

# STRUGGLER'S POST



## The Exmoor Beast BY SARAH ROGERS

Having completed a marathon in August I'd become a bit tired of running, so when it was suggested to me that I may enjoy a cycling Sportive event, it sounded like a good idea. With an ample 5 weeks in which to train I entered the Exmoor Beast 100 km ride.

I'd treated myself to a new bike earlier in the year for my commute, so although a bit wobbly, I had ridden the 7 miles to work and back a few times. After a 20 mile ride the previous week I felt fully prepared for the challenge ahead.

I'd only ever ridden on my own on country lanes in daylight, so setting off from Tiverton, in the dark, in a wave of 50 riders, led to a minor collision with a barrier at the start. After that it was plain sailing. All the other riders set off like greyhounds out of the trap; as I cycled towards Bampton I was overtaken by wave after wave of cyclists all travelling at twice my speed.

Coming up to Wimbleball I was met by my support team, aka my sister and her dog, who attempted to fix my front brake which didn't work due to the cable tie holding my number on! Cycling down the hill into Timberscombe, we were stopped for a while so a rider could be loaded into the back of an ambulance. The road was damp, and slippery with leaves, and I couldn't believe the speed that everyone was travelling downhill. As a mature lady wanting to keep my teeth and collarbone intact, I took it easy.

I narrowly avoided another clipped into pedals/falling off incident at the Dunster traffic lights, and then I saw the welcome sight of the feed station for soup 'n' snacks. After Minehead I knew that THAT hill would be coming up. My sister had warned me to be careful about cycling over the cattle grid, but by that point I was struggling to push my bike up the hill, let alone cycle.

Having completed the marathon on a Rice Krispie squares bar and a banana I couldn't believe how hungry cycling made me – luckily cycling doesn't jiggle stomach contents up and down like running does! As I came up out of the woods towards Dunkery Beacon I saw “Caution Runners” signs and almost wished I'd plumped for the Exmoor Stagger instead (an event I completed last year after a similar lack of preparation).

Another rendezvous with the support team at the top, and I was on the home stretch. After the Luckwell Bridge hill it was almost flat all the way to Tiverton. The road went on forever; this was definitely the toughest part of the ride. It'd started raining, it was windy, my legs and shoulders hurt and I'd lost feeling in my undercarriage despite padded shorts and a tub of Vaseline. Never have I been so happy to see the Bolham sign. The announcer at the finish summed it up: “Here's Sarah Rogers, she looks exhausted!”

The Beast is another tick on my list of slow motion sporting events. A couple of learning points for next year: (1) do some training; and (2) don't use Gator Skins and slime tubes if you have to push your bike uphill – they're really heavy!



## My First Half Marathon

BY TANYA MARROW

Race day quickly approached, my training schedule went out of the window, but too late now. Myself, my friend Emma and a few Strugglers met at the start line of the Great West run in Exeter.

Nerves, excitement and fear ran through my body while waiting in the starting pen. Suddenly the klaxon went off and we started our half marathon challenge.

Five miles in and I was feeling great, all ready for the hill at seven miles. The crowd roared, the band played, what a great atmosphere. The last mile and the end loomed. A final sprint for the line, crossing it a hug from my friends, a tear of overwhelming joy I had done it.

I could not have done it without all the fantastic support from the amazing strugglers. Thank you for your sponsors, I have raised over £1000 for Cancer Research. Well done to everybody who ran The Great West Run.

Same again next year.....

## Bideford 10 Miler

BY ELAINE FIELDS

A rainy start to this flat 10 mile race even with the odd exclusive bit of hail on the way round but otherwise it remained dry! The second half along the Tarka Trail wasn't easy considering the strong winds which were then against you but despite this 11 Strugglers ran and lots of PB's were achieved. It was good to see the return of Derek Page as a struggler and there was only seconds between him, Tracey Hullah and Phil Pennington with Tracey winning 3rd in her age group.

## Reader Contributions

**RICHARD WESTCOTT** - Don't know if people have come across this little film, but I found it definitely inspiring, and I have to say, rather moving. <http://blog.goodgym.org/therunners> Keep on running everyone!

## Upcomming Fixtures

Dec 8th **Otterton 10k**  
 Dec 18th **Streetlights**  
 Dec 22nd **Torrington Christmas Caper**  
 Jan 26th **Braunton 10**

## Results

### Drogo 10

PAUL COOKE	01:04:20
PAUL MORGAN	01:14:44
MARTYN KNIGHT	01:19:53
CHRIS MURRIN	01:20:51
NIK WHALLEY	01:22:50
RICHARD CONNETT	01:25:57
CLAIRE CAMPBELL	01:27:22
ANDREW SAMUEL	01:28:44
BEN TROTT	01:31:29
NAOMI HUGHES	01:32:50
ELAINE FIELDS	01:33:30
KEITH MCNEILL	01:46:46
EMMA HILL	01:53:27
KATE KILBURN	01:55:47
ROSS DENNIS	01:57:59
JULIE YOUNG	01:58:08
JON HIBBERD	02:05:35

## An interview with ...

 **PHIL PENNINGTON**

**1. How/why did you start running?** I gave up smoking New Years Eve 1999 after 20 years! To try and get fit and hopefully live a bit longer i started running with Tracey and joined the Strugglers the year after.

**2. How old were you when you started running?** First time at school aged 11. Second time round was 36

**3. Your pre race fuel?** 5 pints of beer the night before a race. And maybe some porridge and toast in the morning.

**4. Recovery food/drink?** Water. Don't like all these fancy isotonic faddy drinks

**5. Any pre race superstitions?** Odd socks. Remember the London Marathon Julie? None really.

**6. Make of running shoe?** Asics

**7. Favourite race – and why?**

Exmoor stagger. Very tough a real challenge. Closely followed by the Struggle. I was surprised by how good it was.

**8. Sporting idol?** Mo farah, a legend and modest with it.

**9. Recurring injuries?** Lots. Mainly piriformis. Yes that pain in the arse. Not nice.

**10. Running aspirations?** I recently did a sub 1:15 10 mile. That was my last target time wise. I have done a sub 45 10k a sub 1:40 half and sub 4 hour marathon so pretty chuffed.

**11. Any other sports/activities?** Circuits on a Thursday.

**12. Why do you run?** Keeps me sane. Tracey often has to kick me up the arse and get me out running. I am by nature a lazy sod. Thanks Trace!

**13. Best running achievement?** Sub 4 hour marathon at Barcelona. It got pretty hot!

**14. Closest club rival?** Elaine

**15. Favourite biscuit?** Jammy dodgers

**16. Best excuse for not running?** I have a whole list of them. Best one i remember i was reading a good book at the time and I couldn't put it down.

**17. Who do you nominate for next months interview?** Graham Peters