

## **Knaresborough Bed Race 2024 – Suzanne Rickard and Graham Tinsley**

### **Mixed team report**

With Anik sowing the seed of a social bed race team to your running buddy you realise your options are limited. There isn't a choice, you're doing it... same with Heather, Andrew, and Jo... oh and maybe Anik. Bob will steer. Stuart will manage; all sorted.

As it turned out this isn't an 8-person effort, you need more people. Anik soon defected to the ladies' team and Jane was brought in. Practice was quickly arranged, and a bed acquired (thank you Suttons). A couple of laps around Studley near the car park and the realisation this wasn't going to be that easy, sunk in.

Beds are heavy to push and that's without Bob. Plus, the bed had lost a wheel, so a replacement and repair were quickly arranged by Andrew. Training sessions were arranged around the actual course in Knaresborough plus the first encounter with the 'hill'. The ladies were also there but only 5 of them.

Surely, we can keep up with them I thought. 200m later they were out of sight and remained so! At this point we realised we needed support, and we are very grateful that Ady, Laura, Sue, and Annette provided that at various times. We also had a dilemma; the boy's bed was available! After much thought and a try out between the beds, the beds were swapped, we now had the men's rocket ship.

We must at this point thank Suzanne's dad, Malcolm for all the support he gave both teams in the training and on the day. He was simply brilliant!

We also had to deal with John being John, and picking up a hamstring injury chasing Ray at the Melmerby 10k. It was touch and go if he'd recover in time, plus Allyson also got a late call into the team.

The bed theme had been decided at this point and plans for the decoration decided. To have people do this away from the main team training was brilliant and many thanks need to go to Stuart and Jane for the bed decoration and Heather and Joe for the costumes. We eventually decided to do a couple of river crossings which led to much debate as to best how to do them. Whatever you agree on goes out of the window on the day but at least we gave it some thought. We also had a plan for the day, very organised, unlike me who is used to winging most things.

Race day is a long day. The bed must be in the castle grounds by 10am so it was an early start collecting the decorations and preparing the bed. Eventually we were ready, the orange Nokia phone looked magnificent (in our eyes). We walked the bed up to the castle in full costume. We ignored the excellent iPhone standing proud on another bed and took our place in the grounds of the castle.

We ignored the questions about why John and I were dressed as pumpkins, we were oranges, we ignored the questions about the 2 Robinson's hoods and the pregnant blueberries. Maybe people just weren't getting it. We were blackberries, apple and orange representing the mobile tech firms of the day! Anyway, we were proud, we

were close to winning the best dressed bed. That should read we were parked next to the winning bed. Yes, the lunar landing bed, close but not close enough.



Next up was the judging and photos, of the lunar landing bed, then onto the parade and the crowds.

Bob handed out the sweets wondering why people were putting cash into his bucket (we hadn't briefed him on this bit) and we made our way to the start area. On the way we lost the front wheel in my attempts to steer the bed straight I'd kicked the pin out! Luckily, this and the wheel were recovered but not before a panic. Finally, we were ready as the start time neared. 3pm came and went and the band played on, Bob practiced his hooting to 'Sweet Caroline' and finally we were good to go.

The ladies' team were only 10 seconds ahead of us and to be fair, the start was the last we saw of them, they were rapid! We were wary that the other ladies' teams were right behind us, but we weren't going to revert to tactically slowing them down. We didn't have to as another team was blocking progress with bed failure and teams naturally stacked up behind them. This gave us a little breather before the hill: 2 mins 50 secs of effort, we had at this point no one behind us so no pressure on us.

We caught and passed the Nidd valley juniors which gave us a lift as did the cheering crowd around the course. Great to see familiar Ripon Runners faces in the crowd around the course, it was loud. The encouragement from the crowd stirred us on and Bob couldn't hear us giving instructions but did a magnificent job steering the bed. Practice does pay off!

Then onto the Market Square and High Street and a full pelt to the river. Despite all the prep and Heather's river crossing guide, all that goes out of the window on the day and it's a 'just get the bed and yourself across the water and over the finish line'.

There will be obstacles in the way, just deal with them. We did it in 19:19 and 31st overall out of 90 beds, we were happy with that time.

In summary, this is a great event and if you get an opportunity to take part, grab it. It's a full day but it seemed to fly by. We had a good laugh on the journey and appreciate all those that supported us. Don't worry if you look like a pumpkin, it's all a bit of fun in the end of the day. The best part was to see Malcolm's beaming smile in the pub afterwards which made it worthwhile. Well done teams, excellent day and results.

### Ladies' team report

Bed race day started with both teams meeting at 9.00am in Knaresborough to decorate the beds.

Malcolm Gatford (bed race engineer) transported the beds and watched on amused as the two teams took different approaches. With a theme of innovations and technology through the ages, the ladies' team with a theme of NHS (and several years of experience) had pre-decorated boards which were swiftly attached. The mixed team full of enthusiasm had power tools, saws, staple guns ready to adapt their decorations ably assisted with driver Robert.



Once decorated the beds were then taken up to the castle for scrutiny and judging. Considering the high standard of beds around it came as no surprise that neither of our beds won best decorated.

After the parade through the town and down to the Conyngham car park the nerves well and truly set in. The beds were stripped of their decorations and team members changed out of costumes into running kit.

Chief engineer, Malcolm, checked the beds over before the race, precise wheel pressures and an emergency search for a lost wheel pin, which was swiftly found and reattached.

The crowds were several deep on the race route, an alleged 30,000 people lined the 2.4 miles challenging course. The beds set off at 10 second intervals in approximate

seeded order to try to reduce the need for overtaking as many sections of the route are too narrow.

The ladies' team, Claire Walker, Donna Riddler, Anneke Imeson, Suzanne Rickard, Emma Sorby and new recruit Julia Morgan, set off as bed 28, with the second ladies' bed only 2 beds behind them. Driver, Ian Pollington-Clyne in the seat for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year running earnt his stripes, two beds were overtaken on the starting straight and a 3<sup>rd</sup> bed manoeuvred around through a very narrow gap. Some teams, although faster in previous years, had had a change of runners, so the Ripon Ladies' team were on a mission to overtake when they could.

One of Claire Walker's many talents, is the ability to scream, very loud (she says 'encourage') at the team when going uphill – even the driver joined in this year, so another two beds overtaken on the nasty ascent. Fabulous also to hear our very own marshals, Lisa Quinn and Darren Glegg, stationed on the hill screaming at the team. It's about the only place on the course you can distinguish voices.

A spin around the market square, means you can glance back to see if any other ladies' teams are hot on your heels. It seemed not, but as it is a time trial, beds don't need to overtake you to win. No let-up was allowed as the ladies pushed on down the high street, and of course, no need to wait for traffic at the bottom unlike in training.



The last big push is down to the 'Worlds End' pub, as once you get on the riverside there is no room to overtake.

Two more beds overtaken on the decent, thanks to Ian's great navigation around the traffic island. These tactics allowed the ladies a clear run along the riverside. A clear swim across the river (Claire, is unusually quiet on this section) meant that the whole team made it across the finish line in 16.48.

One of the team's fastest times in several years. This equated to an amazing 13<sup>th</sup> overall and more importantly, first ladies' team.

This couldn't be done without our volunteer marshals, the support that we receive beforehand with training, decorating, and transporting beds, on the day from friends, family, and fellow RR. Thank you all from both teams.