, with almost two full teams registered on both sides, ready to head up to Milton Keynes. Unfortunately, as with every other event, it fell victim to Covid-19; leaving us rather disappointed.

Talk had begun a few weeks back on various forums and groups of the organisation of a virtual event. Fortunately our sport has many great characters and volunteers and the Virtual National Road Relays were created by the small team at Opentrack, who have done an outstanding job at short notice with almost seven times the amount of entries they were expecting.

Jamie and Sam quickly went to work in drumming up interest among the members and the regulars quickly made themselves available. What I have been particularly happy about though is members who maybe don't always feel "quick" enough or have not competed in club team events before getting involved. It has paid dividends as we have seen a number of "PBs" (very unofficial) from top to bottom.

The brief for the race was very simple: run a 5k as fast as possible, while following all social distancing guidelines, and then upload to Strava and the Opentrack website. This obviously means some will take liberties here and we all know the slight limitations of GPS; but did mean everyone could access safely and close to their homes, while providing a fairly accurate 5k time.

The standard of the racing has been sky high. Based on entries, over 60 current or ex-GB internationals signed up and this can be seen in the results. On the men's side, notables include Marc Scott for Cambridge, a Nike professional who recently broke Mo Farah's European Indoor 5000 record in 13.08. He was only third fastest (although the athlete in first has a slightly suspect time), in 13.43. To get into the top 50 times you had to run 14:43, 15 flat would get you 97th, 16 minutes 394th and 17 dead 798th!

At the front end of the men's race there was an epic battle with the lead changing hands regularly over the last 48 hours as each of Tonbridge, Leeds, Bedford and Cambridge added rapid times to their fastest 12. It was eventually Leeds, who crept ahead of Cambridge in second with Tonbridge taking bronze. Bedford were fourth. I mention four teams as they all went under three hours total. It does not take a maths graduate to work out that these teams therefore averaged under 15 minutes per leg, Leeds getting exceptionally close to 14:45.

The Roadrunners were not put off by the competition, rising to the challenge of the top athletic distance clubs in the country. Friendly rivalry between the guys meant many ran 'PBs' in their efforts. As results were compiled together, the men finished a highly respectable 41st out of 118 complete A teams in a total time of 3:21:05 (for comparison, Leeds were 2:57), averaging 16:45 per leg.

Scoring legs were: **Jack Gregory** (15:34), **Mark Worringham** (15:52), **Stephen Ridley** (15:59), **Chris Burt** (16:41), **Mark Apsey** (16:51), **Ryan Faulkner** (16:52), **Matthew Davies** (16:53), **Sibrand Rinzema** (17:13), **David Parton** (17:16), **Brendan Morris** (17:16), **Callum Pratt** (17:19) and **David McCoy** (17:19)

A key feature of the team was the excellent depth. All 12 of our scorers were in the top 1000 finishers, something not common in many teams outside of the top 20. Motivation is there to bring all of those times down by just 30 seconds and suddenly we would move up 10-15 places.

Special mentions in the scoring team must go to Stephen Ridley, who dipped under 16 minutes for the first time. He should probably scrap that triathlon stuff! Also, I believe there were 'PBs' for Chris Burt, Matthew Davies and Callum Pratt, while also excellent efforts from Sibrand Rinzema and Brendan Morris, both coming off injury but delivering solid runs. While part of the challenge of a 12-stage relay is to get your 12 strongest runners out, it is worth noting RR were missing **Rob Corney**, **Matt Richards** and **Seb Briggs**, all of whom would likely have scored.

As mentioned, RR's depth is certainly a strength and this was shown by an excellent showing by the B team, finishing ninth among B teams in 3:51:36. Lots of the guys here were knocking on the door of the A team, with sub-18 performances from **Jamie Cole** (17:22), **Jamie Smith** (17:28) and **Tony Page** (17:47). Backing them up were **Alex Harris** (18:18), **Brooke Johnson** (18:51), **David Clay** (18:53) and **Pete Jewell** (18:56), who was the first Roadrunner to complete a leg, early on Saturday morning. Next up were **Stuart Hyslop** (18:59), **Rob Thompson** (20:21), **David Caswell** (21:13), **Chris James** (21:40) and finally **Ben Fasham** (21:48).

