



I'm writing this race report for two reasons:

- There is no medal or t-shirt for this event, just your race number and chip time and I would like to have some record of doing this race.
- Trail/Mountain running is completely different to road running and to be honest in 2.5 years of attempting endurance sports from doing Half Marathons to a Half Ironman, this 20km Trail/Mountain run was the hardest and most humbling of events I have done to date and would like to share my experience with club members.

As most members know or don't know, I have two goals for this year:

- Attempt and finish DCM on the October Bank Holiday Weekend
- Get my weight down to mid 80kgs by end of 2018.

Let's not talk about point two above now but concentrate on running. Although my times are not great due to on-going issues with point two above, I'm really enjoying running, preparing for DCM and completing a few half-marathons with club members and on my own this year so far.

One of the Half Marathons I have done was the Glen to Glen Half Marathon run by Laragh AC, which is run on the same day as Lap of the Gap Full Marathon. The Glen to Glen Half is a run from Glendalough to Glenmacnass Waterfall with 240M of elevation. It was a tough Half and I really enjoyed it, finishing with a time of 2:03:41. It's from completing this Half, I heard about Run the Ridge Trail/Mountain Race again run by Laragh AC. I signed up with the early bird price of €25.



I have never done a Trail/Mountain race before and was curious, it can't be that hard or that much different to road running and the more hills the better for DCM, right about the hills, oh so wrong about the difference!!

Looking at the elevation it did not seem too bad 600m of climbing, until one expanded the elevation to look at it in more detail on the eve of the race!!!





This Trail/Mountain race is a complete self-sufficient race in that, you must bring your own water, gels, sweets food etc..., including warm/rain gear if the weather turns, which it will on the mountains as they have their own micro-climates. So, on the morning of the race, what does one bring with them?

This is what I brought with me:

- 1.5lt Camelbak (hydration bladder removed)
- 500ml and 250ml Soft flask with water
- 3x Gels, one with caffeine
- 1x Cycling rain jacket
- Cowl
- 250ml Soft flask with water and electrolyte(backup)
- Small Mars bar – help me work/rest/play (backup)



And of course, you cannot attempt a new sport/discipline without some new hardware. I had to purchase a pair of Trail/Mountain runners (worn in of course, and a wise investment, as a few racers pulled up with foot injuries due to wearing standard runners)



Race start was 12:30, so headed off to Laragh at 10:15ish to give me enough time to register and get ready for the race. Headed to Laragh via Dunlavin, Hollywood and Glendalough, lovely scenery and views, the weather was fantastic, Car reading 22 Degrees (this was going to be an issue for me racing – overheating! Started to sip water bottle with lemon and rock salt more frequent.)

HQ and start/finish for the race was Laragh GAA Club, parking on the training GAA pitch, headed over the event tent to register. These events run by Laragh AC are quite chilled, friendly and relaxed, numbers are relatively small so in and out of registration, toilet visit etc... relatively easy.

Heading back to the car to get ready, on my left I have a van load of guys from Trim AC all out on the grass packing what they need in their Race Vests, Gel flasks with long Nozzles etc., these guys have done this before. They are also spring themselves with something as well and it's not a Lynx shower, more on that later....

On the right, I have a foreign guy with all his family with him. He is wearing one of those white caps with sun visor on the back, running gaiters etc... to be honest he looks like he is going to run the Marathon Des Sables. He is eating everything he sees in the family picnic they have brought. I'm starting to worry what have I signed up for, but watching this guy eating everything I get hungry and raid my backup Mars bar!!

Race brief is at 12:20, with race start at 12:30. There is 100+ (cannot remember exact number) doing the 20KM, cut off time for the race is 3hrs after which time the race sweeper will catch you and ask you to hop into whatever transport the next race marshal has and you will to be taken back to HQ. The route on the trail/mountains where there will be no marshals are marked with posts. Marshals will be at 3km and at the ascend/descend of the mountains, if you lose the route, head back to last marshal and he will guide you!!!

