

THE VIRGIN LONDON MARATHON

21st April 2013

Dr Keith D Thomson, MB BS, DRCOG, FRCA
Consultant Anaesthetist
Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

I made it to the finish line but only just, the final eight miles were increasingly hard due to intermittent nausea, neck pain, some calf cramps and general tiredness. I had to dig deep – but I managed to complete it with a combination of jogging and walking driven on by the cheering crowds, the generosity of those who had donated so much (over £9000 to date mostly using my website <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/gokeithgo>) to my chosen charity Mercy Ships, and the desire to give a finishers medal to my first grandchild, due to be born in June. (fig 1)



Fig 1. I got the medal!

The day

After waking at 5am I had breakfast consisting of tea, porridge and a banana. My wife Fiona then drove me to the Datchet Dashers club house in Windsor where, with about 25 other runners, I boarded a bus which would take us to near the start of the Marathon in Greenwich Park. The uneventful journey only took just over one hour which left two remaining before the starting time on a clear but chilly morning (fig 2). After a bottle of Lucozade Sport and another small bowl of instant porridge I packed all my extra bits and pieces in the bag provided and deposited it



Fig 2. Keeping warm before the start

in the lorry designated for my running number – 53348. (fig 3)



Fig 3. The baggage lorry

The Start

We began entering the start area at about 09.30. I was at the back of the 'cage' at area number 9. Before the event began there was a poignant 30 second silence in memory of those tragically killed and maimed at the finishing area of the Boston Marathon only a few days before. We had also all been provided with a black ribbon to attach to our running shirt. After the 'gun' it took me about 30 minutes to reach the start line where the timing chip attached to my right shoe was activated.

The Race

For me the first half went really well, passing the Cutty Sark at the 6 mile mark and then crossing Tower Bridge

to reach the halfway point at 13.1 miles, where unlike Mo Farah I did not stop! I was feeling good (fig 4) and hit my halfway target of 2hr 20 min on the nail.

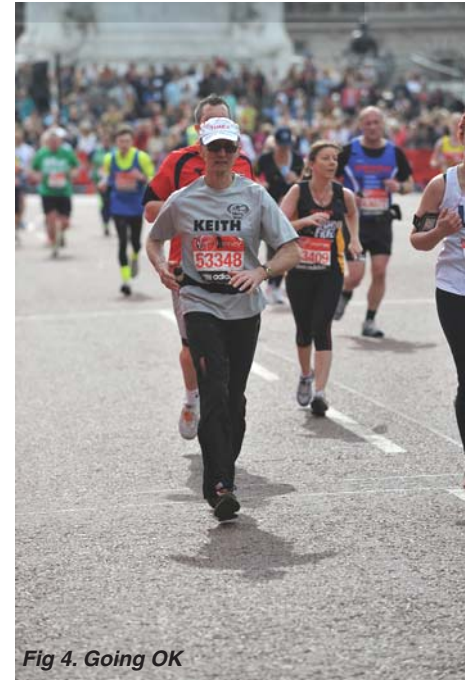


Fig 4. Going OK

From the start the crowd lining the streets had been fantastic, cheering on those of us who had our name embossed on our running top – I did in fact meet at least four other 'Keiths' en route. I saw two men running with small Aga's on their back, another carrying an 80lb rucksack, five soldiers in uniform carrying heavy looking Bergens, a man with 'Sikhs in the City' on his T-shirt, other people dressed as camels, rhinos, chickens, Batman, Elvis, fairies and many with just a poignant reminder that they were running for a deceased loved one.

The last few miles

All was going well until about mile 18 when things gradually began to become much harder (fig 5). I started to try out a regime used by an Iron Man competitor I met recently at a drinks party in Edinburgh – run for 9 min then walk for one. This in theory was fine but gradually the 1 min walking became 9 or 10 as

THE VIRGIN LONDON MARATHON



Fig 5. Going gets harder

the miles went by at an increasingly slow rate (fig 6).



Fig 6. Walking on the embankment

I had to resist the temptation to stop and have a rest but after months of training in different conditions including snow in Ascot and the heat of Guinea in West Africa I was determined to finish at all costs. So with more walking than running I struggled on, the feelings of nausea were

probably due to dehydration, there was plenty of water and Lucozade Sport provided but as you become tired the tendency is to drink much less than you require. My son Duncan said the problem was that I had not completed enough long training runs (3hr+) – you can only run 4-5 miles more than your training distance – in my case about the half marathon – before the body begins to protest. Eventually with the fantastic crowd continuing to spur me on, this crazy 65 year ‘Mad Medic Marathon Man’ crossed the finish line in 5hr 26min 27 sec, well outside the sub 5 hour target I had set myself – but who cares, I had raised more than £9000 for Mercy Ships (www.mercy-ships.org.uk) the remarkable charity I have now been involved with for more than 20 years and my grandchild can have my medal.

Postscript

My son Duncan kindly collected me in his car from Regents Street, a short hobble from the finishing line in St James Park and transported me to his house in Fulham where he ‘forced’ me into a cold bath (apparently good for getting rid of lactic acid?), put on the TV with a recent edition of ‘Top Gear in Africa’ which I had missed and then provided me with an excellent meal of hot ham with cauliflower, mangetout and potatoes. Refreshed and once more in positive calorie balance I then travelled back home to Ascot in style in a Mercedes taxi sent by Ascot Cars. I even managed to make it to work in Basingstoke by 0830 the following morning in a remarkably good state with no blisters or joint problems, just slight leg muscle stiffness. I anaesthetised a woman for her third major joint replacement who was 13 years younger than myself – I feel privileged that at my age I can still run with no problem that cannot be overcome by more training.

Although I was disappointed at not doing a faster time, I had finished (unlike some I saw wrapped in foil being treated by St John’s Ambulance personnel), received the medal and I guess done alright for a man who will be 66 in November. In fact I was only 41 minutes slower than the last time I had completed the London Marathon which was in 2000, five years before I underwent gruelling therapy for cancer of the tongue from which I took two years to recover.

Stats 1 Result | Surname: thomson | First Name: keith | Runner no: 53348 | Split: Finish time

Place overall	Place gender	Place category	Name	Club	Runner no	Category	1st HALF	Finish time
28398	19417	179	» Thomson, Keith Derek (GBR)		53348	Age 65-69	02:20:32	05:26:27