



TOWN AND COUNTRY HARRIERS ROUGH RUNNING NEWS

Winter 2023

Letter From the Chair

As we enter 2023 there is lots of great stuff to reflect on from 2022. Although it seems a long time ago, it was only last summer than we emerged from the smaller pod runs and moved to the larger open runs and post-run pub gatherings. As a club with had great events hosting the Butcombe Trail Ultra and Keynsham Dandy (and supported local charities in the process) and a number of social weekend days out. And individually there were some phenomenal race event achievements from people's first race, first ultra, to podium showings for TACH members against world-class fields.



We got strong membership numbers and stable finances, even though we didn't get as much race income as hoped last year in the aftermath of restrictions. We're in a good place.

Looking to 2023, we're still fully reliant on you to volunteer and be a proactive part of the club. I'd ask you to please make a New Year pledge to marshal at an event - ideally our flagship Butcombe Trail Ultra on 29 April. It's great when we can put on events that runners from other clubs can participate at, and then we can fly our TACH colours by entering the races that other clubs put on. And also to lead a run. Our run-coordinators Emily and Tom are here to help in any way you can if you're unsure about leading your first run, or need a refresh if you haven't led an open run for a while. Our club will only stay successful if we please all share the load of marshalling and run-leading amongst us all. Thank you.

As always, the Committee is here to help you have safe, inclusive, and enjoyable runs. So do please get in touch with any of us if you have questions, concerns, or feedback.

Nick
TACH Chair

Butcombe Trail Ultra
Saturday 29 April 2023
See page 2 for more information
about how you can help





Editor's note

Thanks to everyone who's contributed to this and all the issues of RRN I've edited since the autumn of 2019. Thank you not just for your articles, but for putting up with my lack of organisation and iffy communication – an issue that began with email forwarding issues but continued with my lackadaisical approach to checking Facebook and the dedicated TACH email server...

Anyway, this issue we have an interesting mix of articles, including what I think must be the first ever RRN piece written by a computer. I asked the ChatGTP tool to 'write a magazine article on the benefits of trail running', and it did an admirable, if rather generic, job of it. There's lots of talk among writers about whether this tool and future iterations will replace them, and as someone who deals with words for a living, I've certainly been impressed by what I've seen and it's only going to get better. But although AI might be able to string together sentences with ease and write convincingly on any number of topics, it can't yet experience the joy of running, or indeed write about it afterwards, so Rough Running News still very definitely needs your input.

Your new editors will be Tricia Allen and Luke Merrett, and the email address to send them your articles is comms@tach.club. I wish them all the best and look forward to reading the next issue!

Tom Moriarty

Butcombe Trail Ultra, Saturday 29 April 2023 butcombetrailultra.com

Every club member can play a part in making our flagship event a great day. Here's two things everyone is encouraged to do:

1. Volunteer to marshal on the day. We'll need plenty of volunteers to make it a success, so please do take a look at the briefing notes [here](#) and sign up [here](#).
2. Tell your running friends up and down the country about the event and persuade them to sign up to run one of the two (50 mile or 56 mile) races this year. Or they may want to think about starting to train now to do the race next year?





The Traditional New Year's Eve Green Man Ultra Social Run Jim Plunkett-Cole

The 2022 NYE GMU Social Run

Some 22 folk turned up at 6am at the Angel in Long Ashton to start the 2022 NYE running of the Green Man Ultra, one of the highest turnouts there has been over the ten years since it was first run on New Year's Eve. As ever, because it's a highly informal social run, you are never really sure who is trying to run the whole 46 miles, and who is running part of the route.

In the event, there were nine who did the whole route and thirteen who did a portion (with popular places to drop out and run home being Keynsham, Warmley and Hambrook). Of the nine finishers, I believe there were two first-timers. Several were from TACH (Phil Boler, Lucien Campbell-Kemp, Sharon Jones, Tom Farman, Pete Robertson and myself).



As usual, I started by asking the assembled "Does anyone know the way?". However, I probably shouldn't do this as I think there may have been a few there who don't quite understand the rather 'laid-back' approach we take to the NYE GMU (and indeed, life in general). We are starting at the Angel pub and we all start running down the side of the pub to the church. However, for some reason we turn around and run all the way to the Co-Op in Long Aston before

picking up the route somehow. Which made me laugh as it appears we went wrong within the first minute of starting! (Subsequently, however, I have looked at the route and we could have gone through the church quite easily to pick up the route). Anyway, no harm done, we were soon back on track, and it's always fun to do things a little differently.

