

Oh, Snow Lucky

With all the ice and snow over the Christmas and New Year period the logistics of organising the 16th Daleside Auld Lang Syne race were a nightmare. We flagged the route early because of the snow, but then had to change everything because thick ice had developed on all the bridgeways on the moor. Then add in to the equation the fact that our camper van was snowed in, Penistone Hill itself was carpeted in ice and West End cricket ground was snow bound. It's thanks to many that this race survived. Simon Farrar and his trusty Landy were two of the races saviours: they delivered the famous **Daleside Old Leg Over** beer to the race venue, delivered the prizes to the pub and even brought us to Haworth very early on race day. However, with what has happened since: the travel chaos, with thousands held up on grid locked roads; buses, trains and aeroplanes at a halt; road closures; weather alerts; over 2000 schools closed; sporting events canceled; a biting Siberian blast causing -18 degree celsius temperatures and the whole of shivering Britain being covered deep in the white stuff, we were 'Oh, snow lucky!'

WOW, but what a spectacular end to the year and the noughties it was, despite everything!

The skirl of the bagpipes being played by young Callum Carslaw, the backdrop of a snowy picture postcard Penistone Hill and the hustle and bustle of noise that only runners can produce made this the only place to be on New Years Eve morning. World Triathlon Champion and Triathlon Man of the Year award winner, Alistair Brownlee, showed he can still mix it with the best in fell running, seeing off a star studded field and more impressively breaking trail through the worst of the snow drifts on the summit ridge of the changed route.

The route used on the day – the *original race route* – was chosen because on the other route all the bridgeways towards Bronte Waterfall and then the Pennine Way to Top Withins Ruin were sheets of ice and unrunnable – unless you were going to audition for 'Dancing on Ice' or felt the need to break some bones!

This *original route* took in more of the moorland paths, which were just snow covered, although the route from the Top O' Stairs to Oxenhope Stoop was virgin snow with numerous drifts to negotiate, making it a fell runners dream – 'the more challenging the better'. This route, for

the bookworms, was last used in 2003 when Ian Holmes ran the record of 34:01 to win the race for the eleventh consecutive year.

To celebrate the year end and get everyone in the festive mood for the evenings revelry to come, all entrants on registering were presented with a bottle of Yorkshires Finest Ale – **Daleside Old Leg Over**, which this year had a neck label of either Andi Jones or Blue Haywood, as tribute to them for winning last year. On that note, because this race was pre-entry for the first time ever, all entrants who for whatever reason didn't get to this years entertaining snowy adventure, had the chance to pick up their bottle of Old Leg Over at the Soreen Stanbury Splash race.

It's snow easy for Ali

382 runners sped off at speed after the traditional guest starter Louis Holmes, dressed as Superman – a tribute to his dad, Ian – said the magic words, 'GO ON THEN'. 21 year old pin up Alistair, who is gracing the cover of several sporting magazines, made his move to victory along the ridge and by the Stoop checkpoint had ten seconds on the chasing group of younger brother Jonathan, twice winner and *normal route* record holder Andi Jones, 2006



"Go on then!"

Photo © Dave Woodhead www.woodentops.org.uk

First three women (l-r): Emma Clayton, Olivia Walwyn Et Sarah Ridgeway-Kleeman



winner Simon Bailey and 'old faithful' Ian Holmes. By the beck crossing, after the eventful snowy descent, Ian had caught Alistair but it wasn't long before Alistair began kicking for his second victory here, to which veteran Ian, 23 years his senior, had no response, although he did have enough in his legs to keep European Junior Triathlon and runner up in the World's, Jonathan at bay. With these three athletes all representing Bingley Harriers the team prize was easy to work out, before the rest of the weary runners descended into the finish, where they realised just how cold their hands and feet were. They soon got the feelings back after a cup of steaming hot coffee.