And if these 24 runners were not enough, there were outstanding efforts many more men. A shout-out must go to our youngest runner, Under 17 **Jacob Atwal** who ran an excellent 17:49 but due to age restrictions could not be slotted into our B team. Further top efforts came from **Peter Cave** (22:07), **Clinton Montague** (22:14), **Chris Barkus** (22:28), **Alan Williamson** (22:59), **Stuart Wylie** (23:31), **Roger Ganpatsingh** (24:11), **Paul Monaghan** (25:30) and **Peter Reilly** (25:41).

As well as the 12-stage race, there were the veteran six-stage competitions, categories that RR tend to perform particularly well in. This was no different with the vet men (V40 and above) 13th, counters being Worringham, Parton, Cole, Page, Harris and Jewell. The V50s were also an outstanding fifth with David Caswell adding to Parton, Harris and Jewell.

Thank you as usual to our team captains Jamie and Sam for drumming up interest and continued encouragement to get more and more RR out of their comfort zone and competing for the club. We continue to grow and improve and this can be seen in our results. It's great to see over 50 runners coming together during this difficult time and has been a welcome distraction alongside the many other excellent initiatives and activities going on (virtually) at the club. Well done and thank you all.

Finally, following on from my above point on our continued improvement, I thought this would be a good way to sign off. There was an overall 12 stage competition including men and women based on age grading. I won't go into details, as most will be familiar with parkrun, however I feel this is an excellent way of bringing together the overall performance standard at a club.

We averaged an exceptional 83.06 per cent across our top 12, finishing 31st out of 148 clubs. This included beating local rivals Reading AC, Windsor and Newbury and national powerhouses Belgrave and Serpentine. An incredible achievement! Below are the scorers (ordered by highest age-grade score):

Mark Worringham, **David Parton**, **Carrie Hoskins**, **Jamie Cole**, **Jack Gregory**, **Pete Jewell**, **Stephen Ridley**, **Katherine Sargeant**, **Alex Harris**, **Tony Page**, **Julie Rainbow** and **Chris Burt**.

Roadrunners' Race Results

David Dibben

CONGRATULATIONS to Jack Gregory and his pals in his seriously rapid Wednesday evening training squad for their performances in the Virtual National Road Relays.

Respect, too, to Carrie Hoskins and her chums in our ladies vets team for their stunning times and their fifth-place finish.

In fact it was a triumph all through the club, with shedloads of personal bests.

What a shame our top-form members weren't credited for those PBs by the sport's 'bible', Power of 10.

Just a thought for when the season resumes... wouldn't it be good if a lot of these fliers listed below turned out for a Track Friday 5k at Palmer Park?

April 4th-8th

Virtual National Road Relays 5k

<i>Name</i>	<i>Time</i>		
Jack Gregory	15.34	Jane Copland	20.46
Mark Worringham	15.52	Mel Shaw	21.18
Stephen Ridley	15.59	David Caswell	21.23
Chris Burt	16.41	Chris James	21.40
Mark Apsey	16.51	Chloe Lloyd	21.42
Ryan Faulkner	16.52	Ben Fasham	21.48
Matt Davies	16.53	Julie Rainbow	21.58
Sibrand Rinsema	17.13	Peter Cave	22.07
David Parton	17.16	Clinton Montague	22.14
Brendan Morris	17.16	Swinda Falkena	22.17
Calum Pratt	17.19	Chris Barkus	22.28
David McCoy (Snr)	17.19	Liz Johnson	22.45
Jamie Cole	17.22	Alan Williamson	22.59
Jamie Smith	17.28	Claire Woodhouse	23.29
Tony Page	17.47	Caroline Jackson	23.31
Jacob Atwal	17.49	Stuart Wylie	23.31
Alex Harris	18.18	Claire Raynor	23.33
Brooke Johnson	18.51	Claire Seymour	23.53
David Clay	18.53	Angela Burley	23.58
Pete Jewell	18.56	Roger Gatpansingh	24.11
Stuart Hyslop	18.59	Sam Whalley	24.17
Gemma Buley	19.21	Liz Gatpansingh	24.48
Caroline Hoskins	19.39	Paul Monaghan	25.30
Nikki Gray	20.01	Peter Reilly	25.41
Katherine Sargeant	20.05	Alex Bennell	25.44
Sarah Dooley	20.16	Katie Gumbrell	27.48
Rob Thompson	20.21		

Dawn till Dusk Virtual Relay

Jamie Smith

A simple idea to have a club member running throughout the daylight hours of Bank holiday Monday. The idea was thought up by Sam Whalley - 6am through to sunset at 8pm in 30-minute time slots – and how far could we run in that time?

