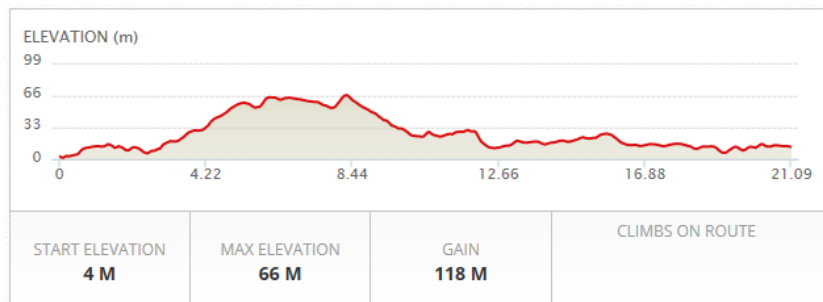
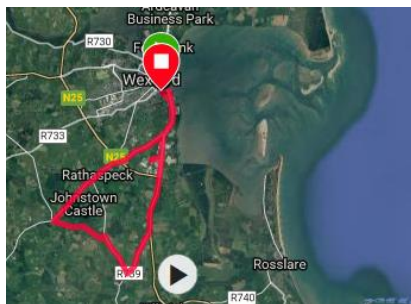




Growing up as a child of the 70's/80's, I was a big fan of the rock legend that is Meatloaf. Granted, these days I enjoy the baked variety more so than the classic rock & smoochy ballads type, but as I nurse my aches and pains and reflect on the outcome of this event, for some reason the great Texan rockers immortal classics are ring through my mind (see how many you can spot, **hint they're in red!!!**)... ..

ATC club mates know, **I would do anything for bling** and the quest for the 3 piece novelty jigsaw medal continued at the beautiful location of Wexford town. While it wasn't a **Hot Summer Night** the weather was cracking and the mood was positive amongst participants. ATC had a good representation here – Myself, John Cuddy, Michael O'Connor, Arnold Kane and Siobhan Harmon doing the Half. With Donna Kane, Dave Lynch, Genell Renehan and Baco Mac doing the 10k – there may have been more that I didn't meet.



While this event is billed as “Ireland’s record-breaking course” I wasn’t planning on any speedy heroics but I was definitely looking forward to testing the legs on a more forgiving course, after the Wicklow Half Marathon elevation rollercoaster in series race 1. The event elevation chart for this one showed a bit of climbing in the 1st half but a soft decline & flat 2nd half, just what the (calf n quad rehab) doctor ordered.

At the gun, I spotted Michael and slotted in behind him to draft the 1st 2 ½ km through “The Rocks”. There’s a little bit of a climb leaving the town but it’s not too bad a start. As you head out up Coolballow Rd the course takes a cheeky turn upwards. For the next 4km or so, until you reach the Irish Agricultural Museum, you can feel the drag. It’s probably a climb of about 50m over 4km but with some fatigue in the legs it feels like you are **going nowhere fast**. Enough for me to quietly whisper **for crying out loud** when the calves began to burn.

It levels out again at 6km and there’s another cheeky steep climb at Murntown at the 8k marker but after that the route starts to be friendlier, dropping that 50m you’ve climbed in the 1st 8km over the next 4km. As soon as I hit the decline I was **like a bat out of hell** leaving the competition **like objects in the rear view mirror** - OK maybe not but I was moving better than expected and the internal monologue was hinting at a negative split & **if you really want to chase a PB, it could be on**. But this is supposed to be a rest week so for now I thought PB **Heaven can wait!!!**



As I reached the turn at Lightwater around the 12k marker I still felt ok, the sun was out in force and that suits me and my dodgy joints. The calves were really on fire but the pace naturally picked up as the course flattened out through Ballyfinogue and Drinagh at the 17km marker. The day & race was really warming up now and when a lad zipped past me remarking “I thought I’d be **Home by now**, time to start **running for the red light**” I just thought “**You took the words right out of my mouth**” and immediately decided I wanted a **Piece of the action**”

Just after the 17km marker there’s a sharp left for a 500m out and back section through a business park. I’m calling it the “Energy Lab” (IM Kona fans will get that reference). As soon as you turned into it, the light but cooling breeze disappeared; it was suddenly like running in a sauna. Exiting seemed to reinvigorate runners though and from there I was **all revved up with no place to go** bar the finish line. Time to see if this race lived up to the PB billing!!!!

The last 3km are straight down the Rosslare Rd into Wexford town, finishing at The Faythe. I love this part of any event. For one, it’s nearly over and two, it’s where the physical and mental challenge begins. Your brain is shouting at you “look at your heart rate ya dope”, your body is screaming at you to ease up but I think you can always push a little more if you really want to. There are always runners in better shape at this point too and I latched on to a few faster fellas as they passed me, kinda drafting, till they dropped me. Amazing how you think you are maxed out until someone passes you and you find that extra gear.



As I entered the final furlong I was grimacing in pain. That may have been mistaken for a smile as Siobhan’s husband Dave Harmon caught me on camera – Dave is the long day legend (today he was on hubby support duty – thanks Dave for the final words of encouragement). I reached the finish line, empty but ecstatic, **1hr 38mins, my best ever.**

But whatever about Mac Juniors jollies, it’s Baco that won the day for me & finishing shortly after him was great. His achievements this year are leaving **Not a dry eye in the House** (I’m really stretching for song titles now!!!) & we are all so proud of the auld fella – He’s knocking years and kilograms of himself and a good 10 minutes off his 10k PB too. Our next event together is TriAthy, where myself, Baco and my two brothers Ritchie & Dave (who completed his 1st duathlon at ATC’s event on Sunday & loved it) are all taking part in the Try-a-Tri race.

For now I bask in the pain and glory of a half marathon PB (**Read ‘em and Weep** Mr Knee surgeon). And while Garmin found it fitting to award me with **bullsh1t** badges (I really hate that auto kudos crap), with the 3rd and final race of the series in Clontarf still to come, I’ll leave the last word to Meatloaf....



Badges