Count down begins to race start at 12:30, the sun is really strong and off we go, pace was unusually slow as we headed along in front of the GAA Club house and out on to the road, turning right and up over a hump back bridge on by Derrybawn House and we then stop as we hit the first part of the trail, the gradient is brutal, but I stay running for about 2.2KM at which point I start walking like everyone else. At 3KM we meet 3-4 runners heading back down with numbers in hand shaking their heads... My strategy at this stage changes to trying to walk 500m and run 500 meters.

As we head deeper into the Derrybawn Woods, closing 2 farmers gates as we go, I figure out what TRIM AC were spraying on themselves; - Mosquito Repellent!! As I and every other novice is covered in a cloud of Midgets/Flies on top the sweat dripping into my eyes and the ever-increasing gradient. The only reprieve is the view looking down on Glendalough Upper lake etc.

To be honest from about 4.5km to 8km I had to walk with intermittent running when I could as the heat, flies, gradient and lack of air as we climbed really kicked in, but I was not the only one as we all marched on spreading out thinner and thinner over the trail. At 8km I got a second wind and my body felt like it had dealt with the shock of the first 8km, I started to run again and at 9km we met the first marshal. Head on through that gap and straight up parallel to the Woods, last big climb.

Going through the gap we head out of the woods and into a field with a gradient only sheep or mountain goats could handle as we walk up along the forest edge literary with our legs and arms, with the peak no where to be seen. The only relief was the flies were gone for now.

Reaching the top right of this field, distance 10.5km in a time of 1:21hrs, a few running groups had stopped to take pics of the scenery, have a break and swap backpack carrying duties, bastards!!! I stay running past in disgust as I head along the top ridge of the field and towards the first mountain, with the terrain changing to bog, shale and rocks.

Every step along here could lead to twisted/broken ankles, landing flat on your front, hitting your head off a rock etc..., so completely exhausted, concentration must ramp up to ensure each step is sound. The first peak of 528m is reached, the breeze is cooling, and I continue along the ridge, watching each step, still walking and running as the gradient changes towards Derrybawn Mountain at 474m.

With regards the weather, we were lucky in one way as it was dry. The footing was good on the rocks and bouncy/heavy on the bog, would not have liked this in wet/bad weather, but it was too hot with an average temperature of 30 degrees according to the stats.

After reaching the second peak, the mother of all descends started, again on rock and bog terrain. The gradient on this descent was frightening and like heading up through the field to reach the ridge,

the descend was done with legs and arms with the occasional use of my arse as I descend towards vegetation again and the flies.....

Reaching vegetation of ferns at approx. 12.6km, which trail do I follow, where is the race route, I start scanning for the race post, which were not great, a bamboo cane with a meter of builders white and red tape on the top. FFS!, got it and off I run through the ferns like Martin Sheen in Platoon, well maybe in my case more like Gorillas in the mist. Jesus, these ferns hurt as you run through them, slapping off your legs.

The running terrain changes back to rock and rubble at this stage as I run back towards Derrybawn woods, with Gorse bush either side of the trail. The flies now at this stage are swarming around me like I'm a vacant property in Dublin. I have no idea what my stats are at this stage, what the distance is etc., as I'm too busy concentrating on footing on the ups and downs of the trail and horrible terrain.

At last I reach the woods and shelter from the sun and the heat. The terrain changes from rocks to typical trail routes, but each km at this stage is up and down, up and down and the body is wrecked from this, I zone out for bit at this stage legs on auto-pilot until I met a family out walking the trails in the woods with their dog (which was quite busy and a nice distraction). Even the dog is struggling, and the Dad offers to carry the kids dog. As I pass I ask if he can carry me too? To which we all laugh at and I switch back on and off I go again.

I reach the 16km mark and another marshal offering water and directing me on which trail to follow, up to the left and then full stop – the gradient is brutal and I'm back walking until it levels off at 17km – Killer!!!

From 17km I followed the trail we came into the woods on, descending instead of ascending, going through the farmers gates, first one was marshalled and opened, nice one, second was not, had to open/close it. Reaching 19km I could hear the prize ceremony going on for the winners and started to push on.

