



SPORTING MATTERS

BY PETER JACK

FROM CASTLE WALLS

IT'S not often you get the chance to be involved in two big sporting events inside the same week which involve on the one hand, a castle on the shores of a beautiful Lough and on the other hand a city with famous walls and ramparts but that was my luck last week.

The walls of course belong to the town at the end of the Limavady Road i.e. Derry / Londonderry / Stroke City, where I was due to trot 42.2Km in the Marathon.

The castle perhaps might be slightly less familiar to you – it's the castle at Lough Cutra south of Galway near the town of Gort. This

race is part of a 5 race series in the British Isles and France all of them based around a castle.

Lough Cutra was the first to be followed by Cholmondeley Castle (Lancashire), Castle Howard (Yorkshire), Chateau de Chantilly (France) and HeverCastle (Kent). I found myself there for

the first time last May doing M.C. after helping to organise the Roe Valley Sprint Triathlon the day before.

I am not saying that I was tired when I got to Galway but I don't think I was actually awake until about lunchtime on the Sunday when I had already been on the mic for 5 hours!

It was great to be asked back again. As M.C. you can relax and enjoy the ebb and flow of a race and talk to interesting people (both in the race and behind the scenes). In Limavady although I

am on the mic I am wondering if a marshal has turned up to man a roundabout or whether the drinks have arrived at the aid station or whether everybody is happy with their goodie bag.

When you are a guest at someone else's race you just start spoofing and try to add to what the spectators can see in front of them.

There is no need to state the blindingly obvious but hopefully you add to the information and colour of the spectacle.

And what a spectacle it was! Lough Cutra's

perched high above a huge Lough which in places is 15 meters deep. The family that own it, the Gwynn Jones, have been in possession of it for several hundred years. I am told that it ainteasy trying to maintain an ancient castle but events like the triathlon help pay the bills and help with the rest of the race team on Saturday night. The week before however the castle had slightly more distin-

guished guests than PJ from Limavegas, namely Charles and Camilla! The Royal couple stayed two nights and President Higgins hosted a dinner in their honour.

There was still a buzz about the place. Obviously security had been at warp factor ten but the whole castle and grounds were now getting back to normal.

The two sons of the castle, Rollo (who flew in from Hong Kong) and Dom both took part in the race which was fantastic because they totally buy into what makes the race so

special – the lough, the castle, the grounds, the trails for the running section etc.

It is just a naturally stunning location and it is great when you are suffering on race day to lift your eyes and take in the wonderful scenery of a race such as this.

The first race started at 8:00am with 'the Gauntlet'. This is the half ironman distance, i.e. 1.9Km swim, 90Km bike through the world famous Burrenand 21Km run. There were nearly 200 in this race and over 1,200 athletes in total

taking part in a variety of distances including the standard / Olympic distance, super sprint, sprint plus and then at 3:00pm the kids races began for the 8 – 10, 11 – 12, and 13 – 15 age groups. The man behind the series is Brian Adcock. He had the vision five years ago to put together a series of linked races where the common theme was a castle (and a lake or a lough obviously as well). The Castle Triathlon Series is now the biggest independent Triathlon Series in the British Isles. Brian is also an athlete.



Gauntlets from Olympian Tri Club at Lough Cutra. NCL24-803s



Siobhan Gallagher, first lady out of water at Lough Cutra. NCL24-805s



Springwell Runners at the Walled City Marathon. NCL24-801s



Peter Jack, taking part in the Walled City Marathon last weekend. NCL24-802s



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TO DERRY'S WALLS...

Last year he trained for the legendary Bob Graham Challenge (42 fells in the Lake District with all of that climbing and descending, within a 24 hour period – therein lies madness!) Brian was on target until he fell coming down a scree slope and broke his little finger, i.e. the same type of injury I still have from my fall in China! Brian is plotting another epic journey next year. Meanwhile his wife Caz was part of a team that set a World Record for John o' Groats to Land's End (over 1,000 miles) which they ran in 57 days. It wouldn't surprise you to learn that their kids not only helped out at the races all day but then they also took part in the most important event, i.e. the kids race where 10 year old Esther Adcock won!

