

## Snowdonia Marathon

The Snowdonia Marathon is a race I've tried entering before but I didn't manage to get in, so when I saw the entries opening nearly a year ago, I entered the marathon not knowing if I could actually do the race or not because of my rota, but at £35 it was worth the gamble. Even 3 weeks before the race I didn't think there was much chance of me being able to do it because I was supposed to be away working, so my training was half hearted at best. So to find out, 2-3 weeks before the race day, that I was home for that weekend was a feeling of "Oh Sh\*t" rather than "Get In".

The Marathon itself is billed as the toughest road marathon in the UK with an undulating course to say the least with two big climbs. When it came to race day, I had the mindset of just enjoying it and not bothering about a time. It was bitterly cold at the start but as long as the rain and snow showers that were forecast stayed away I was happy. The race started easily enough for a few miles before starting the 2 – 3 mile climb up to Pen-y-Pass, the climb wasn't steep just a long slow drag. I found this good to warm me up and get the lungs working. Going through 13 miles in 1:42 I was surprisingly still feeling pretty fresh and I was enjoying myself. At 16 miles though the wheels started to come off, I could feel a little pain in my knee which has been a problem for me for a good few years. I slowed the pace a bit for a few miles to try and ease it but at 18 miles the pain was getting worse so I had to pull up and rest it. From then on it was run/walk strategy and struggle on to the finish rather than do any permanent damage to my knee, this did give me more time to take in the stunning scenery though so it wasn't all bad. At about mile 21 you head off the road on to trails and fields over the pass back to Llanberis, this is by far the hardest climb of the race, the stoney terrain did nothing for my knee either. The last 1.5 miles is a steep downhill section which you would think would be nice but at this point I was getting cramp in both thighs. It was by no way a fast finish for me. I was disappointed with the time of 4:10 but when things don't go right what can you do!

Overall it was a brilliant marathon to do, well organised and marshalled, with plenty of feed stations. And for a remote course it was brilliantly supported (I can still hear the sound of cow bells ringing in my ears!) Now that I've seen the course, I didn't think it was too bad, definitely not a PB course but you can still manage a decent time if all goes well, yes there's quite a few uphill climbs but you get the nice downhills to follow to. So if anyone fancies a challenge next year's marathon entries open on 1<sup>st</sup> December and last year the race was full in 2 hours, so you need to be quick.