

The Grizedale 26 - Report by Paul Blundell

Four Hardley runners headed up to Ambleside to take part in the Grizedale 26 trail race, the forecast was for strong winds and torrential rain but it takes more than a bit of water to put off Martin Loveless, Tiff Hanley, David Gould and Paul Blundell.

The plan was a training run to help prepare us for other challenges later this year so start slow and see how we got on.

It was a dismal drive to the start, the planned car park was closed due to fallen trees and we got quite cold huddling under shelter waiting for the delayed start (due to a closed motorway junction and traffic delays).

We eventually headed off up the first of many hills on quite a solid track, in fairly persistent rain and settled into a steady pace, Martin and Tiff were not feeling great but soon warmed up. After a couple of miles David fell back to a steadier pace.



The terrain was a bit sticky in places and it wasn't long before the leading 10 mile and half marathon runners belted past us.

I found the 8 mile checkpoint came up quite soon and I felt quite good at this stage.

The rain had eased to the occasional heavy shower, the views across Coniston were stunning and I was pretty warm, gloves and hat off, coat unzipped.

We passed through the finish before starting the second lap, up a steep and rocky track.

We came to a road section and Tiff was leading the way, Martin and I struggling to keep up with her, but keep up we did and we started overtaking more runners, we would overtake a couple then they would overtake us, and we would too and for a bit before coming out ahead in most cases. We headed down a steep and slippery rocky track toward lake Windermere and I was really starting to struggle despite keeping up a steady food and drink intake, however we got past quite a few runners going down to the lake.

I took a gel and soon started to feel a lot better and by the last checkpoint at 20 miles, my tired legs didn't seem to matter so much as we started the steep climb away from the lake.

The last 6 miles did seem to take forever however and as we crested the hill, the dreaded cramp hit Martin.

Luckily this was a temporary setback and we continued with our overtake, get overtaken then overtake again technique, generally we were getting a past a lot more people on the downhills and eventually we came to a point where we recognized the track we had come out on.

A steep and slippery descent was all that was left and we belted down to the finish without mishap.

Through the finish we quickly cooled down so headed back to the car to change before warming up in the cafe with the free supplied meal.

David arrived soon after and we drove back to the hostel for hot showers and to practice our rehydration strategy.

You may be able to see photo albums on David and Paul's Facebook pages.

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