

Lakeland 100 24!

Strap in – this is a long read! But then I did run a very long way!

“What defines us is how we rise after falling”

I heard that phrase the day after I completed the 100 and I could simply say it's related to getting the finish after my 2nd 100 attempt, but it actually runs a lot deeper than that because the “did not finish” and the fall were intertwined and one of them eventually led to the other. The DNF the previous year was a bit of a stinger, but I honestly had no regrets about my decision to stop, other than there was nothing physically wrong with me when I stopped and I did worry that I'd not be in the same shape in 24.

I trained pretty much the same as I had the previous year. I didn't increase mileage, and I did some similar back-to-back sessions. What I did do differently was looked after my mental health, I refused to engage in anything negative, I actively looked for the positives. In training if I had a negative thought then I had to think of 2 positives (this was a piece of advice given to me by Lucy Lamb during a massage) I imagined scenarios in my head and thought about how I'd respond in those situations. One thing I'd struggled with the previous year was going into a second night without sleep, this just happened to be at Howtown and I remember looking over at Fusedale and it looked so dark and menacing, and I just couldn't face the slog of it, so part of my mental strategy was to imagine getting to Howtown and what I would do if I felt the same way.



I could ramble on A LOT about the training, the build-up, and all the crappy stuff that had gone on the previous year, but that crappy stuff really needs me to close the door on it once and for all and whilst it matters a great deal to me, it doesn't really change the adventure and story of my 2 nights out on the fells.

We arrived in Coniston on the Friday mid-morning, the queue for 'kit check' already out of the marquee and almost onto the main road, I joined the back and settled in for a long wait but after a couple of minutes one of the marshals came along pulling 100 runners out of the line and taking them to front to get them through kit check. I felt half mortified and half like some kind of bad ass as we were pulled out and put right to the front of the queue. Kit check went smoothly and I decided to go grab a pizza and coffee, my plan was to eat as much as possible without overeating before the 6pm start. The year before we had booked for food at one of the local bars, but we had all found it overpriced and pretty poor quality. So, this year we had called at Greggs on our way to Coniston –and I had a trusty cheese and onion pasty for my 5pm tea (one of my stables before a training run!)

I milled about for a bit, catching up with pals I've made at the event over the years before heading to our car which we'd parked up next to Mark, Julie, Lindsay and Andrew. Lindsay and Andrew looked after us whilst we were getting ready. Di and Roy (Lindsay's parents) came and joined us, and Roy asked for one of my supporter's numbers which he stuck on his flat cap. I chatted to Di and asked if she would be on hand with the Sudocream for afterwards (Di has looked after my post-race chafe at every race she has supported me on), If only I knew then where the chafe would be! I had a bit of admin to do, taping the backup (I had pre-cut strips of band aid to stick across my whole back) trenching the feet etc and I wanted to be pretty much ready to go after the race briefing at 4:30.

The race briefing was heart-warming, humbling and hilarious, Marc, Uncle Terry and Vicar of Kentmere all saying their bit. Marc's words “If you're not on the edge of failure then you're not really challenging yourself” still fresh in my head as we left the briefing and went back outside. Our Manda had arrived at this point, she was meant to be running the 100 herself but after a week of the lurgy she had been advised not to attempt it, she was disappointed but in true Manda style she committed to being there for everyone else instead. As sisters we are quite different and sometimes this makes us clash, but when the chips are down, she's rock solid and there's no one else I'd want to have in my corner.

I spent the last hour before entering the pen checking I had everything, I saw a lot of my pals that had come to support me – I just hugged them all tightly, we didn't really need to exchange words, they knew where I'd been last year, and they knew what this year meant to me. I didn't really feel nervous – I didn't really have time to think at all if I am honest, it was so busy with friends coming to see me and hug me, my mind was kept very busy in the final hour.