There's snow stopping Walnut

It was a battle of two halves in the ladies race with reigning Yorkshire fell champion, Emma Clayton, leading until halfway along the snowy ridge. 'It was just crazy, deep snow and I never knew how deep it was. I hated it. It was horrible. I am so mad with myself for losing it there. Olivia just strolled past me,' said 21 year old Emma, who now teaches PE at Wibsey Primary School. Emma, the Withins Skyline winner was also disappointed she didn't beat her U18 record time from 2003 of 48-32, being 33 seconds slower. When you consider that only the first three men broke the ladies record (40-05), set by Sarah Rowell some 14 years ago, it shows what the conditions must have been like. Incidentally Saz was our Stoop checkpoint marshal.

Emma has had a very, very good year: Senior English Bronze medallist, fourth in the senior British championship and English and British U23 champion. She had been rewarded with two senior England vests, wearing one to finish third at the International Mount Snowdon Race. She has also improved her 3K and 10K times by 30 seconds each to 9-52 and 36-22. Add to this that she is the senior Yorkshire champion and Yorkshire U23 champion, was a part of the Yorkshire Inter County girls team victory at Hutton Roof with Lizzie Adams, Zante Wray and Lisa Lacon. What more could a girl ask for?

2009 Inter County fells champion, Olivia Walwyn, nicknamed 'Walnut', who ran dressed as an Indian Squaw said, 'it was a steady start. I was trying not to put pressure on myself and to just see how it went, because over Christmas I have been injured and it was only a jog the previous day that tipped the balance for me to run, although I had been cross training. The ridge was enjoyable, I love running in snow and even deep mud, although at times when overtaking you just never knew how deep the hard snow was.' A librarian at Kings School in Macclesfield, Olivia's name is now on the Daleside beer pump trophy for the third time: 2006, 2007 and 2009 – and of course she is the record holder for the *normal course*. Her year has been a very mixed one. A great early season with fourth in the Southern and a tenth in the National Cross Country Championships, and a road 10K pb of 34-53 at Blackburn. Later on colds etc. took their toll, although making the England Commonwealth

Games team in Keswick and finishing seventh was exciting.

In third, hot on the heels of Emma, was Welsh 1000m Peaks and 53 mile Highland Fling winner, the Australian born Sarah Ridgeway-Kleeman, who has run in the World Mountain Trophy and is now a Welsh international. Sarah, along with the Welsh contingency, spent the New Year at Haworth Youth Hostel, and the day after she won the Giants Tooth race with Matthew Roberts, who was eighth at the ALS.

There may have been snow all around and runners shivering everywhere but seeing a junior, who has run in the junior Quarry Runs over the years, progress to winning the U18 category in their first senior outing was heart warming: 17 year old Nichola Jackson of Preston Harriers impressively finished an incredible fifth overall.

The Auld Lang Syne is about serious racing for some but also about end of year fun and celebrating for others, so Louis Holmes' first job of the day was to decide the fancy dress winners, not an easy task we may add, with so many but Werewolf – Paul Crabtree, Skeleton – Andy Nicholl, Leprechaun – Steve Turland, Shaun the Sheep – Sue Roberts, Punk Rocker – Caren Crabtree and Christmas Parcel – Mick Green all won Heroes chocolates, for being real sporting heroes.

Renowned P&B fell runner and artist Shane Green, who finished 32nd, added a surprise extra to the winners prize haul, by presenting Alistair and Olivia with two framed running etchings at the beer come chocolate prize giving, where the race video entertained the packed Old Sun Hotel.

This race was pre-entry, but a few runners did manage to enter after the closing date, purely because they provided invaluable help to the organiser. Remember, without the help of others, race organisers can't put the events on for you to enjoy. So for 2010, why not **SUPPORT YOUR RACE ORGANISERS – THEY ALWAYS NEED**



Wolfman cometh: Paul Crabtree with Jason Hemsley

THE BIG ONE!!!!

FIRST UNDER 18 LADY - NICHOLA JACKSON OF PRESTON HARRIERS

'Before this event I had only ever done the junior quarry runs, which accompany the big races. These were fast and furious but none the less very enjoyable and with great prizes too! However I was too old to compete in these so I had to do the 'Big One ...

