



NSRRA
June 2020

Virtual Edition 2



Dear Runners

It's been a huge challenge for us all during the last 3 months. When the restrictions meant we were only allowed out once a day to exercise it was a chance to enjoy freedom in a bizarre way. My running restrictions came about by ill health and the idea of not running was an immense mental challenge. However, I think it was a chance to reflect on running and plan how we use the time as: a sport, relaxation, weight management, social interaction and whatever personal goals you may want to achieve. The freedom of running needs to be valued not taken for granted.



I am on the road to recovery and thankful to my wife Julie that I can use running at a much lower pace, distance and frequency to reduce my anxiety and build my confidence.

Well done with your virtual racing and I look forwards to when we can get back to real events and the enjoyment it brings.

Your Editor Graham

Chairmans Report

In our last newsletter I was saying what would happen to our 2020 NSRRA season? As lockdown continued it became obvious that races as we know them were a long time away, and I as write this article in the middle of June there is still no sign of races returning.

This is why we have decided to turn our league into a virtual league. Not ideal but better than nothing. Thanks must go to Paul Clinton for adapting his programme so that it is the best 8 races to count rather than the normal 12, Andy Vickerman for doing all the hard work in producing results, Shell Harrop for the medal design and Mick Hall and Bryan Dale for their support. We now have 12 virtual races signed up to the virtual league therefore with the 2 we managed to have before lockdown that makes it 14 in total. We have decided that this year it will be the best 8 to count. We are still having our Memorial awards and group awards plus top three in every group and age groups.

With 182 in total entered into our first event the St Thomas Virtual 10k a big thanks to everyone who are supporting NSRRA, It's not perfect but I believe it's better than nothing.

Keep an eye on our website for the links to enter each event and let's once again

look forward to seeing the updated league tables from Paul Clinton.

Stay Safe Everyone.

Ken

Virtual St Thomas 10k

The virtual run has been around for years, but now that the world is under lockdown the format has really taken off. For many local (and some not so local) runners, the NSRRA adopting the virtual race idea means not just a way to carry on with the league but also a new experience. This was certainly the case for me. I didn't know how racing would feel with no other runners around me. Doubts began to creep in, had I mapped out a good route, which day was going to be the best day to run it, has my race pace dropped off. I decided a finishing time within a minute of my PB would be ok.

I tried to recreate the build up to the race that I would have for any normal race. I would race on a Sunday morning a few hours after breakfast, having the same meal as normal the night before. I'd wear my Newcastle vest and lucky red cap and have several visits to the gents before the start.

I did a bit of a warm up to the end of the road where I'd decided to start from, had my photo taken and I was off. I knew the route would be flat or downhill for the first 3 miles then a steady up hill until the last half mile which was downhill again. I set off towards Newcastle before looping back. Pace was good until I turned the corner onto Loomer Road just past the 3 mile mark. The wind hit me and my pace slowed. I had visions of other racers flying past me. I had to dig in. Thankfully there were few cars on the road so I didn't have to slow down to cross the A34. It was a hard slog. I just kept in mind that when I made it to the Victoria pub it was downhill from there. I tried to stay focused and concentrate on my form. Soon enough I passed the pub and started my sprint to the line using everything I had left. 6.21 miles on the watch in just over 36 minutes, brilliant. Feeling happy with that I stopped my watch....and then nothing. A frozen screen....then a black screen.... then back to a frozen screen. At this point anyone looking on may have wondered why there was a man in running gear standing in the street swearing at his watch and frantically pushing buttons. 'I'll put it on charge, that'll sort it.' A quick run back home and I plug it in, still nothing. Thankfully Kat came home and calmly googled what to do, a few buttons pressed and everything was sorted. Knowing I wouldn't have another sub 37 in my legs before the Tuesday deadline I was relieved to discover the watch had saved my run after all. I quickly uploaded it before anything else went wrong.

It seemed most people had the same idea to run their race on the Sunday morning and the rest of my morning was spent seeing others upload their runs on social media. The eclectic mix of photos on Bryan Dale's racephotos page was brilliant to see, selfies, photos taken while running, in back gardens or the street after the run. Even a photo from John Munton-Davis who had taken part in a local race despite being thousands of miles away (one of the advantages of this type of race). Although no one did as good a job as Bryan.