As we headed into the pen, I lost sight of Mark and Julie so I stood on my own with my thoughts, I thought about all the miles and all the adventures I'd had over the last few months and reminded myself how lucky I was and how making the start line was an achievement in itself. Every year they perform a live rendition of *Nessun Dorma* (it means none shall sleep) and I am pretty sure this is just another twist in the Lakeland Tale – a little poke, a jab, an inside joke! But this year it made me think of one of my pal Karen Taylor who had sadly and very suddenly passed away earlier in the year. They had played it at her funeral and I knew at the time when I heard it here I would have her in my thoughts.



Thunderstruck came on so I knew we were moving! I passed under the gantry and headed onto Lake Road. I stayed to my left – knowing all my family and my pals would be near the garage. Screaming, shouting, clapping and hugging commenced until I was on the first climb out of Coniston. We climbed Coniston Old Man and I was instantly aware of the muggy, sticky heat, it was that kind of energy zapping heat, it brought a feeling of nausea and like the stomach wanted to shut down right from the start. I knew from previous experience it was unlikely I'd actually be sick, but I also knew that I needed to watch my pace, not burn out and not exhaust myself.



Seathwaite 1:43

Theme was Harry Potter and I was welcomed in by a wizard. I took advantage of the proper toilet here and then got my bottles filled, grabbed some flapjack and left.

Boot - Running time 3:41

Don't remember the theme but it was a busy CP, I got my flasks filled and put another sachet of beta fuel into one of them. I'd practiced with beta on my long training runs, I'm not great at eating and struggle to follow getting so many calories in per hour, but Rosie's husband Mike had broken it down really simply for me, 1 flask of beta and 2 packs of precision chews every 2 hours were pretty much

enough to maintain, obviously the plan was to eat from the CPs as well and I had decided to carry much less food with me than usual as I rarely eat it and end up taking a lot of food out on a long hike!

Wasdale - Running time 5:20

I had some soup at this CP and used my Hello Kitty cup for the first time, she got a few “oooh look at this cute cup” from the marshals. The Hello Kitty – a nod to someone who is in my life who has overcome many obstacles to get to where they are today.



My pal Alexandria was in this CP, she was having issues with her ankle and was talking about dropping, but I knew she wouldn't, she's hard as nails and I knew she was in for the finish. I left the CP and I prepared myself for the climb up Blacksail.

Blacksail is a big climb, halfway up you have to cross a fairly daunting waterfall before carrying on the climb up. I don't mind the climb, but the descent off it can be unpleasant at the best of times, its technical and slippery. I was keen to get up and over the climb before the rain, which we knew was coming, took hold. The climb was okay, I was in a group and I was happy to just climb at the pace they were going. The descent was slippery in places, I opted to use the grassy sections where I could instead of the hard rock, I often think its better doing it in the dark so you can't really see how horrible it is. As you get to the bottom of the descent there are 2 rocks and the path leads you straight down the centre of them. The first time I had reccied it, I had gone straight down the centre and it was fairly unpleasant, the footholds too far apart for my short legs and I had slipped a few times. But after a few more reccies, I realised there was a little path to the left which is far easier and much less of a stretch and scramble. I steered to the left, some followed me, others went straight down the centre – all of us survived! The bridge was out at the bottom of Blacksail so they had put marshals and a guide rope across to help you steady yourself as you crossed – I was so glad of this as I had reccied it a few weeks earlier and I had not enjoyed the crossing in the daylight!

We then climbed Scarth Gap, the rain coming and going, I held off putting on my jacket, knowing I would be warm once I descended into Buttermere. The rain made the descent tricky, the steps become pretty slippery when they are wet, so I just took my time, running the bits I could and walking the bits I couldn't. I'd opted to wear parkclaws for the first half of the 100, they are a much grippier shoe and do well on technical ground. But they are a fraction too tight for my broad feet and JM doesn't fair that well in them (JM is my big toe - real name John Merrick)

Buttermere - Running time 7:58

I knew arriving here would give me a good boost, Neil was crewing here and I knew he would be relieved to see me through the first section. Neil took a tumble out on a reccie on the first section in November last year and gashed his knee open to the bone, he had to have 20 odd internal and external stitches and is still unable to run after tearing his knee bits in several places. (pictures available upon request!) I knew most of the crew here – DH and other pals I have made across the years, so for me it felt like it was the personal touch. Despite this I wasn't hanging about though, I knew I'd lost time compared to the previous year, a combination of muggy weather, queues at CPs and the rain all contributing to a 20-minute gap against the previous year. In the grand scheme it wasn't a biggie, but I wanted to get to Dalemain faster than the year before. I grabbed a couple of jam sarnies, another beta fuel into my flask, and after a couple of pics I set off.