Travelling across to Penistone Country Park from Lancashire was a challenge in its self, the icy roads and snow covering made the journey treacherous. We managed to grab a parking space at the bottom, not risking to go any further up the road as we would probably have skidded back down! I collected my number and bottle of Daleside Old Leg Over beer along with my dad, who was running as well. Mum had just come to give support. Dave then carefully pointed out the route which was just a mass of whiteness, as I had no idea where I was actually going. It didn't seem too bad, but I was wrong in thinking that!

Everyone made their way down into the quarry following the sound of the bagpipes, the people wearing fancy dress were judged and we were off! Though some front runners did jump superman's start! The run out of the quarry was fast and a bit mad, I had never experienced this before! I ran hard along the road to make sure I had a good position when it got to the single track.

It was difficult to keep your feet as the snow was deep and rutted, I suffered a few tumbles but got straight back up again. The snow became progressively deeper as we climbed, running along the flat path towards Top O' Stairs was fairly deep snow, it seemed to just sap the energy from your legs, but little did I know there was worse to come! I pushed on from the end of the path and to the Top O' Stairs, managing to negotiate the stile. Unlike Alex Fowler from Preston, who didn't bother to lift his leg up - he obviously thought the stile would move itself! He did suffer the consequences of a bruised and bleeding knee!

Trying to run across the summit ridge through calf deep snow drifts was impossible. Every time you put your foot in you just sank! I didn't have much idea as to how far the ridge lasted and whenever I was brave enough to look up I risked losing my footing as a result. I could just see a line of runners against the vast white background. Not a pleasant sight but beautiful scenery! I managed to use the foot holes the runner had made just in front of me to make sure I didn't sink. This proved to be a good tactic and I was a bit surprised by how quickly the trig point came - just the descent to go! The rutted, frozen snow made running downhill a little hard, I suffered a few tumbles but I just ran

as fast as I could. Going over the final bump and seeing the finish was a welcome sight as were the hot drinks and biscuits!

The pub was packed, but the hot soup and bread roll was just what I needed to get some warmth! As I was 1st under 18 I got some biscuits and a tin of Heroes - chocolate was needed after such a cold race! I was very pleased with my run. I didn't expect to finish so high up and it was a surprise to be 5th lady! I really enjoyed it and I will be back next year and run even faster...

I first started running at the age of eight because my sister Lucy used to run. Lucy still holds records in Sports Hall Athletics, though she now is a county badminton player with Durham University. You could say it's her fault I got in to running. My first fell race was at the Helm Hill English Junior Relay Champs when our club needed another U12 and Stephanie Roe, Dominique Claydon, Beth Goodwin, Amie and Emily Kevan talked me into it and we actually finished first girls team. I didn't have any fell shoes so had to run in trainers. Coming down was scary! As well as fell running, I do track, road and cross country. I have represented Lancashire at the English Schools and at the Inter Counties, both for Cross Country.

I'm studying A levels in biology, maths, geography and sport studies at Cardinal Newman College at Preston, after achieving 2A*, 7A's and a B in my GCSE'S, last summer. I hope to go to university after college. In addition to running I'm in the netball academy at my college, play badminton and was third in the North West Singles Championships. I'm also in the hockey squad and we were runners up in the North West. More recently, together with Ellen Buckley and Abi Mackley, I was part of the winning team at the North West Schools Biathlon Championships which were held at Liverpool. This will hopefully get us to the Nationals in Bath.

In 2010 I just want to keep on enjoying running, as much as I already do and run as best as I possibly can in every race and hopefully good things will come as a result! Of course that's if my taxi is still available ... Mum and dad! Seriously though without their support and time given, I wouldn't even be needing to write this article as it's all down to their encouragement. Thanks!

PS: Steven, my dad finished the race in 58-43, whilst I ran 50-12, he, he!

