

Great Edinburgh Run 2007

By Fiona Green

www.fionagreenphotography.com

The BUPA Great Edinburgh Run is advertised as Scotland's most popular 10K race. This year's event, held on May 6, attracted over 10,000 participants, including many elites and British celebrities who were running to raise money for the Marie Curie Cancer Research Fund.



Because the race coincided with a visit back home, I decided to participate in what was, for me, a trip down memory lane. Having studied at Edinburgh University some years ago, I looked forward to revisiting familiar haunts as the scenic course passed by many of the city's most popular landmarks -- the Meadows (Edinburgh's version of Central Park), the Castle, Holyrood Palace, Princes Street (shopping district), Arthur's Seat and the Grassmarket (drinking district).

The race started at 10.30 a.m., so I had time to enjoy the traditional Scottish breakfast on offer at our B&B. However, the idea of running while trying to digest bacon, eggs and sausages made me slightly nervous so I opted instead for my usual bland oatmeal.

On arriving at the Meadows, we were greeted by men in kilts, the skirl of bagpipes and, of course, a brief, traditional Scottish downpour.

After the mass warm-up, runners were grouped into waves according to their expected finishing time. The first wave consisted of the elite Women, followed 10 minutes later by the elite men and runners who had run a sub 41minute 10K in the past year. Having run a 40:57 in October, I barely managed to squeeze into this wave. For various reasons I knew that this race would be a lot slower and decided to adjust my race goal. Instead of worrying about time and place, I would try to achieve my moment of fame.

Because the event was being filmed by Channel Five Television, I made sure to stand close to the cameras that were filming the elite men. I was smiling and looking like I was having a good time while thinking to myself 'I should really be in a different wave --- the sub 46-minute, sub 1-hour or perhaps the 1-hour plus.' I even momentarily considered running with my camera and photographing the event as I ran.

The first couple of miles were relatively flat. After passing the Scottish Parliament building and Holyrood Palace, the fun began. No sooner had we begun the steep 1K climb at Arthur's Seat that the wind picked up. Forget about maintaining pace. It was difficult enough to just stay on two feet and move forward. At the top of the hill, the course offered a short downhill break before heading into even stronger strong winds in the Grassmarket area. At this point we enjoyed vociferous support from the beer drinkers

who had taken time out from their busy Sunday schedules to cheer on the runners as they passed. Comments like 'Run faster' were greatly appreciated.

The elite runners provided a great deal of excitement for the spectators. Winner for the past two years, Jelena Prokopcuka, achieved her hat trick, winning in 32:53 and narrowly beating British favorite, Jo Pavey, by 4 seconds.

The men's race proved to be even more exciting with the top two runners battling it out in the final stretch. The eventual winner, Hosea Macharinyang, won in 29:14 -- a mere second ahead of Ugandan Boniface Kiprop, last year's runner-up.

As for my goal - I did achieve my moment of fame. Although I had to replay the video at least 10 times before my parents eventually saw me, I did appear briefly on television. For just one second I can be seen bobbing up and down behind the elite men. Mission accomplished!

(Note: Fiona, 41, finished in 44:27, placing in the top 5 in her age division and she was 467th overall in a field of more than 7,000 that included several elite runners.)