The climb out of Buttermere felt long and tough, its 3 miles until you reach the top and begin to descend. The rain had firmly settled in now and I had my jacket on to try and keep me warm. The fern was high and as it brushed against me it soaked me to my waist (I AM SMALL) I always worry

about ticks whenever I am near fern and I began to imagine they were having a tick party on my body! Eventually we reached the top and then began the stony descent, before hitting the grassy section down towards Braithwaite.

Braithwaite - 33 miles in. Running time - 10:06

As I arrived at Braithwaite the rain was bouncing, I headed into the CP and the heat hit me, it was packed with runners, the air was filled with hot sweaty steam, it was foiling and made me feel a bit gaggy! I got my cup out and went and got a cup of tea and asked for a bowl of rice pudding. I got my flasks filled, I really needed a pee but the queue was huge, so I grabbed a few biscuits and left, I decided I'd find a bush on the route instead. As I left the CP I bumped into Pete Denston. He runs for Border Reivers and I met him for the first time the previous year on the 100, we were both in a bad way that year and we spent a couple of miles together swearing A LOT! Pete had gone on to finish the 100 that year and we have kept in touch on and off since so it was nice to see him again and we were both in much better spirits so were able to enjoy this section together. We stayed together on the road into Keswick, until I ran off ahead to find a bush because I really needed a piddle.

I ran into a bush and whipped down my shorts and knickers. Phwoooarrrrrrr omg the pain as I did this took my breath away! Unbeknown to me I had begun to chafe in the lady section of the department store. The sting brought tears to my eyes and the wee was a painful one to say the least. This really concerned me, I've never chafed here before, my back is common, I've done my inner thigh before and I've been known to have a bleeding armpit before, but this was new territory and the only person that I've known to have this happen before is my sister back in 2021 on the 100 and it was race ending, she suffered a 3rd degree chafe! I didn't know what to do! I tried not to panic and I decided to just try and blank it out, I applied some anti chafe to myself and then just tried not to think about it and to give myself 2 positives! I also knew I had different shorts at Dalemain with a longer liner so I just hoped I could manage the situation until got there.

I headed into Keswick and as I got to Spooky Green our Manda was there, I told her about the chafe, at this point I was saying "I've chafed my undercarriage" but apart from that I was in good spirits. Manda climbed up towards Latrigger with me, I asked after Mark and Julie, Mark was about 40 minutes ahead and Julie was heading into Braithwaite. As we approached the top Manda turned back to go and catch Julie and I carried on towards Glendetterra and the first unmanned CP. I like this section a lot – it reminds me of the Cumbria Way and then once you turn off it's a nice easy section to Blencathra Centre

Blenthcathra Centre - Running time 12:33

I was now up 10 minutes on the previous year and despite the chafe (which I was now calling the Ring of Fire and kept singing the song Ring of Fire or playing the scene from Finding Nemo when they say "the ring of fire, ooh haha") I went into the CP filled my flasks, emptied in a beta, grabbed a cup of tea and a slice of toast and left eating and drinking them both. I stopped outside where I was alone to reapply some cream to the ROF (ooh haha) And then carried on along the path.

I was soon heading towards the old coach road, Manda popped up twice on the route as I headed to it and she said I looked great and was moving well and despite the ROF and some nipping on my leg and back I did feel pretty good. I knew that at some point I was going to have to sort my back out and see what was going on with my leg, but neither were concerning me that much so I decided I'd try and hold off until Dalemain when I would have a full kit change.