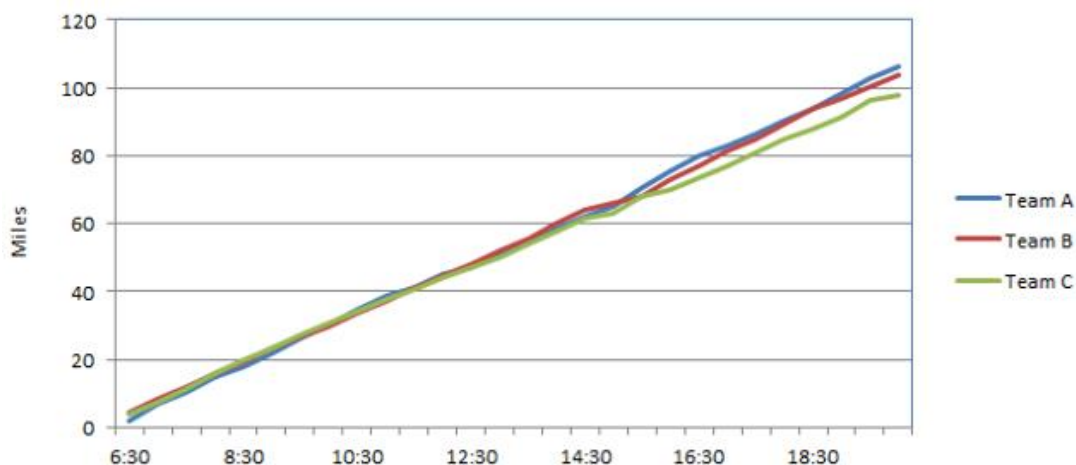
Such was the enthusiasm from our club members with just one message posted on Facebook, it took less than an hour to fill up every single 30-minute slot. Sam was overloaded with more requests, and it was soon apparent that a second and then a third team was required. Both additional teams were to fill up just as fast as the first team. This would then create a small amount of competition between the three teams – Which team would go the furthest? How far could three teams run?

Throughout this lockdown, with all races having been cancelled or postponed until who knows when, training has become a little monotonous without the added excitement of a goal or target. Track nights have been missed and without club mates the loneliness of a distance runner has really been felt.

What the Dawn to Dusk relay did wonderfully was bring so many club members together, if not physically (social distancing was of course strictly adhered to!) then virtually we all clapped, supported, cheered and congratulated our teammates on their performance throughout the day. In total, 80 club members took to the road on Easter Bank holiday in the inaugural Dawn to Dusk Virtual relay.

The format of the day was simple, run or walk as far you can in 30 minutes, then post this distance onto the club's Facebook page. Of course, after the obligatory upload to Strava/Garmin, as without this it wouldn't have taken place!

From the moment the first members started out at 6am, the excitement would build throughout the day with the lead changing five times between the three teams. Going into the last few hours there was only a handful of miles between the teams.



The tension was building, with refresh constantly being clicked on as a 20-minute wait for the next member's distance to come in towards the end of day feeling like an hour! It was great to see so many club members head out wearing their club top with such pride. Lots of photos were shared on social media – it really felt like we were all together at a club race, only without the cake!

Come 8pm, Team A had covered the furthest distance. In a first for the club the results were announced by Sam Whalley via live video stream on Facebook.

Team results:

Team A: 106.06 miles

Team B: 103.94miles

Team C: 97.95 miles

Total distance run: 307.9 – as was correctly guessed by **Stuart Hyslop, Gary Clarke & Mike Hibberd**Average distance walked/run by all club members: 3.6 milesFurthest distance in 30 minutes: **Mark Apsey** – 5.28 miles

However, with all the current negativity around the globe right now, I think the real winner on the day is every single club member whether you took part or not. This event showed that while we cannot be together right now, we will be together again and as a club we will be a stronger.

The virtual relay also served as a fantastic opportunity to raise some money for this year's nominated club charity – **Parenting Special Children**. I am delighted to say that £620 was raised (this will also be topped up with gift aid). Thank you to everyone who donated.

