

Lazy girl running

Laura finally accomplishes her dream of running the London Marathon

This year, more than five years after I first began trying to get a spot in the London Marathon, I finally got to run the race. I'd grown up watching the race every year on TV, so now that I was living in London and I was actually a runner, it seemed 'sensible' to enter (ignoring the fact that I hadn't run more than six miles at this point).

It's a big race with more than 30,000 people taking part every year. But it's popular too, and securing a spot is HARD. My application to the ballot was rejected four years running.

There are other marathons though, so I ran a few of them. I ran the Brighton Marathon twice, the Robin Hood Marathon in Nottingham, then travelled to Edinburgh where I dipped under the four-hour mark for the first time.

I had been chasing the illusive sub four-hour time for about nine months; now I had done it I needed a new goal. If I could knock 10 minutes off my marathon time I would be under the Good For Age qualifying time for the London Marathon, which then stood at 3hrs 50mins for women in my age group. If London Marathon wouldn't let me in through the ballot, I'd work my way in through the side entrance.

Week after week I dragged myself out for long runs with the words 'Good for Age' going round and round in my head. After the 2013 London Marathon, and just a week before my next marathon in Manchester, London Marathon announced that the Good For Age qualification standards were changing, but there was no word as to what they would change to.

This was a major spanner in the works. I was aiming to run a qualifying time but didn't know what that was. Come race morning there was only one option: run as fast as you can and hope that it's good enough. I crossed the line in Manchester in 3hrs 38mins. Whatever London Marathon announced wouldn't change the fact that I was delighted with my time. That week the new times were announced – my category had been lowered to 3hrs 45mins. I was in.

After years of waiting, the London Marathon came and went with me staggering home 40 minutes slower than I had the previous spring. By the fifth mile I was seriously considering dropping out – something that has never happened to me in a marathon before and something that shouldn't be happening at mile five.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
 Laura Fountain is a blogger, author and editor living and running in London. She's run seven marathons and is now training for an Ironman but just six years ago she couldn't run 400 meters. Her book *The Lazy Runner* was published in 2012. She's a UK Athletics qualified run leader and helps beginner runners learn how to run and, more importantly, how to enjoy it.

My mum and dad were waiting at mile 10. They'd made a banner and caught the early train down. I couldn't drop out before seeing them. So I started running again. The crowds, enthusiastic in their support were, at times, overwhelming. On a good day, maybe they'd have spurred me on, but it made me feel worse.

I made it to my parents and their banner and stopped again. My mum offered me jelly babies which I tried to eat and then had to spit out because I felt sick. They told me they'd see me at mile 18, but I was sceptical I'd make it that far.

At almost half way we turned onto Tower Bridge. It's a scene I have seen year after year on the TV and being part of it was like stepping into a film set. I looked around and tried to soak it in.

At mile 21 a kid handed me an ice pop; eating it kept me busy for a while. I overtook and was overtaken by the guy trying to set the world record for the fastest marathon

dribbling a football, and another man wearing just a thong.

At mile 22 the London City Hash House Harriers had a beer stop. They handed me half a pint of warm beer which I downed to calls of "On, on!" And on I went: through the last tunnel where there was some respite from the crowds; down the Embankment which I've run many lunchtimes over the years, dreaming of the day I'd run it as part of this race; past my colleagues with whom I'd cheered on runners from our cheer point for the past four years; and, eventually, after a long day of running, over the finish-line.

Although it didn't turn out as intended, I'm glad I finally got to run London. Thanks to my supporters, without whom I wouldn't have made it past mile five.



My post race smile, with the banner my mum and niece made



Eating pizza after the race



Having a celebratory pint with my mum