PPS: Last year for my coursework that contributed to my A* in Textiles, I designed and made a recycled dress, made entirely from recycled household items and just general rubbish!



Photo © David Brett www.photos-dsb.co.uk

Nicola chased by a scary skeleton, Andy Nicoll



Photo © Dave Woodhead www.woodentops.org.uk

The Belles of Belle Vue Racers

BY CECILIA BOODHOO - WHO FINISHED IN 70-17

"Looking at the entry list online for the *Auld Lang Syne Fell Race 2009*, plagued with international and world champions' names, made me want to knock Kevin Egerton, veteran Belle Vue Racer (BVR) and fell runner, off his stool in the pub next time I came across him. Kevin had recruited members of the ladies BVR team to run the race using the flowery language of achievement, personal fulfillment, friendly folk and fun. In the cold light of my computer screen it now looked to me like I was well and truly out of my depth. This was clearly a top notch, serious business race for proper athletes. Yet here I was on the 31st January, trotting down into a quarry on the Yorkshire moors to start the race. I was relieved that I kept the outfit simple with a lilac feather boa to enhance my team's colours. Some of the fancy dresses were hilarious – hats off to you guys!

It was the second fell race in my whole life – the first had been all sunshine, sheep and cakes. "Beam me up Scottie" was all I could think of at that moment. Then we were off. Me, Maxine Grimshaw, Vicky Smith and Jill Osgood – Belle Vue Ladies here we go.

The race was exhilarating, funny, friendly and just simply great! It was all new to me; deep mud, snow for miles, fantastic views, legs doing weirdo moves to keep the body upright and arms flailing. It took some time to get a rhythm going. I think I was passed by many fairies, the nuns definitely, the Sheikh was well ahead. A few knee high plunges into the soft black mud kept me on the alert. Overtaking was tricky – not that I did it often but as soon as you took your eyes off the trail for a second, anything could happen. Down the last slope to the finish – part of the way on a safe fattish bottom. What can I say? I didn't appear on the video (shows there is a God). Before I could say "Those fell runners – especially the tippy toed fast women – are something else", I was enjoying a drink in the pub afterwards with Kevin and about 300 other fell runners and all's forgiven.

Consequently, I have now downloaded an application to join the FRA. I am an unlikely member, I imagine, but they can't exclude me. There are laws against it. I should know, I am a 49 year old divorce lawyer.

I have been road running since Linda Cheetham, trainer at Belle Vue Racers, turned up at the end of my road in Didsbury, Manchester in 2003 along with her late husband and the founder of Belle Vue Racers, Eddie Cheetham. They arrived to inspire an athletically diverse set of ladies to get running. Job done. I am a convert from ladies soccer, which I played for four years with our solicitors group. The 5k Wythenshaw Park event in 2003 was my first race. Although my dad John wasn't over impressed with me finishing near the back then, he does understand

the sport more now. The year after I ran the London Marathon and I have now done my favourite race, The Stockport 10, every year, it's a great race. Through Belle Vue Racers I discovered an enthusiastic set of runners now using one of the best outdoor running tracks in the country for training. There's a few fell runners in the mix

as well which is how we ladies came to find ourselves on the moors in the snow on New Years Eve.

What a terrifically well organised race and a memorable finish for 2009. There's no way I'll let those nuns beat me again next year – now I'm getting the hang of it!



Photo © David Brett www.photos-dsb.co.uk

What a race!

BY JILL OSGOOD & VICKY SMITH – WHO WERE SEPERATED BY TWO SECONDS AT THE FINISH IN 70-01 & 70-03

There's little for us to add – although it is true that it was Kevin's idea, or can I say fault?! He first persuaded Vicky, who then convinced me, and had entered us both before we, a) realised what we were doing, and b) had the chance to back out. Maxine Grimshaw, an experienced and successful fell runner – particularly endurance events – was keen to enter for another year. As was Tom Snaith, the first Belle Vue runner to finish in 66-04.