In summary the virtual racing idea has pros and cons. Pros include: no driving to a race, no queue for the toilets, no sweaty drive home. Cons include: no fellow runners, no



sociable chat before and after, different routes for everyone, no Bryan or Ann to snap a memento of your race, no cheer from a friendly marshal, no oatcakes at the finish, no prize giving. However while the cons outweigh the pros, the sense of the running community was still very much present, just online. This way of racing isn't the future, it's a temporary solution to a problem affecting all parts of life in these current times. So I would say embrace the NSRRA virtual races while they are here, it won't be forever, it's different but it's also great fun. Bring on The virtual Cheadle 4.

Lastly I would just like to say a massive thanks to the NSRRA, race organisers and AV timing for putting in the work to allow the league to carry on when it could have been quite easy to call off the whole years races.

Ben Bewley

Newcastle (staffs) AC



The Michelin A.A.A. Marathon at Stoke John Brotherhood

As we were riding in the Press Bus out to the 5 mile mark on 1st June 1975, I noticed a sign, "Toilets for runners only". Don Shelley., who had masterminded this race, then told me that there were, "Signed Loos" at approximately every mile on the 3 lap course. Obviously everything had been thought of.

The first we saw of the race was at the 5 miles where exactly 24 minutes after the start, the clockwork Simmons ran by. He was followed some 20 seconds later by the Japanese Ozawa, another half minute later by a bunch of some 15 runners, so close that they must



have been sharing their sweat and so it continued from 5 to 10 miles and 15 miles.

Simmons reeled off the stages in 49:34 and 75:36. The Japanese was about minute behind him and the bunch 1 minutes down. Somewhere around 15 miles, Ozawa dropped back, was rapidly passed by the bunch and left the race.

By now the bunch was smaller and distinctly select, displaying Kirkham, Wright, Johnston, Angus, Norman and McLoughlin amongst others.

By 20 miles Simmons' speed had dropped a little and he went through in 101 minutes 36 seconds, 1 minute 51 seconds ahead of the rest. He still showed little sign of strain; perhaps a little drawn. Although his stride may have been a little shorter he still had some bounce.

It is probably not unreasonable to remark that, nowadays, when a Marathon is run in Great Britain, the first 20 miles, even if covered in 102 or 103 minutes, are merely a formality. On a day such as this when the weather was as favourable as it could be and although the course was tough with some sharp grades in it, one didn't expect there to be any great difficulty. But after 20 miles anything can happen.

Suddenly one realised that if Simmons was not able to sustain his magnificent pace, and blew up, that there would be a tremendous race contested amongst the inseparable bunch of seasoned performers who were trailing him. It was enough to play safe and go meekly from 20 miles to the Stoke City F.C. Stadium and await the finish. The gentlemen of the press took a gamble, they would



snatch a quick look at 22 miles.

The traffic by now had built up but the police magnificently were keeping the left hand entirely free for the runners. We whizzed up it with admirable immunity and shot into a side street to await the runners.

The pilot car and the announcers were heard coming round the corner - the knell of doom - "Simmons, who has led by nearly 2 minutes for most of the race, has had to drop out", cramp apparently.

Simmons is an athlete who I respect so much that I can only express my extreme sympathy for him in his predicament. He may be criticised by some for going out too fast on that course, but only by those who do not understand the courage that makes great athletes.

By now the race was really on, no longer distorted by the glamour of an unchallenged leader. There were now seven highly experienced and tenacious distance runners who had run for over 20 miles, as close as a 1500 metre field Angus, Norman, Johnston, Kirkham, McLoughlin, Deakin and Wright.

The barriers were down. A 4 mile corridor of empty road stretched between them and the A.A.A. Championship. Angus took the first initiative, be to no avail. He did no more than tow Norman, Kirkham and Johnston clearly. Looking at them from the back of the bus there was the red face of Angus, but not unhappy.

Norman was apparently unconcerned, the hatchet face of Johnston was nonchalant, as it had been at 5 miles and Kirkham was concentrating.

