

On Sunday, 10th. May 2009 I ran the Geneva Half Marathon. My time, 1hr. 15 mins. 20 sec. First in my 55 -60 age group and a cash prize to boot. All done in a Ripon Runners vest. Very impressive. Picking granules of sleep from my eyes as I climbed from my bed, I dressed quickly and made my way from the hotel to the race start alongside the lake. The full marathon started at 8a.m., two and a half hours before my event, the half, but I wanted to cheer the brave souls as they started their journey.

Before I had decided to come to Geneva I had to make an important decision, whether to race in the Ripon 10 or spend a long weekend in a beautiful city, running the half marathon. One thing swung it for me. Switzerland is the home of fine chocolate and I love chocolate.

As I walked to the start I reflected that it was apt that a marathon should be run in the home of chocolate and although the decision twix(t) full marathon and half was difficult, I now felt confident I had chosen well. Near the start I saw a marathon entrant with a cat on a lead. Across it's back was slung a bag with two pockets, one on each side of the animals body. I noticed that in one bag was a pair of running shorts and contained in the other side was a vest. Upon enquiring as to the purpose of the bag carrying animal the runner replied, "It's tiresome lugging all my running gear to the start so it gives me a break if I have a kit cat."

I reached the start and apart from those taking part, spectators were few so I was glad I was there to boost them on their way. There were just under 1000 participating in the marathon, the course consisting of 2 laps of the half marathon course, no picnic.

After having seen them off I returned to my hotel for my pre run breakfast and then returned to the starting area for my race which began at 10.30am. I was in time to see the winner of the full marathon come striding in to collect his winners bounty in a time of 2hrs.19mins. 49secs.

I set off on my run along with the other 2500 entrants. Although a relatively small city marathon, roads had been closed off to traffic so no cars, trams or double deckers to avoid. After running alongside the lake for about 1k we crossed a bridge and into the old town, full of beautiful ancient, prosperous looking buildings. They were quality streets, full of expensive looking shops with tempting window displays but today I was not interested in these mall teasers.

It was noticeable that there were very few fancy dress runners in this event but one I did notice was a famous footballers wife, I can't think of her name, sitting astride a unicycle. I thought it original of her to dress as a wagon wheel. Another runner was dressed in a wooly outfit, either a sheep's coat or goat's coat. On top of his head was a large key and around his neck hung a millstone. I'm still not sure what a mill key baa kid was supposed to represent.

You would imagine that a race in Switzerland would be quite tobleronesque in profile but this part of the route had the texture of a ripple. The race through the old town had more twists and turns than a curly wurly and for me just as hard to get through.

About 11k in, we reached the lakeside again and commenced running along the other side of the lake from whence we had started. However, unlike the route through the old town this was as straight as a finger of fudge and more than just enough. It stretched into the far distance and after progressing along it for a short while passed the leaders of the race making the return journey along the finger. After 15km. I made the turn and commenced my journey back towards the city. By this

time I was starting to flake but fortunately I had remembered to bring a couple of small squares of the famous work, rest and play chocolate. As I was about to pop a piece into my mouth, a tiny fly alighted upon it. I looked and pondered that perhaps there is life on Mars. We now crossed a bridge to the starting side of the lake and the finish. The crowds increased as did the mid day heat. I was melting but the spectators appeared to revel in it. My aerobic fitness had disappeared but the line was now in sight and with a last boost of pace, crossed the line in a disappointing 1 hour 40 mins. But hey, life's not always a box of chocolates. The half marathon winning time was 1hr. 04mins. 29secs. Full results and info can be found at www.genevemarathon.ch

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