For all of us at Belle Vue, the race offered the chance to do something outside of the normal road running, interspersed with cross-country throughout the winter. Once we entered, (or had been entered I should say), it set a trend – other club members were keen to enter but found the race fully subscribed.

The fell race was a first for me – originally with a background of team sports, playing county Hockey and Lacrosse with tennis mixed in. Walking and then running on the fells in the Peak District and then, after relocating to central Manchester I predominately do road running. It was at this point I was introduced to club coach Lynda, and recently have trained with Belle Vue Racers, which is Thursday night at Eastland Stadium, where everyone is welcome.

Vicky, a relative new comer to running, has spent the year notching up a variety of new race types – from her first half-marathon at the Four Villages to now her first fell race. Vicky is always willing to try something different and recently went to what she thought was a Boxercise class, but found herself actually at a proper boxing club training night, with big muscle bound blokes working the bags and sparring with no quarters given!

The race was a great way to mark the end of the year. For both of us it was a year plagued by injuries – making us realise that we're just not as young as we used to be. My injured left groin, knee and foot continued to be problematic throughout the year and Vicky suffered with both knees. It meant that we saw more of, and spent more on, the physio than we'd ideally like. However for me, a medical student, it has greatly enhanced my anatomical knowledge of the 'lower-limb'; including how to examine, investigate, and treat it for a variety of complaints – perfect for my up and coming orthopaedic rotation. I feel like I've been given a head start. (Now all I need is an 'upper-limb' injury...)

The friendly atmosphere and fabulous location – made even more so by the snow, the novelty factor and even the countless falls – all added to the experience. It's not everyday that you get to run alongside a pair of nuns, or should I say get beaten by a pair of nuns. We felt relatively strong on the ups, and along the ridge, but found going downhill took all our concentration – and probably meant we were

holding others up in the process. The sense of camaraderie throughout the run and the congratulations we received at the finish line ultimately made the run such an enjoyable experience.

Would we do it again? The answer is a probable yes, although maybe next time we'll don fancy dress – it didn't seem to slow the nuns down, and who knows it may get us on the video?!



Jill Osgood sprinting away from Vicky Smith



Vicky Smith relishing the snow



World Champ Alistair Brownlee breaks trail



Sheikh Clive Greatorex

Legless in the snow

BY WORLD TRIATHLON & NOW TWICE AULD LANG SYNE CHAMPION ALISTAIR BROWNLEE

'Another New Years Eve, another chance to get lost on Haworth moor. I turned up to find it was Caribbean weather compared to last year, even though there was snow on the ground. There was a bit of confusion at the start, since I went on the STEADY and not the GO! – Sorry Louis – but we got underway heading out towards the cafe.

I took the lead, knowing the path down to the stream is very narrow and rocky. Part of the way

up the Stoop I saw a water channel heading off to the left and thought that must be the one I should be running on. Faced with a 6ft wall to get onto it, I wasn't so sure anymore and looked up to see the other runners heading further up the hill. No nice calls telling me I was going the wrong way this year!

I caught them back up again and started running along the right water channel in shin

deep snow. Not too bad, just a bit frustrating. Stairs Lane was a bit slippy and the snow was getting deeper. On the moor at the top, Holmsey had told me to go to the right of the wall and believing his advice I did. Very quickly my legs completely disappeared in a deep drift, I was legless and then I had to swim out it, front crawl style. Back on (slightly) firmer snow I had to catch the leaders up, again! The snow was shin deep and slightly frozen. I could run on it but every so often it wouldn't hold my weight and I'd go through and the hard snow would cut my shins. The stretch along the top went on forever and I was glad to get to the corner of the wall. The stretch to the standing stone and back was not deep and runnable, at last! I had a bit of a gap and ran hard but Holmsey still came flying past me on the way down to the stream. Fortunately I caught him on the way back to the cafe and made it to the finish. The bag pipes greeting the finishers was a nice touch!

