

**SPORTING MATTERS**

**BY PETER JACK**

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for that matter? The founder of the Park Run, Paul Sinton – Hewitt (in Bushy Park, London on 2-10-04) and I am sure he was stunned at the scenery and at the crowds that flock to this culture weekly changing free event.

Patrick had a good run and finished ahead of me while I was trying to work my way round the problems of my right leg as my hamstring and calf were suffering from my 10 week layoff and my impatient return. We made it back to Limavady and after a quick restorative shower, I was then in the car for the trip to the wilds of Donegal.

The Springwellians meanwhile, had commandeered a bus and a 50 strong team had ample supplies on the coach of food and drink to accommodate a Brexit style siege. Others had made their way to the start line including Pauline Mullan and Janet Patrick who had also done the Park Run a few hours earlier, their's being in Limavagas.

I made it to the Ballyliffin Hotel for 12.30 where the queue for registration/entry number/goodie bag snaked out into the car park.

Some runners were fidgeting with pre-race nerves. I merely wondered if my body would stand up to the last

bit of battering what I would inflict on it over an intense 30-hour period. Then I spotted an underused physiotherapist, Eimear, who had her table up in the corner and wouldn't you know it, she was open for business.

When I was face down on the table, she asked me if I did any running, "bits and pieces" I replied through gritted teeth as she found more knots in my hamstring than in a sailor's rope.

The start was delayed by 10 minutes to accommodate the 1,500 (record numbers) of runners who had swamped the Main Street for our traffic free race. Just as the hooter sounded, I realised my laces were undone, what a rookie mistake, so I fought my way to the side of the road while 500 or so trotted past me. Although the first mile was all downhill, it still took me 12 minutes, such was the volume of human traffic.

It was a blessing as it forced me to go slowly through the maddening crowd. Every time I spotted a Springwell purple vest, we would have a chat and inspire and cajole each other.

The course is described by the organisers as the world's most scenic road race and as Annie Lennox sang "who am I to disagree"?



The ladies winner, Ciara Toner. NCL18-14-2019s

We had hills, dales, views of beaches and bays (including Trawlbrea) soaring inclines, descents and not a sinner on the jaw dropping beaches we could see all around us. Meanwhile my Sunnto was telling me that I was working at an average of 123 beats a minute with a peak of 156 on one of the monster hills and just

before half way, I met a Springwell athlete called Adele from Coleraine who was doing her first ever 10 miler.

I assured her she was on for a PB! (my own PB of 61 minutes for a flat 10 miles having disappeared into the ether of the previous century).

I thought we could work together as our pace

was similar. We swapped stories of our post race treats, mine would be a dip in the Atlantic to cool down to try restore some semblance of normality to my hammered legs. Adele's was going to be an Easter egg.

My watch was now telling me our average speed was 5.36 minutes per kilometre and my

fevered brain told me that if I could muster a bit of a gallop up the magnificent beach and end on a high, we had a glimmer of a chance to beat 1 hour 30 minutes for the 10 miles.

A few years ago I had a 1 hour 21, but anything close to 9 minutes a mile would be all good in my book.

The tide was coming in, our shoes were swamped from running through pools of sea water but there it was, the nirvana of the finish line with a huge crowd to cheer you home. Wow!

What a race, what a course, what a relief! My 100K bike and 21K of running in 29 hours was over. I now had a dip in

Pollan Bay to look forward to.

Not only was the race over but so was my Lent.

A much anticipated beer awaited me to celebrate two great races - there are worse ways to celebrate Easter 2019. Put both of these epic races on your personal bucket list!



The finish....NCL18-13-19s