The conditions were pretty wet underfoot and it rained from around 9am onwards. At times this was quite heavy rain; coming down from the Green Man statue it felt as though it was driving almost horizontally into my face and my mouth was spurting water the whole way down the hill.





Support was provided by Helen King at Keynsham, Hambrook, the church at Easter Compton and Blaise. Hot drinks, soup, crisps, and more...and a smiling face...all really welcome on such a miserable day of running.

The plan for the NYE 2023 GMU social run



I've already started planning the 2023 run. This is because, for 2023, I thought it would be a good idea to do something a little special. I'm hoping that we can get at least 23 first-time ultrarunners around the course. I'm also hoping that TACH members will help us to pull this off.

The context for trying this is because it was a TACH-organised assault of the GMU, in 2008, that was my first ultra. My memories of that day, the super support from TACH (Pete De Boer with hot drinks), and my elation / euphoria at reaching Blaise and realising that I was probably going to

finish, are still very much with me. Over the last ten years of the NYE GMU we have had a good handful of others, like me, who have had a similar super-positive experience of doing it as their first ultra. So I thought, for 2023, that I would specifically try and recruit a largeish number of first-timers to prepare throughout the year for the NYE GMU.

I'll be pulling this together over the next few months, but really hoping that TACH gets involved in helping to make it happen. It would be great if we could have experienced GMUers to act as run-buddies, for example. It would also be good to have an appropriately sized support team to provide support at Keynsham, Hambrook, the church at Easter Compton and Blaise. I think the final thing we need some help with is recruiting those potential first-timers who want to take on an ultra.





My Training Tips Luke Taylor



Here are a few ultra distance training tips from me - things that I noted in the five months leading up to the Lavaredo Ultra Trail (LUT) race that took place on 24 June 2022. But please, before you take too much notice of what's written below, remember that I am a pretty average ultra distance runner with no professional sports science training behind me. I have made mistakes in the past leading to injury and missed races. I am not a know-it-all. But just maybe some of the following will chime with you, and so might be of some use.

Firstly, what is training? For me, training is a process of putting my body (and mind) under stress and then helping it to recover stronger than before. Repeat, again and again. Too much stress and not enough recovery will lead me to injury. Too little stress and too much recovery will result in my performance being less than I am capable of. I try to listen to my body and am getting better now at resolving minor injuries before they become major ones. Because ultimately it is better to be under-trained but at the start line, than not start at all.

About training plans: I can see that training plans can be useful to provide a high-level shape to one's training but, if followed too religiously, they can lead to injury. Always remember that, unless you work with a coach who can create a training plan just for you, off the shelf training plans will almost certainly not be well fitted to you as an individual. So, use their mix of short runs, long runs, cross-training, etc, as a guide, but don't think "the schedule says I must do 20 miles on Saturday, and another 15 miles on Sunday so I must do exactly that or I will fail". Make sure that you pick a training plan that fits with your capabilities, and then give yourself plenty of flexibility around the plan.



The LUT is 120km long with 5800m of uphill. So, from the start of my training, I knew that the race was going to take me a very long time to finish, with lots of going up and down hills, including some rocky, technical paths. This is where my next tip - about specificity - comes into play. For the LUT, I split my training sessions so that each had a specific focus that I knew would be required for the race. I made sure I included downhill running sessions, uphill walking sessions, and sessions which focused on hours on my feet rather than distance covered. I also found some rocky paths down from the top of Cheddar Gorge that helped me to practise running down technical trails.

Beyond run training, I spent some time in the gym, mostly focusing on core strengthening exercises, but also some upper body exercises. Personally, I found this gym work to be very helpful.

During 2022, I increased my protein intake when compared with previous years of training. Mostly this has meant eating more eggs and also drinking whey-based protein shakes. For me, this has helped in two ways. Firstly, I think I have recovered more quickly from hard training sessions. And then also I have added a little muscle mass, which I think gave me increased strength and resilience to my body.

It's good to practise your event nutrition, hydration and equipment. Two things that worked well for me during the LUT:

1. I read some research about how the body is able to absorb carbohydrates at a faster rate if those carbs come from multiple transportable sources (fructose, sucrose, maltodextrin). Throughout the LUT I felt able to eat and drink more carbs than I have in previous races, which I think was due to the mix of carb sources I consumed.
2. I usually drink caffeinated drinks (tea, coffee and diet Coke). The LUT started at 11pm at night and, for me, went on for over 24 hours. Not a time to be suffering from caffeine-withdrawal symptoms. So, for a few weeks before the race, I weaned myself off caffeine, and then on race day I took some Pro-Plus caffeine tablets with me. It worked a treat, and gave me the control to take a couple of 50mg caffeine tablets at certain points in the race when I started to feel really tired.