I was absolutely freezing but Dave made us stand around posing for his pictures before I could put some sensible clothes on. I did a very long warm down with every clothing garment I own on and managed to warm back up again. The prize giving was spectacular as ever with a packed pub of familiar faces – is it me or does the Sun get smaller every year? I'm looking forward to next year already.'

V60 Dave Waywell (179), Sally Malir (300),
Rob Pitchard (103) and George Stevens (152)



Out of the naughties and into twentyten – a learning curve

BY SARAH RIDGEWAY-KLEEMAN – 3RD LADY AT AULD LANG SYNE & 1ST AT GIANTS TOOTH

The old year ended and the new one began with a race, but what surprised me was how much I enjoyed them. Following a rollercoaster year of injury, sickness, selection/de-selection for international events and plummeting motivation for racing, I had a rushed rekindling of enjoyment that stems from fell racing and running:

- a) The atmosphere – which this sport brings
- b) The terrain – because it's so varied
- c) The views – each one is different
- d) The weather – it's always changeable
- e) The thrill of pushing yourself

And so it was that two races, Auld Lang Syne and the Giant's Tooth, dominated my thoughts in reflecting over the year. I found myself, rather than dwelling on the disappointments of 2009, thinking back to when I first took up fell running some six years ago. It was those same feelings that drew me to the mountains in the first place that have driven my husband, Iain, and I to make fell running an integral part of our lives, including setting up our business: Run Snowdonia.

That's not to say 2009 wasn't great. There were many fantastic achievements to be enjoyed. Some of them my own, like winning the Highland Fling 53miler, the Welsh 1000M Peaks race and the North Wales Border League Road Series. There were also Iain's achievements: gaining selection to race for Wales in the Commonwealth 100km Race in Keswick as well as his superb run in the Ultra Tour De Mont Blanc (UTMB), completing in less than 30 hours. But in truth, when asked to write an article reflecting on the past year, I found myself postponing doing so. While 2009 had some fabulous moments, it was not an easy year for me. I had already subjected my non-running and running friends to a year of grumbles and I was at risk of doing the same to the wider fell running audience with a torrent of:

I got really sick, twisted my pelvis, got sick again, started having a few good races, had a knock back, got a forefoot injury and chipped a bone in my foot, knee flares up, got sick again, started having a few good races again, foot injury flared up again, I got sick again, ripped my calf muscle...

Hmmm - not exactly inspirational stuff. Inbetween I'd also made the mistake of throwing all my plans made early in 2009 out of the window and competing in and training for disciplines that I had not originally planned for. The result: Injury, illness and poor motivation, all leading to bad training and a plummeting of

fitness. The moment Casper the Ghost passed me in the Snowdon Marathon was perhaps my lowest of the year. For the first time in my life I did not enjoy running.

Yet run on, I did. Perhaps not wisely, certainly without any clear strategy or plan and many times with pain and/or post illness fatigue. My low motivation had resulted in abandonment of my log book, but I continued to keep my blog (sarzmountainrun.blogspot.com) of favourite runs in the mountains with Iain, our mates, as well as Bella and Fly, our two mad collie mongrels. When I looked back through my blog posts, I realised there were countless experiences in 2009 of that simple pleasure of running in the mountains. Or should I say, **being able to run** in the mountains. I think I had started to take for granted the years of training and experience that has allowed me to do this sport – having

the fitness to simply run up a mountain, the confidence to explore new routes, getting to know old routes in a different setting (night running) and taking the challenge of adapting to running in different countries.

