

WEWERETHERE

CYPRUS INTERNATIONAL 4 DAY CHALLENGE

by Malcom Price

Forget Guernsey, Lanzarote, Algarve, Malta and the Isle of Man; these all pale into insignificance when measured against this series. The Ultimate test of toughness in a 4 day challenge.

The Cyprus 4 Day Challenge started 2 years ago with just 60 runners, last year that grew to 120 runners and this year there were 250 entrants – convincingly proving that many runners now search for that extra – ordinary event and seek the biggest test of pain and endurance.

This 2:09 Events (Mike Gratton) organised challenge left nothing to chance and had the touch of a runner organised series right from the beginning. We flew with Cyprus Air from Heathrow – had a free paper, free headphones and free drinks with the lunch. It was so embarrassing to see Richie fill his pockets with small bottles of wine though! A slick airport transfer and 45 minutes after landing at Paphos airport we were dropped at our hotels. Being almost 10.30 pm local time there was nowhere open to eat – no problem, a ploughmans buffet was waiting for us in our rooms.

There was a two day rest for training and acclimatisation (daytime temperature around 22 C) before matters started in earnest. Then the 2:09 Event team held a full briefing attended by virtually everyone to explain the courses, timings, transport, toilets, water stations – in fact everything except how to survive the runs.

Race 1 was a 6Km time trial set off at 10 second intervals along a flat coast road, runners spewed out for almost 45 minutes and naturally enough timed with chips tied to the shoelaces for the whole series. Our man Richie, not being a speed specialist, ran a moderate 25-09 to be 6 minutes down on the early leader and 2nd in his age group.

Race 2 was an 11 Km Hill Climb, with a 3 Km start along fairly even ground parallel to the coast followed by a sharp 600 metres climb over the next 8 km. The vast majority of the field stopped to walk at some stage but our man RP took

a big 5 minutes out of his Vet 60 rival to establish a category lead going into the next event.

Race 3 was another off road effort but this time a Half Marathon (21 Km) across the Akamas Penninsular, which climbed over the hills to 550 metres high then dropped back to the coast road rather like a fell race. There were even more people walking before the end of this race and our hero suffered badly on the downhill sections and dropped 5 minutes on his friend and rival in the Vet 60 group.

Finally came Day 4 where there was an early start for the 8.00 am gun down in the harbour at Paphos – much too early for many and at the end of a 50 Km climbing marathon. This was a flat course with no wind which meant that our series hero (Richie) enjoyed a 44-31 finishing time, having run round most of the way with his immediate rival, a Scotsman. There were drinks a plenty available on the finish line, including beer on tap and many were downed while photos were taken to celebrate the end of the torture. With another quick transfer to hotels most runners were back just after 10.00 am and free to soak up the sun or soak in the sea to revive their stiff muscles.

The celebration banquet in the evening saw the top man (Swiss) and the top lady (Norwegian) take home 4 giant sculptured trophies each. Goodness knows how they got them through customs! Their winning prize? A return ticket to Cyprus in 2008 to defend their titles.

There were no less than 8 countries represented, including the army, the air force and the local British Telecom squad all based in Cyprus.

As well as runners from all over Britain: Swansea, Bedford, Newquay, Plymouth and of course, Southampton. Would they do it all again?? No doubt they will and another 300 plus mad runners likewise as numbers are still expected to climb in the future.



HERO



IMPORTANT INFORMATION, PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

SRC newsletter goes on the web!

To make things easier and to save the planet, from now on we will email the newsletter to as many members as possible. The PDF file will also be available for download on the SRC website.

Everyone else will receive the newsletter in the usual way by dear old Royal Mail.

In case in the excitement of the change we miss someone, no worries, we ask you to let us know if someone has been neglected. Pigeon post is under evaluation at the moment but not yet available.

Thank you to everyone who's contributed to the newsletter, more or less of their own free will.

Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo!!!