Finally, about 2 miles from the finish, Angus again broke away, but taking



only Norman with him, down a long fairly steep descent. I felt that this could only be to Norman's advantage. Maybe my hunch would be right.

It was indeed Norman who entered the Stoke City Ground, some 100 yards ahead of Angus and running very fast around the narrow perimeter track, he won the Michelin and A.A.A. Marathon Championships, 1975, with a grin of delight and applauded by a great roar from the crowd.

For another hour men continued to race amongst themselves, for team awards, against the clock and towards that great achievement racing a marathon. 149 completed the course, the last man in 3 hours 28 minutes 16 seconds. 11 ran faster than 2 hours 20 minutes and another 47 better than 6 minute miles. The team event was appropriately won by City of Stoke A.C., with Deakin 3rd, Adams 16th and L. Austin 18th. I. McKenzie of the Metropolitan Police was the 1st over 40 Veteran, 51st in 2 hours 35 minutes 8 seconds and Tom Buckingham 100th in 2:50:36 won the over 50 award. There were only 34 finishers from Southern Clubs.

The race organisation was obviously first class and was greatly appreciated by the runners. Support from spectators, both along the route and at the finish, was wonderful. The assistance granted to the race by the police was also notable. Michelin can be assured that they staged a race of the highest quality on a challenging course.



	Hrs	Mins	Secs
1 J. Norman (Altrincham & District)	2	15	50
2 K. Angus (Sheffield A.C.)	2	16	14
3 C. Kirkham (Coventry Godiva)	2	16	22
4 T. Johnston (Portsmouth A.C.)	2	16	40
5 J. McLoughlin (Achilles A.C.)	2	17	7
6 N. Deakin (Stoke A.C.)	2	17	33
7 T. Wright (W'hampton & Bilston)	2	17	35
8 S. Curran (Salford Harriers)	2	18	17
9 B. Watson (Cambridge H.)	2	18	30
10 D. Pratt (Sheffield A. C.)	2	18	35
11 M. Craven (Kendal A.C.)	2	18	38
12 S. Edmunds (Sale H.)	2	20	23
13 E. Austin (Tipton H.)	2	20	28
14 R. Heron (Bognor & Regis College)	2	20	40
15 D. MacGregor (Edinburgh Southern)	2	20	50
16 A. Adams (Stoke A. C.)	2	21	24
17 D. Gunstone (Edinburgh A.C.)	2	23	56
18 L. Austin (Stoke A.C.)	2	24	3
19 J. Temperton (Airedale & S.V.)	2	24	5
20 A. Dewhurst (Airedale & S.V.)	2	24	14
21 I. Burgess (Southampton & Eastleigh)	2	24	24
22 R. Atkinson (Cardiff A.C.)	2	24	25
22 A. Macfarlane (Springburn H.)	2	25	0
24 B. Pickergill (Wakefield H.)	2	25	1
25 R. Towler (Notts. A.C.)	2	26	31
26 N. Carrington (Sale H.)	2	26	54
27 D. Collier (Luton A.C.)	2	27	0
28 J. Calvert (Blackburn H.)	2	27	54
29 P. Liversey (Clayton le Moors H.)	2	27	55
30 P. Rawnsley (Sheffield A.C.)	2	28	37
31 M. Woods (Aldershot F. & D.)	2	28	46
32 I. Wainwright (Sheffield A.C.)	2	29	20
33 C. Woodward (Leamington A.C.)	2	29	24
34 R. Tilling (Birchfield H.)	2	29	27
35 H. Walker (Blackburn H.)	2	29	34
36 A. Hudson (Blackpool & F.)	2	29	54

Don Shelley: The Birth of the Potteries Marathon

In 1981, at the time of the first London marathon, the directors of my work place, which was based in Hanley, Kevin Donovan and Graham Bagnall, decided to stage a similar marathon in Stoke with the help of Peter Glanfield, from Keele University, and John Close, from Northwood Stadium.

I was appointed as the race director having already organised many races; including the AAA marathon in Stoke in 1975. All along, we had three main objectives in mind; To raise money for charity; To encourage more people to get fit; To provide a day out for the residents of north Staffordshire.

