

Race Report - Royal Canal Run (Longford)

Saturday – April 21st, 2018

Our Crew – Eamonn McEntee / Deirdre Walsh / Seamus Rowan

This race I found through browsing to see what I could focus on after Donadea 50 k. On the daily train journey one morning, mentioned it to Eamonn, as everyone knows, is the last man to turn down a challenge - and by the time we got to Heuston, we were going to have a go at this one.

Early morning alarm call – 4.45 am, why? Eamonn, Deirdre and myself had signed up for this event a few weeks ago, never checked the time. I knew at the time the marathon started at 10 am but wasn't fully thinking about the Ultra start time or that it might be different, it was only when you get close to the date that we began to think about race logistics. Then the discovery that our race had an 8.30 am start. Working backwards, taking in travelling, any possible hiccups on the way, registration – we decided that we needed to be on the road for 5.30 am – arrive at 7.30 am with an hour to get registered and prepared.

To be in some decent state to attempt this I decided to try to hit the bed a bit earlier than usual and get in at least 7 – 8 hours of sleep.



That didn't really happen, it's like any event that you're a little apprehensive about, you just don't sleep – grabbing the phone at 1.30 am or something like, maybe it was 2 am, to discover Eamonn was also awake, but he never sleeps anyway 😊

I signed up for this race, not sure really what to expect from it, complete it for sure was a definite goal I had set myself. But, time, hmmm, maybe a 5:15, should I attempt the 42.2 Km at sub 4 and run out the rest, these were ideas that rolled around in the back of my head, but nothing came to a final plan at the start other than to finish it, and whatever happens, happens and cover my Half Marathon Weekly Race Streak 😊 – this was to be Week 27 of consecutive Half Marathons going back to DCM 2017 in an attempt to stay running focused over the winter.

At 4:45 am, it's difficult to sit down and have breakfast, but you know you must eat with a 53 Km run looming in just a few hours' time. Cristina had made breakfast and left it in the fridge – I just needed to be able to eat it at the hour!!

Breakfast consisted of fruit smoothie with chia seeds, coconut yogurt, peaches, banana, granola, almonds, goji berries, mulberries, cacao nibs and shredded coconut 😊 – complete Vegan Breakfast – and COFFEE – wasn't missing that.

So, breakfast sorted – gear and race stuff ready – it was time to Go Run.



Eamonn and Dee arrived bang on time to collect, me, the third of our group heading to Longford.

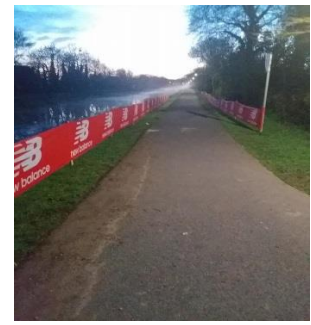
Eamonn is never late – so if your running late and you think he might be late so you're ok – you're not, because that's the day he will be even earlier – but I was ready and waiting to go 😊

Eamonn had managed to acquire the comfier of the family cars, for our two-hour drive north bound to Longford. Dee, an accomplished athlete in her own right, and an IM finisher several times, both are multiple IM finishers, so was in good company or bad company depending on how you wanted to look at it 😊 This was to be Dee's first solo marathon, and was targeting a sub-4 – something well within her capabilities – a sub-4 for me though I won't talk about right now 😊

Eamonn, decided to trust Debbie, his Sat-Nav system to get us there. It did and 15 minutes earlier than planned, but I don't recall the route, other than seeing a lot of bog and fog 😊 It was essential that we got the Spotify playlist to play on-route to keep everyone focused and more importantly awake.

We arrived in Longford at 7:15 am, and found our registration point at the Longford Slashers GAA Club. We parked up and headed down to registration which was a few just a few minutes' walk down towards the canal. Registration was fast, as the only race participants around at that hour were those that were doing the Ultra Marathon and anyone from the Marathon race who wanted to get an early start in.





Once registered, we headed back to the car to get our gear and bring them down to the race area.

There was a dedicated area for the Ultra participants to lay out anything that they needed in addition to whatever the organisers were providing. We found a spot and we would pool everything we needed into one box and work from there – 3 essential cans of Guarana on ICE for the end – it was 7.30 in the morning at this stage, but we knew it was going to warm up 😊

The course itself is a 5.2 Km loop on either side of the canal, with a 1 Km run in to bring it to 53 Km. Once started we would have to complete 10 laps of this course to finish – as Dee was in for the Marathon event, it would be eight laps for Dee. Marathon participants had the option to start with the Ultra participants, with Dee taking this option we were all going to be starting together. We strolled down to the start point and it all happened quite quickly – we were off and running.