I am certain that this will not be the last time this event takes place for our club, with at least three local clubs copying Sam's idea in the coming weeks. Perhaps another idea for future event between clubs?

Thanks to my fellow unofficial team captains Sarah Dooley (Team A) and Stuart Hyslop (Team C) for their assistance throughout the entire day; here are some words from both:

Sarah: "For me, today's relay sums up what an inclusive and supportive club we have in RR. I started team A off at 6am with a brisk walk (I had massive FOMO so I had to take part even though I am trying to rest a niggles!) I then somehow found time in the busy schedule of eating chocolate, cooking, drinking tea/coffee/wine, to check fb for results for team A!

We saw pre-race nerves, pbs, intervals, runs round the park, post box runs, dog runs, birthday runs and some sterling baking efforts too!! I loved spending the day tracking and seeing people virtually hand over the baton. It truly doesn't matter what speed you run at, we are all part of the club and we all support each other 😊 We did win though.... just saying!"

Stuart: "With the lockdown decorating projects rapidly losing their appeal, the dusk till dawn relay came as a welcome distraction. A good motivator to stretch the legs and get some speed work in, but also to get involved with a fun club event. With a guilty love of stats, I thought I could also usefully help compile some results too.

I was not quite prepared for how engaging and inspiring it was. As a relatively new RRR member, I feel like I have 'met' loads more people over the course of the event than many a track session. From the speed merchants knocking on 5 miles to those getting back out there whilst recovering from injury, it was great to see everyone contributing and the total ticking upward. The lead seemed to switch places almost on every leg and it was nerve wracking waiting for the last few results to come in. In the end whilst Team C may not have quite gone the farthest, but we did have the busiest Facebook thread! A tenuous win maybe – but job done for this fun event."

Stay safe, maintain positivity and keep getting out for those miles, we will all be back at track again soon looking towards our next goal - Jamie



Transvulcania Ultra

Stu Hyslop

With the lockdown kicking in I decided to take the opportunity to try and clear off some little jobs on my list. This included sorting out some photos that had been sitting around for a year or so. It's amazing how this triggered memories of past running and I thought I would share a race experience from last year.

Transvulcania is a race that had been wanting to attempt for some time. It intrigued and terrified in equal measure – after dismissing it as too long, too hard, and too far away eventually I ran out of excuses and signed up. It is a mountain race on the small island of La Palma in the Canaries. The island is a little off the beaten path and has a more local feel than its nearby neighbours. The landscape is dominated by a mountainous spine that cuts it in two. It's a dramatic destination, with soaring jagged peaks, black volcanic sands and lush greenery.



For me it was not an auspicious start – some overly optimistic planning saw me miss the last ferry of the day and having to book a last minute flight to hop over from Tenerife to La Palma. Unfortunately the domestic airport was not open when I arrived in the early hours of the morning, so with no hotels in sight I spent the night on a bench outside the airport! At least it was relatively warm, and I met Walter, a Scot also running the race who was in a similar predicament... or was he just saving money?

The race weekend offers a range of distances including a vertical kilometre, half and full marathon and the headline 75km Ultra. Even the half marathon features a hefty 2km of vertical ascent! The Ultra packs in 4.5km and traces the full length of the rocky spine, before diving back to sea level (more on that later). I was in for the Ultra – something I felt woefully underprepared for and that was weighing heavily on my mind as I sat on my bench.



The race started on the very Southern tip of the island, a mad pre-dawn dash around the lighthouse and up the road in a bid to get through a narrow choke point before the masses. After recovering from that, I got settled in for the long haul, munching some snacks and bumping into fellow Brit Mike that I had run with in a previous race (Ultrarunning is a small world!).

It was just getting light as we passed the first village 10km in at around 6.30am, and it felt like we had reached the finish. The whole community must have been out enthusiastically cheering and shouting the runners through. The party was in full swing, with drums and music and an incredible energy about the place – it was hard not to get carried away! This was soon left behind and calm restored as the sun peaked above a sea of white clouds now far below.