Brian's team were just great and put on a first class show. It attracts a lot of UK based athletes to Galway and consequently a lot of tourist dollars go into the local economy, i.e. it's a win win. There were some phenomenal performances including Kevin Thornton back from injury to win the Gauntlet in a time of 4:15, with the womens race won by Siobhan Gallagher in 5:11. Kevin in a few weeks' time will organise the Galway Bay 13K (i.e. 7 miles!) swim. 55 lucky swimmers are each accompanied by a canoeist. Over the last 5 years Kevin has raised 500,000 euros for a local cancer charity in memory of his late mother. The standard race was won by Aichlinn O'Reilly from Westport

(tinned with Limavady) in 2:05 with Kitty Perle (3D Tri Club) leading the ladies home in 2:32. A big strong 18 year old doing his first ever race at that distance. This boy is going to be good... as is my young Club mate Ryan Doherty from Magherafelt whose dad, Cormac, drove 200 miles to enable Ryan to take part. I made sure that at the prize giving that all of the kids gave a big round of applause for their drivers / parents! It was great to see the T.T.C. colours being worn with pride by someone so young and enthusiastic. Also competing for the Club was Peter O'Kane who did his first ever half ironman in Galway in sub 6 hours. Peter won't mind me saying but he wasn't an athlete a year ago. His brother was going to do an iron-

man but got cancer and sadly passed away. Peter vowed to enter, compete in – and finish an ironman in his brother's memory. 12 months later Peter has lost a lot of weight, lowered his resting pulse and is well on course to complete a very emotional journey at Ironman UK in Bolton in July. Driving 420 miles over 2 days and commenting for 10 hours doesn't do marathon preparation much good but needs must so a week later I find myself at the Everglades Hotel at the unearthly hour of 7:30am getting ready for the 8:30am start of the Walled City Marathon. This event is in its third year. In year one I went 4:26. In year two 4:28 so you would be guessing this year I would be 4:30 but this year I had been running far better over

short distances. Having said that my longest run had been 2 x 14 milers. What's another 12 miles between friends? In for a penny in for a pound etc. The weather was as bleak as my chance of getting a PB. I decided to join the sub 4 hour pacing group being expertly led by Springwell legend Eddie Clyde. Eddie does this quite frequently. It's a big responsibility. He has to get it absolutely spot on, not too fast, not too slow. I told Eddie that he might have to put me on his back to enable me to break 240 minutes. I had prepared for race day with three runs during the week. One off the bike, hard one 5K hard and one Temple 5 miler. To break four hours in a marathon you need to average 9 minutes 8 seconds per mile. I hadn't run any mile this

year as slow as that but I did need to run 26 as opposed to 14 so I was hoping I could rummage about in the memory bank to try to conjure up another sub 240 minute finish. I bagged a lift up with the legends that are Catherine Butcher (who broke her arm in a bike crash the week before but was still all set for another sub 3:45 finish) and Fran McPadden (second place in the Lost World 106Km / 66 mile race only a week previously). We met the rest of the 20 strong Springwell crew in the Everglades Hotel and swapped tall tales with other nervous competitors, handed in our post-race bag to the baggage stewards and I then lined up behind Eddie Clyde. I ran with Eddie for 8 miles and thought I should push on a wee bit in case I

needed those extra seconds later in the race. At 10 miles I came along my Club mate Donna Broly. Donna was doing only her second marathon. In London she ran 4:04 and she really wanted a sub 4 performance in Derry. We both focused on just getting to the next mile marker as that was the only thing we could control. All day the spectators were fantastic. They stood out and cheered us on through hailstones, 40mph winds and rain. We even had a glimpse of a yellow thing in the sky at some stage. During a race such as this, you have just got to enjoy every second of it and enjoy the privilege of being able to do this as we passed several wheelchair competitors so what do the rest of us have to complain about? Before you

know it Donna and I were weaving our way past those tricky miles at 21, 22 and 23 and on the road to glory. The throng up Bonds Hill? was four de France stuff and at the top was the prize we all longed for – the 25 mile marker. It was downhill now all the way to relief and redemption and rest. As we approached the long awaited 26 mile mark, we knew that a famous sub 4 was in the bag. All we had to do now was enjoy the rock star status that the Legendary Derry crowd bestow on all finishers and knowing that we could all relax the next day and take it easy in a beatific post-race glow, we all prepared to move from idol to idyll. Walled City Marathon? Sweet as a nut. See you on the start line next year!



Kevin Thornton finishes Lough Cultra. NCL24-804s



Peter Jack and Brian Adcock on the Triangle Triathlon Series podium. NCL24-806s



Springwell Runners at the Walled City Marathon. NCL24-800s



The Transition station at Lough Cultra. NCL24-807s



Julie Stewart and Geoffrey Swan at Lough Cultra. NCL24-808s



Celeb weatherman Deric Hartigan at Lough Cultra. NCL24-809s