Dee started off quickly, leaving us in her tracks 😊 she was on a plan, we weren't on a plan. A km in we picked up the pace and left Dee to her plan. The terrain was flat, with a few bridges to negotiate, nothing you would worry about in the early stages 😊 Underfoot it was a mix of smooth tarmac on one side of the canal and gritty gravel on the other – all in all very comfortable for running. Things felt great in the early part of the race, I don't think there were many km splits in the first 30 Km that fell below the 5:30 min/ km pace.

Eamonn gave a few looks at the pace (concerned probably) at the early quick pace, but despite the fact I knew I should have eased the pace a lot earlier – I soldiered on – reaching the 30 Km mark at 2 Hours 45 min – with another 23 Km to go. Eamonn had stopped at the beginning of loop 7 to stretch the legs but signalled me to go ahead and he would catch up – there's no doubting he would – you don't see him sometimes, but he is always there somewhere.

We had moved away from Dee a bit, but we could see her at various points on the opposite side of the canal, and waves of encouragement were passed back and forth each time we meet.

Eamonn caught up very quickly 😊 and with our current pace we could possibly pull the marathon distance in just under the 4 hours. Loops 7 and 8 would determine this. I eased my pace quite quickly into Loop 7 and let Eamonn continue. My plan was to get my HR down a bit, re-focus and possibly re-join him. At the finishing of Loop 7 (35 Km ish) I noticed Dee at the water stop, I was puzzled a bit – she told me she was finished. I took on Coke from the water stop as she ushered

me on with encouragement to get going. I pondered that in my head – did she miscalculate the loop numbers? I was heading into loop eight!!, she couldn't be finished 😊

I was to find out on the next loop that Dee had taken two falls and ripped up her knees and hands and decided to pull out at – soldier down, but Dee will be back to fight the solo marathon battle quite soon I imagine 😊

I never caught up with Eamon after that 😊 and I passed through the marathon marker point at 4 Hours 9 mins, was happy enough with that – the sub 4 would have being nice – but wasn't to be today. Eamon passed the marathon marker at 3 Hours 57 mins.

Loops 9 and 10, with the day getting warmer would be the battle ground of getting to finish this. It was around 20 C possibly at this stage. I was determined not to walk to re-coup if possible but rather reduce my run style to a slow steady short one foot in front of the other jog to try and maintain a rhythm that wouldn't impact to much on my time. The bridges at this stage made sure there would be some walking parts involved – they seemed to have gotten steeper at each loop as I expected they might.

With the staggered start times of the other events, the half-marathoners and the 10 k participants brought fresh faces and legs on to the course – new people to chat to – new people to chase around the loops 😊

I was determined not to take forever on these two loops (9 and 10) and came home to finish 5 Hours 36 minutes. 😊 11th spot in the Ultra – 20 seconds of a top 10 spot - damn 😊, Eamonn taking 5th spot. – not to shabby for us that only toe-dip into the world of ultra-distances.

This would be a nice Club trip also for members to have a go at – nice atmosphere, well ran – and something in it for all distances.



ULTRA MARATHON

Displaying all 23 results

Pl.	Name	YOB	Club/City/Country	Cat.	#	Result
1	» Tim BROWNLIE			M	3	3:45:08
2	» Juraj KARCAK			M	35	4:28:06
3	» Irene O'CONNOR		Sportsworld	F	1	4:43:35
4	» Stephen TOAL			M	33	4:45:59
5	» Eamonn TOWNEY			M	34	5:05:49
6	» EAMONN MCENTEE			M	24	5:08:23
7	» Conor KELLY			M	17	5:21:54
8	» Kim MARRON			F	21	5:21:54
9	» Shane FINN			M	36	5:28:28
10	» Liz MORRIN			F	26	5:38:01
11	» Seamus ROWAN			M	31	5:38:20
12	» Ollie MCHUGH			M	25	5:46:03
13	» Adolfo GARCIA			M	9	5:46:27
14	» Colman GREENE			M	13	5:51:38
15	» Deirdre DOLAN			F	5	5:53:07
16	» Mary GOLDSBERRY			F	11	5:53:07
17	» David BRADY			M	2	5:54:39
18	» Leilia PENDER			F	30	5:56:56

Smashing great running outing with Dee / Eamonn, with 3 proper 99s on way home 😊