We worked closely with the local police and had their full support throughout the event (even in setting out and collecting the cones). And so, together we established that the race will start in Burslem and finish on Trubshaw cross playing fields.

Similarly we fully supported the runners and helped them to prepare by holding regular meetings with various guest speakers including Ron Hill, an English runner, and also providing advice from doctors and physiotherapists.

The race was held in June, just before the holiday fortnight, giving the participants enough time in order to recover before going back to work. The race day itself, saw around 1500 runners at the start line on Moorland Road, with the early leader being Mark Roberts, who unfortunately had to retire but in the later years went on to win this race seven times. The winner of the first Potteries Marathon, was a local runner, Martin Bishop, with another local, Jayne Barre, accompanying him with being the first Lady. However, everyone who completed the race received a pottery medal and also a collection of pottery plates, which have been awarded every year since the race has started.

In the following year, the race was further developed and moved to the Trentham Gardens which provided a great finishing site for many years to come. In terms of health and safety, Peter Carson, a cardiologists from the local hospital along with his colleagues teamed up with the members of St. John's Ambulance in order to provide excellent first aid for all attendants.

The year of change also welcomed Sir Stan Matthews, first football player to be knighted whilst still playing, as the patron of the race as he always attended the race and was simple amazed that "People could run so far". With his influence, the race was televised and voted as 'The Best Race In Britain' three times in a row from 1985 to '87, by the readers of the 'Today's Runner' magazine.



Alan Dean, Tony Walker, Norman Deakin, Don Shelley.

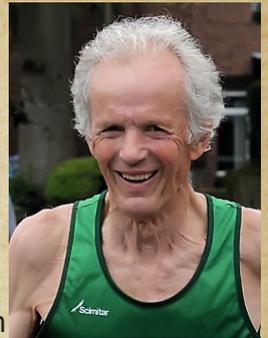
The runners who participated in the race, responded to the award by helping to raise thousands of pounds for local charities – at the same time completing one of the objectives we had set out beforehand.

On the same note, the race also encouraged more people to get fit as many new running clubs were established across the area, completing another of our objectives.

“The Potteries Marathon had changed lives and saved lives” as described by Keith Wales, sports editor of the Sentinel, and was the reason why I, Don Shelley was rewarded with the Editor’s Award for ‘Help our Heroes’.

Runners and friends,

What a great relief it is to be finally emerging from a long period of lockdown and to be able, at long last, to meet up with our training partners once again. I would expect that many of you have been getting out for solo training runs during the past weeks and some I know, have been pushing it as hard as ever, in spite of there being no races to train for. That takes real dedication in my view, but with the virtual races coming along now, may turn out to have been the best tactic.



For myself, it seemed to be a period where I was very much lacking in energy and so just went out for a steady jog and never more than 3 times a week. Now that I can train with pals once again, at a distance of course, it seems to have given my running a bit of the get up and go that I have been so severely lacking. I’ve now entered the virtual St Thomas 10K, which will also be my first race as a V75, where did all the years go? So will just have to see how it goes and while I may be rather disappointed at how much I’ve slowed, I will have to remember to be grateful that I’m still running.

A few of my friends and I are considering running the rather hilly long loop of the Werrington 10K course, but with adding a different tail to it at the far end in order to make up the correct distance. The idea is to stagger our starts a bit, so that we can hopefully arrive back at the finish not too far apart timewise. This is all new for us, but is at least providing a bit of incentive with something to look forward to. It will be most interesting to compare results afterwards and I thank Ken and Andy for their work in organising it for us.

I have been particularly pleased to train once more with my old pal Alan Lewis. As many of you will know, Alan has been unable to run for quite a while now with a hip problem, but following highly successful surgery for a new hip in February, is now back on it. His infectious enthusiasm for the sport has given many of us a lift in these difficult times. I know he is looking forward to running as a V80 following his birthday this October and perhaps by then there may be some genuine races for us all to enjoy. Alan has done so very well to get back to running again and it just shows what courage and determination can do. I’m sure we all wish him well.

Good running and regards, Stan.



Thanks to Bryan Dale and Mick Hall for supplying the photos.

Thanks To Sue and Ken and my wife Julie for proof reading

