Donadea Ultra Marathon Report by Paul Syder

Modern day Entry to Race Events generally consists of an Online Entry Form, followed by your credit card digits and the Confirmation Email makes it all feel real. Posting a Competitor Entry Form along with a 60 Euro Postal Order doesn't even guarantee Entry to the Donadea 50k. It's only when you are added  
to the Facebook Group that you know an Ultra Marathon awaits.

A unique yet truly spectacular Event is what myself, Peadar Owens and Seamus Rowan competed in this past Saturday. This 'no-frills' Race is limited to 200 participants and has a 5-Hour Cut-Off Time. The Race itself is 10 laps of a 5km loop around the beautiful Donadea Forest in North Kildare. The last Facebook message on Friday night from Race Director Anthony Lee makes it very clear and simple, "Run 50km and then fock off home".

At 10am, on a cold yet blissful morning, we set off. My intention was to hold a 5:40km/h pace which would see me complete the 'Marathon' portion of the run bang on 4 hours. That would give me an hour to walk, roll and crawl if needs be, the remaining 8km. The Course itself is mainly flat, three small climbs in the first 2 km and the remaining 3km actually provide a surrealistic feeling that you are going downhill. The surface is mostly a gravel path, not quite a trail run but thankfully not as painful as the arthritis-inducing roads.  
At the start of each lap is your 'Aid Station'. You are allowed to leave a bag consisting of whatever you feel necessary to get you over the finish line. My bag consisted of ten 200ml water bottles, six Energy Gels and a sneaky packet of wine gums. This is also where any supporters may cheer you on and it is now I get to say the biggest thank you to Maggie Owens. What an amazing woman. She braved over 5 hours in the cold, harsh weather and every time we passed, we were greeted with a huge smile and  
words of encouragement. As well as taking our lap times and posting updates to the ATC Group, she even ran the final lap with Seamus.

Notable points during the Race;  
• I was lapped by the Race winner at 9km. He was at 14km. (Mental Note...get faster!)  
• I was lapped by Peadar at 18km. He was at 23km. (Mental Note...ask Peadar how to get faster https://www.facebook.com/images/emoji.php/v7/f57/1/16/1f609.png;)  
• The Race winner passed me for the final time at 31km. He was at 46km. He went on to finish in 3hrs 11mins.  
• At 40km, I recognised the familiar face of Joe Dunne. Fair play to Joe and his family who travelled up to cheer us home. It is also at this point I seen Peadar had finished. The man is a Machine.

And so I crossed the finish line in 4hrs 41mins. The Machine had finished earlier in 3hrs 48mins. Seamus popped over right on the 5hr mark, as steady and precise as always. A Congratulatory handshake from Anthony, a Donadea buff and a medal that resembles something from an U-8 School Fun Day is given to  
each competitor but more importantly, the feeling of completing an Ultra Marathon.

It is highly likely I will grace Donadea in 2018, hopefully along with a few other members. For now, aside  
from the aching in my legs, my focus turns to Tri Athy Double Olympic in June and Ironman UK in July.  
The Journey continues.