The Old Coach Road gets a lot of flack, most folk hate it, but I'd take the Coach Road over Haweswater or the dreaded section around to Blea tarn all day long. But the weather did make it a difficult a section, the rain was relentless and because the coach road is very exposed the rain kicked my backside the whole way, and I was glad to see the trees that gave the glimmer of hope that Dockray was not far away.

Dockray - Running time - 14:55

Last year I arrived at Dockray in a shivering, shaking state of tears. My pal Lorna was marshalling and she brought me into the CP and I had the whole CP flapping around me because was in such a mess. Lorna had looked after me and got me back out on the road and as I arrived there this year she was there! She was running the 50 this year but had come to the CP especially to see me and Julie come



through. I hugged her and said “I’m not stopping Lorna” she said she knew I wouldn’t, she gave me a cup of soup, 2 sarnies and kicked me out the CP and onto the tarmac before the Ullswater Way section. As I reached the Ullswater Way section the weather was bouncing again, this was the lowest I felt at any point on the 100, there was a guy behind me and as we clocked 52.5 miles he sang out “ohhhh we’re halfway there” I think he hoped I’d sing the other half but my head wasn’t in that happy place and I actually visualised pushing him into the lake! (Not part of the mental prepping at all!) My spirits were low and the rain was making my shorts wet and heavy and they were moving against the chafe and reminding me that I had chafed! 2 positives, 2 positives!!

I was relieved to get off the Ullswater Way part of the route, as I got onto the tarmac the heavy rain finally stopped and the sun came out. I then became aware of how sore my feet were, the rain and humidity had made them swell, so now my big toes were banging against the tops of my shoes with every step. JM taking the brunt of the pain! I ran/hobbled/walked to Dalemmain estate where Manda and Gaynor were waiting to see me. Gaynor is one of my female running idols, she’s won the Lakeland 100 before, she used to organise the Cumbria Way Ultra and Grand Tour of Skiddaw and she has saw me projectile vomiting on the finish line of her ultras a couple of times! I was so chuffed to see her, I gave her a hug and apologised for the stink of me, I told her about the ROF before hobbling down the road towards the CP

Dalemmain Running time 17:54 – miles covered 60

35 minutes up on the previous year, I was carrying a few niggles, but I felt in amazing spirits and just wanted to get through this CP as fast as possible. I opened my drop bag and grabbed my pot noodle. I asked a Marshal to fill it whilst I went to get changed. I grabbed all my clothes and went to the portaloo, stripped, dried off, applied sudocream to the ROF and then got dressed minus my clean t shirt and socks. Into the CP chucked my towel on the floor and sat down on it, took my watch off and put it on charge, grabbed my bags of talc and put my feet into them whilst I ate my pot noodle. Grabbed my spare tape for my back and asked a marshal to re-tape my back whilst I was eating. Once the back was taped, I chucked my top on. Restocked my vest with sachets of beta and precision chews. Picked up my gels, I usually use gels on long runs but I’d wanted to hold off using them until the 2nd day as the ones I use have caffeine in them and I wanted to feel the benefit of them as I became tired. I dusted the talc from my feet and put my dry socks on, then I changed into my inov8 Ultra G trail shoes, they are a bigger fit and offer more cushioning, they aren’t as grippy, but I

know the last 45 miles doesn't call for a grippier shoe. They felt like slippers, and I hoped this would bring some relief to the angry toes. The 50 runners were starting to come through as I was getting ready to go again, I felt like I'd been really slick through the CP, and it didn't feel like I'd been there that long before I was ready to leave again.

Neil looked relieved to see me moving and feeling so well, he is a very calm and grounded person and rarely shows if he is worried or panicking (I am the complete opposite) but I could see that he was glad I was through, and that my spirit was strong. Him and Manda walked out of the CP with me up the big hill, the 50 runners were coming through now and they were full of enthusiasm and energy. They would shout to me "well done, you're looking great, amazing etc" I would shout back "thank you, I've chafed my F#@!!?, well done you, have a great run" There were 3 types of reactions one was "ErrMm okay, so enjoy" (mortified and scuttling away), or "oh your poor thing, I've got some lube, do you want to borrow?" And the other was complete hysterics!

