

## An Orion perspective of the London Marathon

Sunday 21st April 5.00 am as I knocked on my friends hotel room door we'd arranged to meet up for an early morning cuppa, breakfast and a short run before we'd go to meet the coach that would take us from the Club to the event village at Blackheath. But I'd already been up a couple of hours as I'd felt sick with not only nerves but excitement too.

Not only was this the big one, the one everyone wants to do but I'd had the privilege of not only being awarded a club place but also had Stella agree to pace me to try to get a new pb. So I did feel under a certain amount of pressure but this was put into the back of my mind as everyone on the coach were so encouraging and the atmosphere was just really upbeat.

Once at the drop off point it was so nice to have a couple of group photos by the coach before we said our goodbyes and last words of encouragement to each other.

It was going to be a couple of hours before my start time so after bag drop was done it was just a matter of keeping warm and out of the wind as it was a breezy day. I tried to grab a snooze here and there but was too engrossed in thinking about the task ahead. But I was just being reminded by my friend that it was just another run and not to over think it.

The start was pretty bunched up as it always is with these events and the nerves were soon forgotten as we were on our way.

The crowds were on just amazing when you have the people shouting out your name and giving you high 5's as you go past was just epic.

The first thing that really hit me was as we ran past Cutty Sark I remembered that the previous year I'd been there supporting other club members that were running and it was almost weird as I was thinking ' I was stood by that pub last year.. how lucky am I ? '.

I kinda spent the next 6 miles or so concentrating on making sure I was keeping pace, staying hydrated and taking on gels at the right intervals.

Then Tower bridge came into view and I knew we were about half way and that time was good as we'd passed the 3 hour 45 pacer. But there was obviously still a long way to go.

The next big high point was seeing the group of Orion Harriers members at Grapes pub. I think it was Narrow street. I wanted to make a point of looking out for them as they'd been so good to me since I'd joined. I waved and shouted back but I almost fell in the process. But so glad I saw them as it gave me a real lift.

By mile 20 I was starting to struggle self doubt had started to creep in so I just kept thinking ' 2 park runs that's it '

About another 2k further on the 3 hour 45 pacer caught back up so I was almost ready to take a break and have a walk. My friend Stella could see I was struggling and just looked at me and said one word 'DON'T' just a bit further on I passed Bob Glasgow he was at the elite water station mile 21-22 I think it was and he was shouting to dig deep and not to give up. All the time the noise from the crowds and the band's kept ringing in my ears.

When I turned into the embankment and went through the tunnel I knew the end was in sight and in under 30 mins or so would be within reach.

At this point my spirits lifted a bit as I'd started to relax more. Soon I was picking my pace up as I entered the final mile and soon was running down the Mal.

At this point I started shouting at the crowds to make some noise so not only I could get the final push of energy to get over the line.

Although I'd fallen a minute or so behind Stella In the final 4k she was waiting for me at the finish and after I got my medal I found myself in Stella's arms getting a huge hug and well done as the tears flowed down my face. It was such an emotional experience to not only take part in such a big event but also been clapped and cheered by so many people from the club I knew.

It is something that I'll never forget and am so grateful for the opportunity and support from my friends at the club and my friends at home.