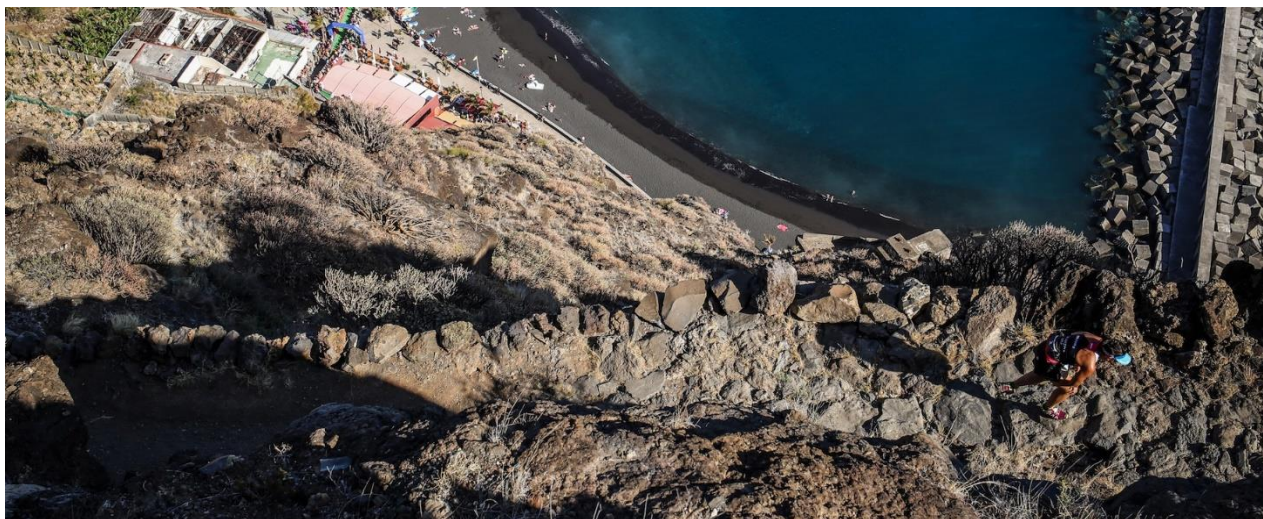


I made steady progress though the day, trying to stick to my race plan (eat lots, drink enough, hike up the steep hills) and not get ahead of myself. A slight disagreement with a low tree branch at around halfway briefly slowed progress, but a quick check of vital faculties confirmed no major harm done and I was quickly on my way.

The alien forms of shining white golf balls soon appeared on the horizon. It looked like a giant was ready to tee off into the blue ocean that stretched off into the distance. They were in fact space observatories that take advantage of the good weather and clear skies. This marked the high point of the race at 50km in, and were a welcome sight. This was all going too well – just a gentle downhill trot back to the finish. How hard can that be...

The little downhill trot was easily the most challenging section of the whole race. A relentless plunge from nearly 2500m back to sea level over just 15km. Downhill on steep, rocky trails is normally my favourite ground, but this was something else. The extended torture for battered quads was a real physical and mental challenge. Cramp caused my legs to seize up and my awkward wooden gait slowed progress almost to a crawl. It was about this point I realised that I was badly dehydrated, over 10 hours out in the Mediterranean sun was taking its toll - the wheels were coming off...

Fortunately the next checkpoint arrived just in time, a dousing in cold water, followed by a brief rest in the shade and as much liquid as I could coax down were enough to bring me round. The world seemed to snap back into focus, the monochrome landscape popped back into colour and it solidified my resolve to continue. I soon reached the final sting in the descent – steep cliff edge steps to reach the bustling beach at Tzacorte, only 5km to go now.



But of course that wasn't quite it, as with all good races this one had a bonus climb at the end. As with most things on this race it was big – some 400m to climb back up to the finish funnel. With the field of 2000 now well thinned out it was a lonely and demanding trudge up the final climb. Eventually the distant cheers of enthusiastic locals could be heard and it provided the boost to help make the final push for the line. Some 12 and a half hours after departing, I finally reached the finish. Exhausted and emotional, utterly spent.



It felt right to cheer fellow Brit Mike in. So I settled down to wait whilst eating everything I could get my hands on. I expected to be waiting only a few minutes – but time passed and he was nowhere to be seen. After 14 hours elapsed I was on the brink of giving up. However, eventually he came into view on the final straight. It turned out the heat had got the better of him too and he had collapsed coming into an aid station. An intravenous drip was swiftly administered and a 1hr snooze in the medical tent commenced. Against all sensible medical advice he had then crept out the back of the medical tent and continued on his way. His rationale... "I didn't want to have to come back next year". Stay safe everyone. I'm sure we will be back out racing soon. I'm already planning more adventures, and hope they will be as good as this was!