Into Pooley Bridge, Jo Hazell was on the corner, I ran to her, hugged her, and told her about the ROF, then over the bridge and towards the pub. I spotted Lindsay and Co. before they saw me, I started screaming and shouting and then it just went wild, all I could hear was shouting, screaming, I saw arms reaching out to hug me, I beelined for Lindsay and then straight to Andrew, I whispered in his ear that I'd chafed and he howled laughing, I have absolutely no idea why I whispered it in his ear, because I had practically loud speakered it to everyone else!

The boost from Pooley bridge kept me going to Howtown, I was caught up with all the 50 runners and I was thriving off their energy the 8 miles from Dalemain to this CP seemed to go really fast.





Howtown - Running time - 20:36 - 1hr 28 minutes up on previous year.

I arrived at Howtown and took a seat, I was looked after by one of the marshals, I can't remember her name now, but she was incredible, I asked to go for a 15 minute lie down and she took me into the upstairs of building, got me a mat, blanket and pillow and said she'd come back to wake me up. I didn't proper sleep, but I did keep my eyes closed for the 15 minutes, I felt like my legs were still running and moving though and my head far too wired to properly shut off. I didn't let the DNF from the previous year enter my head here, I focused on leaving the CP- I had visualised this time and time again. I left the CP and headed towards Fusedale, I was still caught up in the 50 runners so a lot of the climb I was stuck in a line, it's a single track until you get to the top, I overtook a few runners but mostly I was glad to have people around me on the climb. Once at the top I ran most of the section, I was chuffed that my legs were still keen to run despite being 70 miles in! The descent into Haweswater was a steady one, the ground so wet, muddy and slippery underfoot. Once I got onto Haweswater I settled in for the long section with the windy path around the lake. I'm not a fan of this section, I'm too much of a clumsy runner to really go at any pace around it, it's stop start for running and it's busy with other runners so you often end up going round like a game of snake by the end of the section it's a massive line

