

The Report Of Mark "Ode" Cornes' Bob Graham Round

At 18:30 we set off and there's light cloud cover, perfect conditions. Laurence Day (Nav), Julian Brown, Steven Swallows and I set off from Moot Hall.

My shoes begin to rub on the ascent of Skiddaw and I decide to remove my inserts, hoping the lowering of my heel may help, suffice to say it didn't and my heels are rubbed raw by the end of leg 1. On nearing the top the weather slightly deteriorates it's a little damp and windy so I put on my waterproof jacket (this had been decided during the planning stage and would be all that I carried.). We arrive at Skiddaw summit 1 minute behind schedule, but to get the first summit crossed off the list of 42 is a great feeling and it now feels like I've made a start. The decision to swap from fell to trail shoes is made and Julian leaves us on the descent to advise road support that I need a change of shoes at the ready, a cheese baguette and Red Bull. On arrival at the summit of Great Calva, slight rain and a bit of wind the jacket is back on. I've put too much effort in to regaining that lost minute and we find ourselves 12 min ahead now. We descend and cross The River Caldew which is about 30mm deep. Jog over Mungrisdale Common and only looking backwards to see the sun set in the distance. Final pull up to the trig point at the top of Blencathra and arrive 17 minutes above schedule. Clear skies and great views make for a comfortable descent along Halls fell ridge and down into Threlkeld village and its still daylight.

Upon arrival at Threlkeld I swap trainers have quick natter to Dale Colclough who's popped by to say hello and good luck. I say "thank you" and "see you later" to Laurence Day and have a cheese baguette. Sarah Platt and Clare Holdcroft have my trainers ready for me and inform Geoffrey Pettengell that I'm 17 minutes in ahead of schedule. His advice is strong "Slow him down or he will die!". Shortly after I am introduced to Jonathan Whilock who is to navigate me on my next leg using GPS, I say hello to Bryan Carr who will be carrying my food and warmer clothes for the next leg and stroke 'Hollie the Collie'. I spent an extra 2 minutes at this check point due to the shoe change.

Jonathan encourages me to get going so Bryan, Julian, Steven, Hollie and me say our goodbyes as we set off in the direction of Clough Head. The ascent to Clough Head feels fast. I'm up front with John and Bryan chatting whilst Julian and Steve are a short way back. Julian shouts up for us to slow down and John does bring the pace down a little. On nearing the top it begins to get dark and chilly so we put coats and head torches on and arrive at Clough Head 17 minutes early. Heading across The Dodds was comfortable and with John and his GPS guiding us we never put a step wrong all the way through. I'm still feeling good although a little cold so I have my warmer top from Bryan and we head straight over The Helvellyn range. On the descent of Helvellyn is when my feet first start to get a little sore but only when I descend.

When we arrive at Dunmail I've lost the 17 minutes I'd gained on leg one and we're bang on schedule Julian is happy with this. Sarah passes me a peanut butter sandwich and more Red Bull. Kirsty Hewitson (my emergency stand in navigator) asks for the schedule, of which there isn't one (my bad), luckily someone finds one but it has no times on it. Kirsty introduces herself with "Well you know this is the hardest leg, are you ok?" I say "Yes, but I'm getting cold I need to move." She agrees and we say good bye to Julian and Steve and set off with Bryan and Jonathan. Just an 8 minute break this time too cold to mess around here.

I follow Kirsty up Steele Fell which feels quite a pull at this pace up to the summit, from this point on we have no idea whether we are in front or behind schedule. Kirsty and I walk over to Calf Crag whilst the other two wait, their loss the crescent moon is directly above the summit such an amazing site. Descending is becoming difficult for me now. My feet really hurt, but at least I can still run on the flat and climbing is still comfortable. Although no one supporting this route was intending to navigate, there is no issues on the first half of the leg. Kirsty through experience choosing to do High Raise before Sergeant Man. The first cloud cover we see since leg 1 is on the approach to Ill Crag. Due to this we walk straight past and are almost at Broad Crag. Once we realise, we check the maps and track back to Ill Crag, a little time lost. Looking back at the times, we only lost 16 minutes, but at this point I was convinced I was way behind schedule and getting slower. Having not reced this leg due to bad weather, no decision had been made prior as to how we were going to tackle Scafell Pike to Scafell. Kirsty being lead navigator was left to make this decision and as we crossed Mickledore she decided on Lords Rake. This decision mainly being reached because none of us were comfortable with Broad Stand. Having to kick foot holes in to some of the last remaining snow in The Lakes, we made our way up Lords Rake. John leads followed by Hollie, Bryan, Kirsty then me. Bryan shouts down for Kirsty and myself to take The West Wall Traverse because Hollie had gone off in front and was causing a lot scree to fall below. Kirsty and I make it to the summit just in front of Bryan, Hollie is waiting for us. On the descent I feel like I'm flying down the scree, which I'm sure is the first I've descended faster than a snail during all of leg 3. This is also the first and only time I voiced my concerns I was not going to make it in the 24hrs, I felt I was slow and told Kirsty "I don't think I'm going to do it under the 24hr, what if I'm already an hour behind?" Kirsty looked at me and said "Don't you dare quit! You're strong on all climbs you're doing really well... don't you dare quit!!!" John reiterated this, stating he felt that when we climbed Steel Fell he was concerned he wasn't going to keep the pace up. I think this was just to try and lift me out the negative mood I'd got myself into... and it worked.

