



## News release

### The New Forest Half Marathon

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> September 2006  
Location: New Milton

### Hot and Hilly

By: Mike Monk

After reading coach Debbie's report on last years race I decided to enter this year just to see if there really are hills in the New Forest. My Barnes Green "experience" proved to me that being a "flat earth" runner is preferable to scaling hills, mountains and the A259 flyover!

Wendy and I (both New Forest virgins) joined Debbie who was determined to improve on last years time. Stuffed full of porridge, seeds, and maple syrup Wynne and I set off. En route we noticed Debbs on the A27 trying to thumb lifts from passing lorry drivers so, ever the gentleman, I ignored her until receiving a sharp (and painful) reminder to stop and offer her a lift! This, dear reader, proved to be a bad move. My pre-race meditation, as we travelled the high-ways, was interrupted by exited girls-talk about wedding veils, shoes, dresses etc etc!

Reaching the car park in New Milton (phew!) I rang Wendy and husband Mick to check if they had arrived. They had, but using their "sat-nav" were somewhere else in the town. Give me a good old fashioned AA road map any day.

The start time of the Half is 11.00hrs and it didn't take too much grey matter to realise that this run was likely to be hot as the sun smiled down as we stood in the pre-race nervous queues in front of the limited number of "Portaloos". My final "loo-Q" was interrupted by Wendy pointing out that the race was about to start! So joining the back of a crowd of runners I was entertained by a P.A. system that allowed me to hear (just about) every 5<sup>th</sup> word or so. A distant cheer alerted me that we were "off". Neither Debs nor Wendy were anywhere to be seen having forced themselves (no shame there girls!) towards the front intent on good times.

Once out of New Milton (not the prettiest of towns) we hit open countryside. With occasional glimpses of ponies and now into open areas, the sun beamed down on us as we approached HILLS!! Oh no, Debs wasn't kidding, there are hills in the New Forest! Too late to turn back claiming that I had left the bath running at home. No it looks like its "grit your teeth" time. Never let be said that El Presidente ducks a challenge.

Now in the open, bathed in sunlight and perspiration by mile 6 I was seriously wondering why I was here. As Carl says - "listen to your body" and there were times when I walked (quickly of course!) the last 50 metres to the top of a hill. These hills aren't steep, dear Reader, but ever so loooong! Even Debs found one quite testing. Anyway roadside support, marshalling and water and/or sponge stations were quite well done. A pity really because I could have got lost and grabbed a passing pony for a ride back to town.

Around mile 8 we were saved by shade and some downhill stretches. So the final 4 miles were relatively cool which was just as well because I was beginning to wish I had spent the morning washing my car, hair, the cat - anything but running a Half Marathon with hills! With a mile to go to the finish, I looked into the Sainsbury's shopping trolley which contained my steam-driven Garmin to find (shock/horror) that it was just possible to finish under the two hour mark if I put down my painting easel, took off my rather fetching beret and painters smock and actually did some serious running! Donning my one-piece body stocking with wind resistant stabilisers, I took off like a rocket scattering runners, marshals, traffic wardens and startled hedgehogs with my shopping trolley and the steaming Garmin!

About to pass out from too much excitement, I thought I was about to collide with an inflatable castle that someone had stupidly positioned round a sharp bend in the road. And why was Debs waving her medal and shouting - surely



she wasn't trying to hitch a ride again?! Then quick as a flash (it takes time Dear Reader) I realised it was an inflatable finish. Casting aside the trolley, I sprinted (staggered) over the line and on checking the Garmin was overjoyed to see I had beat the two hour mark by 12 secs!!

Meeting up with "Les Girls" I am happy to report that all three of us managed a Half Marathon PB, despite the challenging conditions. Debs actually bettered last years time by a fantastic 14 minutes - actually I think she stopped to feed the ponies last year. Debs overall pace was 8 minute average and even managed a sub-7 at the end - watch out Paula! Wendy also got in under two hours knocking at least two minutes off her best despite feeling that the course was a little tedious.

So fellow nut-cases have a go next year. I will be washing the cat!

Results:

Debbie Hadon - 1:46:43      Wendy Harding - 1:59:00      Mike Monk - 1:59:48

El Presidente