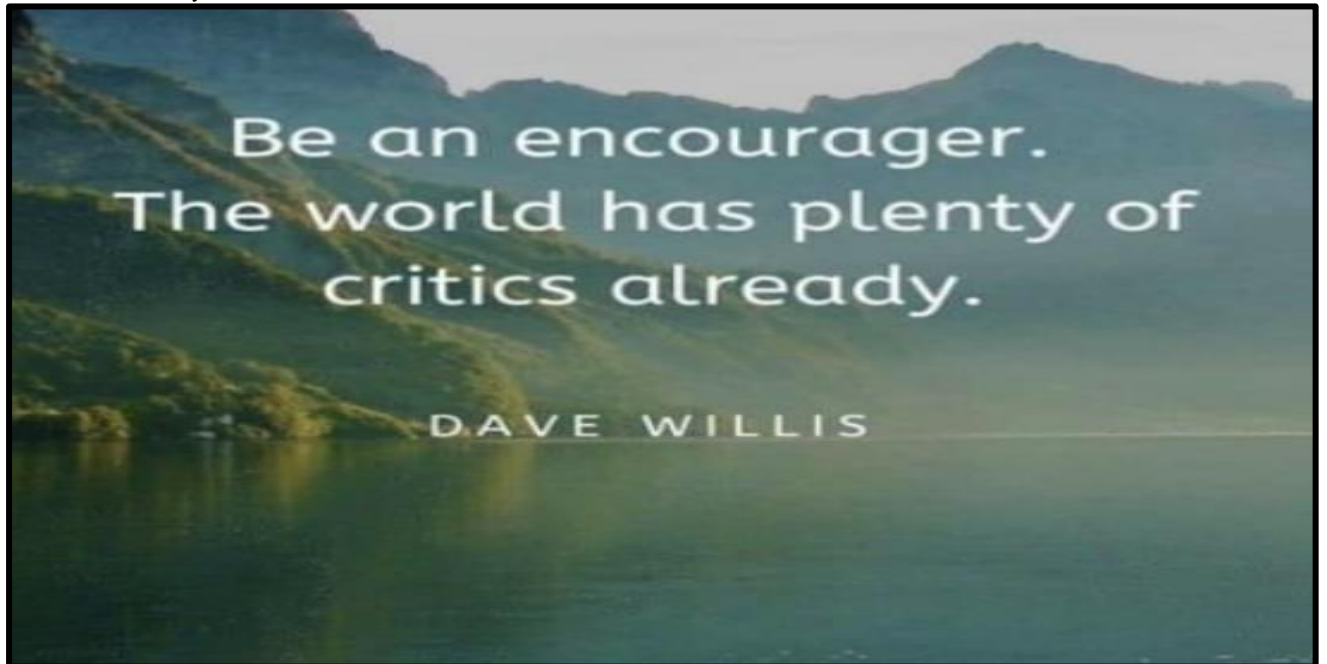
Mardale Head - Running time - 25:00

Finally, I got into Mardale Head, I managed to get a little stool from a marshal so I could take my shoe off and look at my leg which was really nipping now, I couldn't see anything wrong and there was no swelling so I put my shoe back on and went to fill my flasks up. I had something to eat and then headed out towards the big climb of Gatesgarth, once I've committed to a climb I never like to stop and have a rest mid-way or anything, I think it just prolongs the agony of the climb! I was using my poles on all the climbs, so I got them out as I approached the start. The climb felt okay, and I was soon dropping down into Sadgill. As I ran along this bit, I caught up with some of the DH crew on the 50, I walked along with them and had a bit of a chat before shuffling along on my own.

Kentmere - Running time - 27:29

It was really busy in the CP, loads of runners were sat down and taking advantage of the pasta and smoothies on offer. I grabbed a cup of tea, ate a bowl of pasta, filled my flasks up, used the loo and left. The next climb was Garburn and I wanted to get to the top of the climb before it got dark. Garburn is a big climb and as you near the top it is really stony and rocky, it was here that I began to hallucinate, little hello kitty faces started to appear on the stones, then on the walls and finally in the bushes, I knew I was hallucinating and it's not the first time I have hallucinated but it felt very surreal. As I began the descent the light was going so I got my headtorch out for the 2nd night. I was with a pack of 100 and 50 runners, and I recognised one of the 100 runners to be a lady called Jackie

Stratton. Jackie Stratton is a Lakeland Legend, she was on for her 9th Lakeland 100 finish! I spoke with her and I told her she was hard as nails, she told me she felt tired and would be glad to get the finish. Unbeknown to me she knew who I was and every time she got into a CP ahead of me, she would tell Manda that I wasn't far behind and was moving well! I love that! Women championing other women! The way it should be!



By the time I reached Troutbeck the hallucinations were hilarious and terrifying! Hello Kitty was everywhere, but she had been joined by weird slender men characters who were wearing visors, walking backwards and skirting from side to side, sometimes peeping round corners at me, puppies were in the middle of the paths and they kept standing up and curling round before lying back down, aliens from War of the Worlds kept appearing in the distance and occasionally I'd see Andy Bakers face illuminated on the back of people packs. I knew none of it was real but I literally couldn't believe my own eyes!

As I came out of the woods and heading into Ambleside, I saw Manda and Neil. Manda told me Mark was in the CP and wasn't looking great, and she said that Julie was up against the cut off times, I was shocked and gutted to hear this because I really hadn't thought she would be close to them.

Ambleside - Running time - 30:19

I thought it was game over here!

There was a bunch of DH crew when I got here and I told them all about the ROF, I can still see Adam's face as I shouted out "I've chafed my F~&&%!" He looked amused and mortified in equal measure! I think he thought I was quite unhinged; I think I probably was! Unconcerned that people thought I was a mad woman with a raging 3rd degree lady garden chafe I went upstairs to find Mark.