Running back onto the road (feels very strange at this stage) and towards Laragh GAA, the last 800meters was in Laragh GAA and was a whole lap around the 2 pitches finishing at the Club House on long grass. There was no sprint finish to the line today, just delighted to finish and complete the race in 2:35hrs and in 63rd place. Of the 100+ that took on the race, only 80 completed it.

My left hamstring was starting to sing a tune at this stage, so camelbak off and I downed the 250ml gel flask with electrolytes and headed to the event tent, hoping they had those homemade scones with real butter on them like at the Glen to Glen Half and a seat, indeed they did. Laragh AC has not disappointed on either the event or food front!

The race today was won in an incredible time of 1:30hrs, which was so close to breaking the race record, 21seconds out - ouch!!! Such is life. There was also an 8km Trail/Mountain race on, which started at 13: 00. This race will be a 10km next year. Some interesting stats on this Trail/Mountain race: - For those in the club that are stats/data chasers/analysers I have included my Garmin stats from the race below at the end.

I headed back to the car absolutely wrecked, the guys from Trim AC were packed up and gone, seasoned Trail/Mountain racers – in, raced and gone. The



Run the Ridge

Yesterday at 9:29 AM · 📍

Some key facts about the route:

Total uphill: 9.2 km

total downhill: 8.6 km

Flat: 2.2 km

Longest climb: 1.9 km

Longest descent: 3.4 km

Steepest gradient: 15.6%

Steepest drop: -27.8%

Guy looking like he is taking on Marathon des Sables is not in yet, after getting changed at the car I see him coming in for the 800m run around Laragh GAA, good. I normally stop at Hollywood for a 99 ice-cream not today, I'm totally wrecked and just want to get home.

I have hiked most mountain ranges in Ireland and often have met Trail/Mountain runners in the worse of weather on various trails and often wondered why would they do this? As I stated at the start in 2.5yrs of trying endurance sports this Trail/Mountain Running is the toughest, honest and brutalist event I have done and I'm in awe of people who actual seriously compete in this event and very humbled to have completed this 20km Trail/Mountain race.

To be honest for me road running will never be the same, that is not to say it not tough, honest or brutal, it's like comparing apples with oranges, both are fruits but with different tastes and textures. In my opinion Trail/Mountain running is TOTAL RUNNING!!

In writing this race report, my second point was to share my experience with fellow club members and I hope I have done this. The 2018 race season is coming to a peak, as I'm writing this on Sunday morning we have members doing IM Dun Laoghaire 70.30, I hope I can motivate everyone to dig deep as training gets hard and long and we start feeling sorry for ourselves, this is not a rant but a humble and quiet WAR CRY!!:-

Be glad to be able to do whatever event you are training for, some people will never get the opportunities we have to do these events, it does not make a difference if it's a 5k, half/full marathon, IM 70.3/full, open water swim or even a Trail/Mountain race, whatever it is get training and enjoy it, know that your family, friends and club members are behind you and cheering you on- This is what is great about our club!!

Even when sometimes we fail (First Attempt in Learning), and we have given it everything, and we say NO for the second time (the first NO we are just feeling sorry for ourselves), remember NO means Next Opportunity and tomorrow there will be a new race or the same race to tackle again!

Stick to the plan, but every now and then change it up:

- **Swimming with a pull-buoy propping up your arse and legs – get rid of it and try swimming with closed fists!**
- **It's raining out and you get on the turbo, feck that get out and cycle in the rain!**
- **You keep putting off hill running, get off the same old safe roads and start hitting the hills!**

Sometimes you gotta shake it up – “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, expecting the different results.”