It makes the good days all the sweeter

One of the charms and challenges of fell running is being able to adapt to new conditions (terrain, the elements etc), but in all my experiences of running in Europe, New Zealand and Australia – running and racing in the UK is almost unbeatable. Even following an amazing three weeks in Australia over Christmas, I couldn't wait to get home to North Wales and run from the front door of our house. I realised how lucky I was. Sure, there's the weather, but then some of my most memorable runs and races have been in absolutely hideous weather. In fact, my epiphany was this: just as the

The Blue Mountains, Australia





Night running on Moel Eilio, North Wales

bad weather days really make you appreciate the good weather ones when they do come along, so too should the days when running is not going your way. It makes the good days all the sweeter. Two of those days happened to fall on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

Auld Lang Syne coincided with a crisp, clear day that became all the more stunning with the extensive covering of snow and ice. The ice had

forced a change of route, but in no way did this affect the challenge of the race. The deep snow over the summit ridge was affecting many, but here I made places. I was feeling reasonably strong with my sights on Emma Clayton, when Olivia Walwyn floated past. I fought to keep up but turned my attention to passing Emma and fighting through the drifts. Emma and I continued to have a good battle but she surged on the last climb, finishing 5 seconds ahead in second place.

While I enjoyed the slog across that snow, I was roasting. I had self-admittedly developed a certain amount of "mussiness". At the race start I was dressed in full length leggings, long-sleeve thermal, t-shirt as well as gloves and buff (after reluctantly leaving hottie-hotwater bottle in the van). I was still feeling the cold, having only just arrived back from a sweltering Australia three days prior. For some this may not be strange (well, perhaps the hottie), but I'm happy racing in vest and shorts in the worst of conditions. So the next day - New Year's Day - as we stood on the start line at the Giant's Tooth race, I shivered in my short sleeve shirt and shorts, but soon enjoyed the refreshing chill in the air as we raced the three mile course through something akin to Narnia, a race I went on to win.

With a 3rd and 1st placing, these two races were my best performances in quite some time. What's more I really enjoyed them. It was, at first, a bit of a shock to me. Perhaps the holiday in Australia had given me some perspective: I hadn't been too bothered by the calf injury that forced me to persist through a week of aqua-running, and even the challenge of finding routes to cope with the bushfires, energy sapping heat, snakes and water sources dry as a dead dingo's donger*. We raked up some quality running in some spectacular areas. I looked back and realised I'd had a few months of good, steady, consistent training and was finally starting to learn from my mistakes.

One thing I have learnt over this last year is that it's not always roses. Injuries will happen. Sometimes you get sick. Other people can make decisions that affect your racing and over which you have little to no control. The key is not to give up. Find an alternative to running when you can't, learn to manage injuries and read your body and accept that illness will affect how you feel. For me, finally learning to develop a consistent training pattern, planning goal races and accepting the results of non-goal and goal races, as well as learning when to rest and recover, has improved my running.

Most of all, I've realised I shouldn't forget why I do it in the first place. I look back at posts in my blog and remember writing: *'what I realised last night while running in the mountains, is that for me, not running is worse than having a hard time at running.'* I remember thinking way back when I was a rookie, how easy it looked for the top runners. Certainly, some people have an undeniable talent and are gifted with genetics that gives them the upper edge, but in speaking with many top runners, it's no easier at the top, either mentally or physically. Indeed, it's most likely harder.

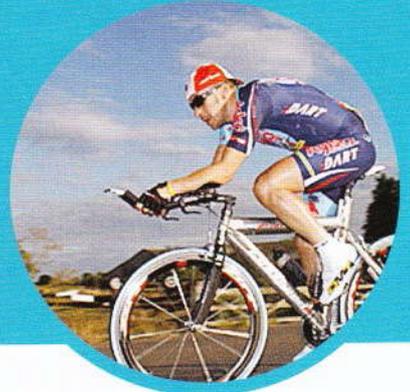
Did Auld Lang Syne and the Giant's Tooth save me or does everything simply always work out in the long run? I think it does, but not without persistence, hard work and a positive attitude. 2009 was tough for me, and 2010 may be just as hard. Either way, I'm taking the good days for all I can. 2010 is looking bonzer**.

*dry as a dead dingo's donger: very dry. Chosen in this article as an alternative to the equally popular 'as dry as a Pommy's towel' - based on the canard that Poms bathe about once a month

**bonzer: GREAT!

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