Mark was at the top of the stairs when I went in, his pack was on the floor "what you doing in here Bev?" "Well, I'd like to get my head down for 10 minutes, grab something to eat and then go"



Mark "I'll wait for you if you want? But I can't run Bev, I'm absolutely done!"

As I'd came into the CP Manda had asked me to hook up with someone for the last 15 miles, she didn't want me going off on my own. Tiredness had really kicked in by now and it was like my head was fighting against my body in the sleep war, every couple of minutes I'd get a dizzy spell and it was as if my body was getting closer to winning!

I didn't need to consider Marks offer "Yes that's fine with me I said". I knew that I would have way much more fun finishing the last 15 miles with Mark then I would if I set off on my own. We have trained together for the last couple of years, and we have both seen the best and worst of each other out on the trails so I knew no matter what I'd have a good giggle. I went into the medic room by mistake looking for the sleep room, there was a lad being brought in slumped, sweating and shaking as I am being told where the sleep room is. He then started to vomit everywhere. I'm not a fan of my own vomit let alone others so I quickly left and went into the sleep room, it was vile, hot, sweaty and the stink of stale mud and damp clothes was in the air. I got up and left and went to go find Mark in the kitchen. I got a cup of tea, and then I asked for a cup of soup. The heat in the kitchen was overwhelming and the room began to darken, and spots started to appear before my eyes, I recognised that I was going to faint so I shouted for help. I came round in the medic room, lying on the floor, feet propped up on a stool with my little hello kitty cup filled with soup next to me. "I'm ok" I told the medic "I'm not stopping, I'm fine, it was just the heat" the medic was a young girl and she was a bit hesitant. The room was total carnage, the spewy guy was lying down on an examination bed, hooked up to a monitor but coming round and chatting. The medic did a headcount "how's the fainter?" "Yeah, she's okay, she's asking to go but I'm holding her for 10 minutes until she's drank her soup" "Okay good, how's hypothermic Sue" another medics answers "hyperthermic Sue's doing okay, she almost at temp, few more minutes and she'll be good to go" I look over and see a woman wrapped in tin foil in a tin foil tent! All I can see is her eyes, nose and mouth, I picture her being popped in the oven for Sunday dinner!

I drank my soup and ask the medic of if I can go, they tell me I'm allowed to leave but to stand outside for 5 minutes in case I'm still faint. Marks at the door now and he's ready to go.

"Bev - this is Mark and Mark, they want to come with us, they can't run either, they don't know the route and I'm goosed, I don't think I can remember it all". "Don't worry Mark" I say "I know the route, I'll lead the way" this is probably the most hilarious part of the 100 for me, because I am notoriously terrible at navigation and have form for getting lost round Hardwick Circus! We went downstairs and by now we have a little group of runners who want to come with us. I know I won't see Manda and

Neil now until I finish, I have no concept of time and I think I will see them in a couple of hours! We got to Skelwith Bridge, my pals Brian and Simon were camping there and had come out to see us, I tell them about the chafing, Simon says it's the most Amanda thing I have ever said! They tell me that Julie has been timed out at Kentmere, but they don't want to tell Mark, I say I'll tell him, I'm gutted for Julie and I know Mark will be too when I tell him.

Marks crack is typical Mark, he playing the part of a grump really well, I think I probably was irritating the life out of him but he is mostly too kind to say. He's cursing about how long it's taken him and says he's getting slower and slower (this is his 4th 100 finish) he is saying it's ridiculous and he's cussing! I deployed the 2 positives tactic on him! "Yes Mark" I say "you could look at it like this, or you could look at it and think, well how lucky am I to spend the last 15 miles with my good pal Bev, and I'm going to get to see her on her first 100 finish, how lucky am I?!" It doesn't work and I'm told to F off!

Chapel stile - Running time - 32:44

I told Mark about Julie at this CP, we are both gutted. I told Mark she was okay and, on the bus back to Coniston. All the others that are in our group went to get something to eat. I don't want to eat anything and I am concerned about standing inside the CP as it's warm and I don't want to faint again. So, Mark stood with me and we waited until the group was ready to go again.