Approaching Wasdale Geoff was waiting, all I was asking was how far am I behind Geoff said don't worry its only 25 minutes nothing at all to worry about. I sat down, removed my 2 jumpers and changed in to a cooler base layer whilst drinking another Red Bull. The one thing that was hard to miss was a guy in a Kilt wondering around with a Canadian accent, he turned out to be Sam the nephew of Andy Skelhorn. Geoff was navigating this leg and Andy, Sam, and Clare Holdcroft were carrying my spare clothes food, and water. All the while, Tom Whittington was carrying my food and taking down all times. We left after just a 6 minute break.

The climb up Yewbarrow was harsh but I was still feeling comfortable whilst ascending. We summited, taking one minute off the deficit that I'd created in the schedule during leg 3. Geoff and Tom were highly motivational at this stage. I at this point was head down refusing to speak, other than to request water and refusing all the food Tom was trying to push constantly. The weather was perfect, the views amazing but what was on my mind throughout this was how daunting Great Gable looked. Geoff reminded me that once Great Gable was summited, I was over the worst of it.

On our way to Pillar, Geoff sent Tom off to recce a route around Red Pike. Sam the Kilted Canadian confirmed my summit of Pillar. We then met back up with Tom who confirmed the trod around Red pike was good to go. On the ascent of Kirk Fell I finally accepted food from Tom and within minutes was beginning to feel more positive and began chatting to my support. Great Gable was hard but really enjoyable, on the summit I accepted a cheese sandwich from Clare and some pain killers from Geoff. On the descent and climbs of Brandreth and Grey Knotts I was happy. This was the first time for quite a while I believed I was going to make it round in under 24 hours. Geoff being the best descender I know ran off in front to organise a clean top, sandwich and a Red Bull.

We were greeted at Honister by Andy Ardron and his Heavily pregnant wife Sarah Ardron. There was a really positive feeling in the team, with people laughing and joking. I'd lost another 8 minutes on this leg and was now 33 minutes behind schedule but I was feeling confident and strong. Larry was back and ready to navigate me through the last leg with Clare as my support. With only a 6 minute break I was ready to get going again.

I updated Larry on how I'd been since he left me at Threlkeld and we nattered all the way up to Dale Head taking a minutes off our deficit. We leave Clare on the trail to Robinson. Laurence and I head over to Hindscarth taking another 2 minutes off the deficit. Laurence knows this leg well and leads me across a sheep trod to meet up with Clare and we head up to Robinson, 7 minutes off this time and all 42 peaks achieved just the descent of Robinson and the run in to Keswick to go. Things almost go wrong here when I fall and manage to hit my knee against the only rock in vicinity. A bit shook up but good to go we set off back down towards Snab Farm. Clare stays with Sarah here fearing we may be travelling a little too fast on the road for her. I don't change trainers as I'm already running in trail shoes but as I'm running I do take my top and bum bag off and Laurence collects my club vest and water as I continue running. I've planned to meet my daughter Eleanor Cornes at the foot bridge at Portinscale to run the final mile. When I meet up with her we've managed to claw back enough time to get in under 23 hours and Clare re joins us. As soon as we get to the town Laurence runs off in front to stop the traffic at the roundabout, so we can run straight across the road and up through the market to Moot Hall (arriving at 17:29). Dale, Andy, Sarah and Sarah are there to greet us. Only thing left was a pint in the Odd Fellow.



