



News release

Date: 9th October 2005
Location: Portsmouth

Great South Run - Odyssey

By: Mike Monk - El Presidente

Oh no - It's the Great South again!! After several years of major traffic jams getting home I really thought I would give this year's event a miss! But I forgot that I had been "suckured" into an early registration around Christmas - probably too much wine to think straight! Oh well better try to plan a travel strategy and throw in the odd training run as well. Gary, he of British Rail fame, advised me to "let the train take the strain" by driving to Havant, catch a train to Portsmouth Harbour and enjoy a 20 minute walk to the start. Perfecto!! Sounds just the thing to avoid the car melee. Then Wendy, she of Margate Marathon fame, remarked during one of our running/conversation sessions (!), that she thought trains weren't running due to engineering works. The Great South magazine was extolling the benefits of arriving by train so surely Railtrack wouldn't plan to disrupt the annual pilgrimage to Portsmouth - would they?

Oh yes they would! Using my steam driven Sinclair C5 Oxfam computer I discovered that "no you can't get from Havant to Portsmouth by train - but you can by bus". Yeh right - that will really get me through the traffic jams! However if I go to Cosham I can get to Portsmouth by train. Great - problem solved. Hang on - where is Cosham? Blimey it's west of Portsmouth. So that means I have to drive west past Portsmouth, then come back east and then south. Oh I can't be doing with all this. Now remember the KISS formula, which is "keep it simple stupid"!! So discard train, bus, water taxi, trishaw, electric tram and donkey and replace with reliable (if somewhat boring) Peugeot 307!

Okay that's settled - it's car for me. But can I face the battlefield of Southsea Common? If it rains will I need a tractor tow to get off? What if they experience a tidal wave or an amphibious landing by the French in retaliation for a good kicking at Trafalgar? Will I need B & B to let the traffic jams clear? Would it be quicker to do a crash course in windsurfing and sail back to Felpham? Would I be home for Christmas?

But then I had a "eureka moment" - well you do get these occasionally at my age!! It's nothing too serious but if it happens on a regular basis there are surgical procedures available if you go Private. Anyway, dear reader, I digress. My "eureka moment" was remembering a giant white pointy - thing rising from the harbour side near which was a rather tastefully designed car park which propped up lots of shops, bars etc which might not be too far from the start. So back on the old trusted C5 computer and "yes" it was an easy walk providing one wasn't waylaid by the local press gang. So to provide myself with "backup" I managed to persuade Wendy to ride shotgun.

So race day dawned and we set off at 8:15am hoping we might stand a chance of getting to the start in time. "So where are the jams?" I asked Wendy as we cruised into Portsmouth and turned right into Gunwharf Quay. After a gentle stroll we reached the start just after 9am. Blimey that was easy - ah but it's bound to be a problem after the race! So after the usual window shopping in Alexander Sports and searching for fellow Tone Zone Runners, we went to the Pyramids and left our luggage. Easy and no queues for the loos!

Now back to the start and the warm up. Lots of announcements telling us not to overdo things because the weather was warm - no doubt worried about the deaths during the Great North. So mindful of health and safety, I stopped doing my warm ups and mimed - well you can't be too careful can you? Okay time to line up. Blimey what is this vision coming towards me in a shocking pink ensemble? Cripes it's my running coach - the beautiful Debs!! Have we changed our striking Tone Zone Vests for something out of Come Dancing and am I now in last season's attire?! Oh the shame!



Fear not dear reader - Debbie was raising money for charity - so anyone who hasn't supported her then she is still open to offers - if you know what I mean!!

So off we went. Well off Debbie went and I trail along watching "shocking pink" gradually disappear into the depths of Portsmouth. Within 2 miles I realise that I am overdressed for today's temperature. I like warm conditions but know that life is going to get difficult after 7 miles. This year there seemed to be more bands and the kerbside support was quite good. The route had also been altered slightly to aid cars leaving the car park. Mind you I wasn't thinking of getting out of Portsmouth just then as my temperature climbed and I continually sipped water between points. I got a touch of "déjà vu" when I saw a shower point - was I back in London? Needless to say I quickly went into Boots for a sachet of revitalising nose shampoo before running through this welcome addition! Emerging cooler and with bright shining hair, I felt much better.

Into the last two miles I realised that my pace had been quite reasonable and, with luck, I might get somewhere near last years PB. Reaching the one mile I forgot about time and just "hung on" as I realised that maybe I had run faster than I had planned - see I am almost a professional runner now!! However determination, aided by my freshly shampooed go-faster hair enabled me to get to the finishing line with a PB. Unfortunately just before the finish I saw that Debbie had stopped in front of me. Being the gentleman that I am, I sailed (staggered) past and wished her well! Debbie had been struck with stitch but gamely carried on - well done Debbie.

Meeting up with Wendy, who also ran a good race and achieved a PB, we meandered back to Gunwharf Quay, which was a good way to relax those achy/tight muscles. After a leisurely cup of coffee it was into the car to join the mass exodus. But hey! Where were the traffic jams? Nowhere to be seen. Well would you believe it - a Great South without any hassle.

So another Great South to look back on. The day was ideal. No traffic problems, good organisation, perfect conditions (if you weren't wearing a duffle coat!), good company and a tee shirt that wasn't designed to fit Steve Redgrave - Wendy was relieved!

Sorry I didn't see our other runners before the "off". Next year we must be better organised. Come back Carl!!

If you haven't done the Great South then have a go. Despite the rather high entry fee I felt this year was the best ever in my 4 years. Oh yes - and the medal has that pointy-needle white thing on it with the lift stuck halfway up!!

El Presidente