The 100 shuffle is strong at this point, we've all got our poles out to help keep us upright, I fall over twice from a stationary position, the tiredness really taking over. Blea Tarn is miserable, but Tony (who man's the unmanned CP) makes us laugh by winding down the window and shouting "you'd get finished a lot sooner if you stopped all that chit chat!" "Hahaha thanks Tony - you ledge!" I shouted to him. The sun is starting to come up now, we catch up to Ian (a pal of ours on the 100) and he joins our little group. Marks twining again "2 days, 2 days like!" Me "yes Mark, but aren't we lucky to see the sunrise 2 days on the trot, and look at Tilberthwaite in all its beauty!" 2 positives, 2 positives! "You're getting on my tits!" He grumps!

Tilberthwaite - Running time 35:48

We got to the steps of Tilberthwaite and paid the toll for Jacob's ladder. Jacob's ladder was created to raise money for a little boy called Jacob Willet who had cancer, his dad Mark Willet a regular runner at the Lakeland event. Jacob sadly passed away in 2019 but the tolls remains and Marc Laithwaite matches the amount paid into the toll each year. Ian is tempted by the toasties on offer but Mark and myself don't want to stop, we know we are close to the finish and want to get the job done. The other Mark who is still with us grabs a sarnie to bring with him and our little trio set off up the steps. I admire the beauty of Tilberthwaite, I've only been up it in daylight about 3 times and these were all many years ago when I'd just began my ultra running journey, so I was probably a bit ignorant to my surroundings back then. We soon arrive at the lone tree at the stream crossing, when you reach that tree, you know you're heading onto the descent and the climbing is done. Even in darkness the tree stands out, symbolic that the adventure will soon be over. I put my poles away for the descent, I only like to use them for climbs ordinarily, I like to have my arms free when I'm descending to help me keep my balance and to flap them about. I am still moving pretty well and it feels quite effortless coming down the mines. We get onto the tarmac and suddenly the other Mark who's been unable to run because he's broken his toe says "I'm just going to run on ahead to meet my wife!" Smart crack Mark says to me. Then he says "you can run on ahead too if you want Bev" but I don't want to, I'm happy enough trotting it in and enjoying our last 10 minutes before the finish. I reply to Mark "Nah, I'm happy to walk the last bit, we could even go into the finishers tent together, and as I'm announced in you could give a little fist pump and a whoop whoop" I say this because I know there is absolutely no chance Mark would do that! He reinforces my knowledge of this fact by telling me to F off again!

I savour this final mile, walking down into Coniston, chatting to Mark thanking him for all his help over the last couple of years, he isn't saying much but that's okay – I have enough to say for us both. Manda appears, she's come to walk us in, she rings the others and tells them we are almost at the finish so to get to the tent to see us in. Manda is well known by the marshals at the finish line and she tells them she's announcing me in. Mark goes in first and I hear the cheers and screams for him and then I walk in, the reception is amazing, I just see all the people I love there for me, faces beaming, tears, screams, clapping, I wish I had stopped in that bit for longer and taken it all in, given back as much as I was receiving but I was goosed. I got my medal and then hugged Manda, hugged Neil, hugged Lindsay, Julie, Andrew and co. Martin Curran is there, and I go and give him a big hug, he is beaming, totally beaming, there are tears in his eyes, and I know he is so glad that I've finished, he

has been rooting for me for the whole time and I see the relief all over his face. I get my photo taken, 1 on my own, 1 with Manda, I get my t shirt and then I go into the main tent and see everyone. Neil is proud and relieved I am back safe, it's a blur of hugs, tears and laughter. I am so happy, I just look around and take it all in knowing I pushed myself to my limits, I was on the edge of failure but the head was so strong that stopping was never on the table and I'm am so proud, so grateful and I feel so loved by all.



Out of 457 finishers I finish 284th
Out of 96 Women I finish 44th
Out of 22 women in my age category I finish 5th