Mobility for Runners

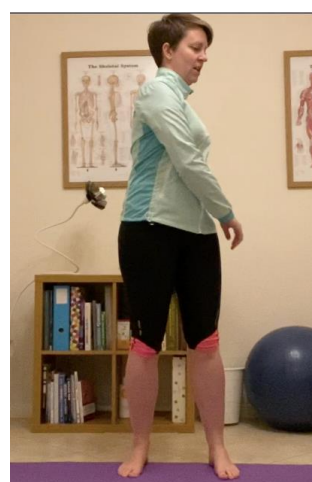
Alexa Duckworth-Briggs

This is an equipment free mobility session for runners; focussed on back, shoulder, hip and ankle mobility.

For the stretches where you hold position aim to hold them each for at least 15 seconds, longer if it's an area that feels tight. For the moving exercises do them for 30 seconds for each exercise on each side.

Back Mobility

Spine rotations: with feet hip width apart and standing tall rotate the shoulders from side to side so your arms gentle swing side to side. The arms and shoulders should be relaxed and, if you'd like you can hold the stretch on either side of the swing to finish

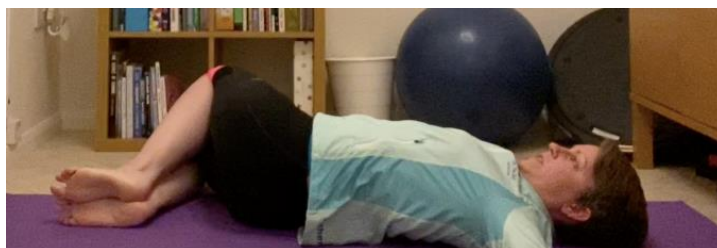


Back bends: starting in an all fours position with hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips. alternate gently between these four positions;

- Drop your head down and arch up your back like a cat so your mid back is the highest point (see top picture, right)
- Lift your head up and arch your lower back downwards so your back dips a little to the floor (see middle picture, right)
- With the spine level banana bend so both your head and bum go to the right, so you can look at your bum (see bottom picture, right)
- Do the same to the left; so bum and head both bend to the left



Spine twist: lying on your back on the floor with knees bend and feet on the floor, arms wide in a T shape. Keeping feet and knees together drop the knees to one side for a twist into the spine, keep your shoulders on the floor. If you can't get the knees to the floor support them with a pillow so you can enjoy the stretch. Repeat on the other side.

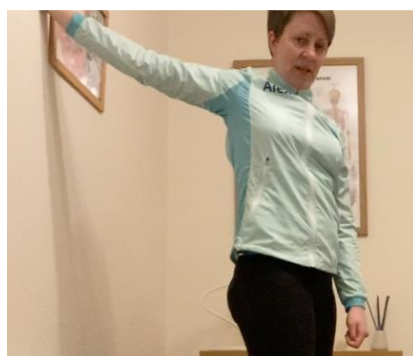


Shoulder Mobility

Backward arm circles: bring your arms up in front of you and then out to the side and back around behind you. Work slowly and enjoy the stretch across the front of the stretch when your arms reach the “10 to 2” position on the clock face. If you have a gym/resistance band you can use this to increase the stretch, holding each end in your hands and keeping your arms straight.



Place your hand on a wall with your wrist level with your arms so your arm is at an upward angle. Turn your body away from that arm to get a stretch across the armpit.



Apsey's Recipes

Mark Apsey



Mark is a self-employed chef specialising in high-end dinner parties, and a former Head Chef at L'Ortolan Restaurant in Shinfield – so not only is he one of Berkshire's top runners, but also one of its best culinarians. In a semi-regular series for the E-bulletin, Mark brings us a delicious, healthy recipe. Do let us know if you've tried any of them, and enjoyed them!

Hello Fellow Roadrunners.

I hope you've all managed to run off any excess chocolate already? Firstly, what a success the virtual Dawn till Dusk relay was. Thanks to Sam and Jamie, plus others, for organising. Even if Sam's Facebook live hinted at me running "all" downhill. Unfortunately I live at the top of 3 of Tilehurst's infamous hills, so wherever I go there's normally a down in there somewhere, I just ran out of time to head back up the hill (or at least that's my excuse).