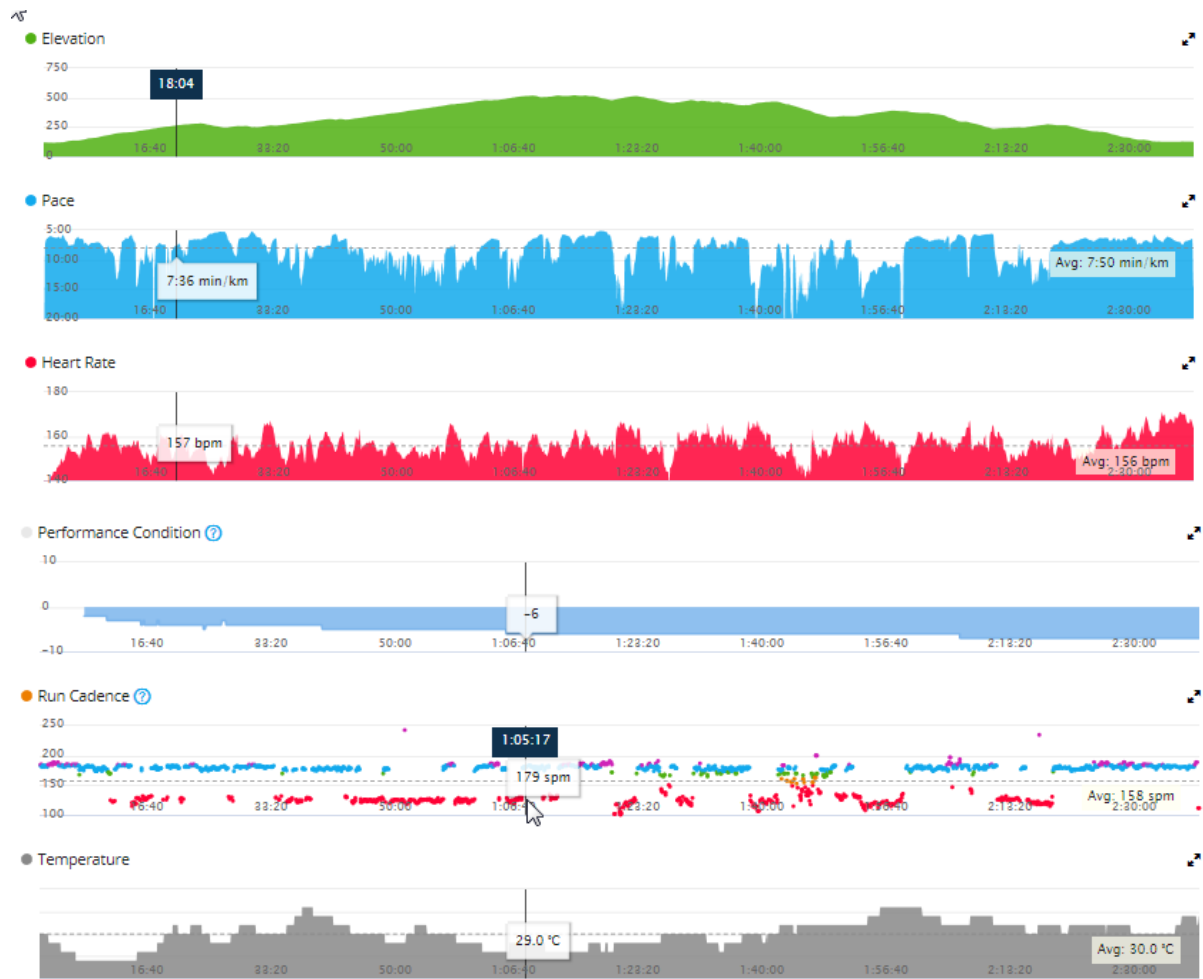
And as always, no matter what event you are doing:

“Swim smooth, Cycle fast and Run Soft”



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My Race stats:



Distance

19.89 km
Distance

Calories

2,168 C
Calories

Heart Rate

bpm % of Max Zones

156 bpm

Avg HR

171 bpm

Max HR

0.0

Anaerobic TE ⓘ

4.1

Aerobic TE ⓘ

Timing

Pace Speed

2:35:43

Time

2:35:33

Moving Time

2:35:43

Elapsed Time

7:50 min/km

Avg Pace

7:49 min/km

Avg Moving Pace

5:06 min/km

Best Pace

Elevation

672 m

Elev Gain

663 m

Elev Loss

118 m

Min Elev

522 m

Max Elev

Running Dynamics

158 spm

Avg Run Cadence ⓘ

243 spm

Max Run Cadence

0.81 m

Avg Stride Length ⓘ

Temperature

30.0 °C

Avg Temp

27.0 °C

Min Temp

33.0 °C

Max Temp