

About time

Breakfast of porridge, banana and honey at 5:30am	✓
Running shorts with energy gels stuffed in pockets and pinned to the inside	✓
Vest with number and my name printed on the front	✓
Trainers with timing chip and Thorlos blister prevention socks	✓
GPS watch – charged up	✓
Jam sandwich, without crusts, to nibble just before the start	✓
Keys	✓
Waterproofs	No need
Bag with a change of clothes	✓
And two nipple plasters – I don't want to look like I've been symmetrically shot in the chest by an assassin	✓

That's it, ready for another marathon. Wouldn't it be good to go under four hours this time. I've never managed it yet, even though I have run half marathons in well under two hours.

It was 10th April 2011 and getting to the start was easy for the second Brighton Marathon. We joined the train at Hassocks to take the short ride to the start in Preston Park, meeting lots of friends from Burgess Hill Runners doing the same thing.

My son Tim had turned 18, old enough to enter his first marathon. Not for him an arbitrary target of some multiple of sixty minutes; he just wants to beat his dad and without doing any training, something he has done lots of times before. Let's see how that goes over 26 miles, I thought.

There are never enough toilets at the start. It was such a hot day, we are all drinking plenty beforehand for fear of the dreaded dehydration, but it's hard to judge that just right. Just as well I had the key to the ROCC Computers office just across the road.

At 9 o'clock off we go for a circuit of the park then down to the Old Steine, through the Lanes, then Kemp Town, before we head off east for the big climb of the race up to Ovingdean. After 11 miles running alongside each other Tim asked me to go on ahead. Shouldering the burden of guilt at leaving my little boy behind, I headed back past the halfway point at the pier in the rising heat and west towards Hove and the power station at Shoreham. Having my name on my vest helps. There are lots of shouts of "Come on Benny!" It takes a few miles before I get used to the fact that I won't know them all personally and its okay not to recognise them. It's a treat when I spot someone I do know. It was good to be cheered on by supporters from Burgess Hill Runners on the way out to Shoreham Power Station. Tim was nearly knocked over when his (female) PE teacher from school leapt out at him with a shriek and a hug.





Can you spot the differences between the pictures? Tim striking the same pose for photographers on the Brighton Half in March (left) and the Brighton Marathon in April (right).

There were fantastic crowds from mile 24, but by then I had used too many gels, too much water and I was beginning to feel awful. The last few miles were much slower with the heat building but the crowd kept shouting at me to go on – they always think there is “not far to go” - and by then I just did what I was told. It is a surreal feeling, running through a funnel of people all screaming your name.





And then past the pier and over the finish line in Marine Parade. 4:10:42. I sat down and couldn't move for twenty minutes. Then I spotted Tim coming through the finish area and managed to attract his attention. He took a quick swig of water then wandered off with his girlfriend for a supersize Big Mac meal. Meanwhile I shuffled up to the station, got home and had a lie down. I didn't feel like eating. So which of us won?

A couple of days later I had forgotten the pain and only remembered the glory, so I registered again for next year.

On Sunday 22nd May I was in Edinburgh. The weather was wet and windy, a gale coming in from the west which was to blow the roof off the airport and onto the runway when I wanted to come home the next day. The hotel was very close to my start at the top of a hill in Regent Road. There were two starts and I was in the slower group, so I went right to the front to see if I could lead it for a little while, see what that was like. It didn't last long before lots of the slow group passed me, but eventually I passed some of the fast group as we all mixed up.

The maths: 26.2 miles ÷ 4 hours = 9 minutes and 9 seconds per mile.

There is a lovely view across to Holyrood and Arthur's Seat from Regent Road, so it is pretty high up, which is the distinguishing feature of the Edinburgh marathon: it is downhill, with a drop of 40m to the finish line at Musselburgh racecourse. With the strong westerly wind to blow us along as the course heads beside the coast to Gosford House at mile 18, I was full of confidence. The first three



miles were all less than seven minutes, and up to mile 17 the rest were under eight minutes. I was halfway after one hour 48 minutes, so I could plod along at ten minute miles the rest of the way and still smash my target, no problem.

The route was largely along the promenade and then it became more rural as we headed past Musselburgh. There were good crowds cheering in the villages along the way. At Gosford House we ran through a free range chicken farm and some runners had to mind the hens on the road. There seemed to be a group of four girls dressed as angels with wings who turned up in different places along the route to cheer us up, but I wonder now if it was just my imagination. Perhaps they were really just more chickens.

Another feature of the Edinburgh marathon is the Hairy Haggis relay race, where a team of four run the race, handing over every six or seven miles, all mixed in with the full marathon runners. So three quarters of the way round a fresh pair of legs comes zipping past because they have only just started; what a pain.

I learnt from last time and so I planned to take the gels only at miles 18 and 22. That would be enough for me to avoid the stomach upsets. But by mile 23 I was feeling dreadful and even resorted to walking for a while. I got going again and didn't look at my watch until I was nearly at the end. I had taken three hours fifty something and there was still a way to go. I pushed on as fast as I could. Past the cheering crowd at the finish line by the racecourse. I stopped my watch as I crossed the line.

EMF 2011 Full Marathon		
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Position	Name (Number)	Times
3864	Benny Coxhill (5010) Photos for 5010 >	04:00:00 10k: 00:50:36 Half: 01:48:23 30k: 02:38:59 Marathon: 04:00:00

Here's more detail if you are interested. My Garmin watch records everything and you can see the route using the *Player*.

Brighton <http://connect.garmin.com/activity/79101212#.ThIjXdRHQs.email>

Edinburgh http://connect.garmin.com/activity/87687156#.ThIJI0L8w_s.email



So it looks like I've still got to try again. In fact, since those were my seventh and eighth marathons, I suppose I had better do another two to make it up to ten. Wouldn't it be good to go under four hours on one of those.