Thank you to everyone who made and shared pictures of my hot cross buns last week. They all looked fantastic. Please please please, do share them over your various social media channels tagging my'lkd in. This really helps my reach in a time where there is literally nobody to cook for (or at least nobody that's paying me to cook for them). Also I'm nearly always on hand (unless I'm out running or wrestling a child), to help answer any questions that may arise whilst cooking.

This week, it is the turn of one of my favourite recipes that is perfect for the hot weather we had over the last weekend, and is due to make an appearance again imminently. Not only is it incredibly versatile, allowing you to swap out the fillings to change the flavour and really make it your perfect post run meal, but it can be made completely before going out for a run, so that you can refuel within the vital 30-60 minute window, when your muscles are best primed to absorb key nutrients and glycogen. I'm talking about quiche!

The Recipe:

This recipe is fit for a 24cm quiche/flan tin, and fills about 3cm deep. If yours is a different size, you'll need to adjust the volumes, or have a little left over/be a little short.

Pastry:

250g Plain Flour
125g Margarine/Butter
1 Large Egg, beaten

5g Salt
15g Water

Rub the flour, salt and margarine/butter to breadcrumb consistency, then add the egg and water. Mix only until the dough forms an even paste, if you over work it at this stage, it will be very crumbly when rolling out. Rest for around 10 minutes, before rolling out on a floured work surface, reserve a marble sized piece of pastry for later. This should be able to be wide enough to allow a small amount of overhang the whole way around your quiche tin.

If necessary, grease the tin, then roll the pastry around your rolling pin and lay over the quiche tin. Use the ball of pastry to press the rolled pastry into all the corners. This is a great way to ensure you do not apply too much pressure and change the thickness in places. If you have any holes appear, you can use this piece to patch them up.



Now you'll need to blind bake the pastry. For this, take a piece of greaseproof paper, slightly larger than the quiche tin, and screw it up into a tiny ball, unravel it, and then lay over your pastry. This will avoid any corners piercing your pastry, this is vital. I use a mix of dried beans, lentils, rice etc to bake with, and they can be used again and again. But anything goes really, Heston uses 1 and 2 pence pieces. Bake on 160°C for 24 minutes.

Quiche Mix and filling:

5 Eggs

10g Cornflour

4g Salt

Large pinch of freshly grated nutmeg (optional, but makes all the difference)

250g Whipping Cream (if you don't have this or can't get it, you can use milk, you just lose a little richness)

100g Milk

100g Mature Cheddar

5 Slices of smoked streaky bacon

1 Red Onion

1 Red Pepper

Dice the red pepper, onion and bacon, so that they are all roughly the same size (ideally around 1cm square, but that's not essential). Lightly sauté (fry on low heat) the dice until they are soft, then reserve to one side.

Place the eggs, cornflour, salt, nutmeg, cream and milk into a jug and using a stick blender, blend until this is smooth (you can also use a whisk, but try not to incorporate too much air). Grate the cheddar and reserve with the bacon mix.

As soon as the pastry comes out of the oven, remove the paper holding the baking beans, and brush a thin layer of the quiche mix around the hot pastry (gently!!!) and return to the oven for 2 minutes. This will help to seal any tiny holes when you pour the liquid in.

Reduce the temperature of the oven to 150°C. Place the cheese and bacon mix into the base of your pastry and then pour the liquid over the top. Bake for around 30 minutes (depending on your oven), but you're looking for a golden top and only a tiny wobble. If you wobble the quiche and the egg still looks slightly liquid, carry on cooking.



Once cooked, using a serrated knife, trim the excess pastry overhang, and allow to cool down whilst going for a run. Serve with salad (always dressed with an oil so that your body can absorb the nutrients inside). If you're not eating the quiche in the next few hours, keep in the fridge and warm though when required.

Bon Appétit!

P.S. One question that came up last week was when I referred to a liquid as a weight, not a volume. This is a very cheffy thing to do, and for a very good reason. Volumes are subjective, especially in smaller quantities, and not all jugs have the correct markings you need. By weighing the liquids on a scale, you get exactly what you need, unless you're using an old-fashioned balance scale, then you're back to square one with subjectives again.