The final tip for me is around tapering. I assume that Killian Jornet and Courtney Dauwalter don't need to do a lot of tapering. But as a mere mortal, one who doesn't think that training close to an event provides any benefit, I taper a lot - in the last week before the LUT, I only ran once (a 4 mile jog around the Downs).

So, there it is, a few tips from me. But do remember, only take these on board if they feel right for you. Either way, I hope you found this article interesting.

Happy running everyone!



How to Win a Running Race

Jonny Riley



I didn't expect to win, and it will probably never happen again. In ten steps, this is how I won a parkrun:

1. I trained consistently since January, about 20 miles per week
2. I bought a decent watch with a heart-rate monitor. It monitored my training load, and I followed the watch's recommendation to do a mix of low-intensity and high-intensity training
3. I tried to include some hills when I could
4. I did a tempo run most weeks with Westbury Harriers as I can't run fast on my own
5. I chose a remote town, on the coast, with no athletics or running club, so the people who live there have no structured training. Milford Haven in Pembrokeshire
6. I chose a windy, wet day, in the autumn, when the good runners stay in bed
7. I went off very fast at the start so everyone thought I was a super quick runner
8. I eased off, allowing the next people to catch me, then ran with them for company
9. I went off the front again near the end
10. I ran like hell when I heard footsteps behind and heard somebody say "get him"

First place!!!! 21.08 Not even quick. But it was enough on the day.

My first experience of run leading with TACH

Tricia Allen



Run leaders are the backbone of TACH, and I am forever grateful to them. But as someone who regularly drifts towards the back of the pack, I assumed that run leading just wasn't for me. Then Sarah suggested that we lead a run together - I could be backmarker, that should be easy. Sarah had a lovely local run in mind (Leigh Woods, Abbots Leigh and Ashton Court), which we ran before work one day. Afterwards I realised that I really couldn't remember all the twists and turns we'd taken. So when we scoped out the route again in the dark, I had a go at identifying the direction at all the decision points rather than just following Sarah.

After two scoping runs, I was beginning to wonder if we needed to offer a short run alternative. So I plucked up the courage to volunteer myself as the short run leader. I had a route in mind (cutting out Abbots Leigh while extending the Ashton Court section) and I scoped it out the Sunday before the TACH run. Then two nights before the TACH run, I ran it again in the dark. Goodness, what a difference – that field with a gate in the distance was suddenly just a black expanse of nothingness, and that well-trodden path I followed across the grass in the light was reduced to a barely visible thread of bare soil which kept disappearing and reappearing. I'm so glad I scoped my run in the dark, it really helped to build my confidence for the actual run.



When Sarah and I booked a table at the Pump House, we found out there was a rugby match on that night at Ashton Gate. It was a bit late to change the venue and scope out a new route, but the one thing we could have done was to pre-warn everyone to allow extra time if driving. Apologies to those of you who didn't make it in time – a good lesson for anyone else planning city-based runs in future.

Run night came, and we ended up with about 30 TACHers all keen to jostle their way across Brunel Loch bridge with hundreds of rugby fans. When we reached the top of Nightingale Valley, it was time for me to stop backmarking and lead the short run for the next 45 minutes with Andrew as backmarker. We did a quick headcount – 14 of us, that's manageable. With a mixture of excitement and nervousness, I set off, quickly to be overtaken by a handful of speedsters.

I discovered that the way to lead not from the front is to give the speedsters some landmarks to aim for up ahead and ask them to sheepdog when they get there. Rather wonderfully, this is exactly what they did. It did mean I needed some language to describe the landmarks – 'at the café; when you reach the gravel path; at the parkrun turning point; when you hit the tarmac' etc. As a back-of-the-pack TACHer, it's always lovely when people sheepdog rather than just waiting for the pack to regroup – it feels more unifying when everyone just keeps running, rather than us slower runners not getting a break while the speedsters have a chance to stop, catch their breath and natter some more.

After just over an hour, I was delighted to do yet another headtorch count and find that there were still 13 other lights bobbing along, heading back to the pub. I'd led my first TACH run and it really wasn't as difficult as I'd imagined it would be. I'll definitely be leading a run again sometime and would really encourage everyone to think about giving it a go. If you have any questions or concerns before you volunteer, I'm sure our runmeisters would be more than happy to help you.

What I miss – and what I don't – about running

Tom Moriarty

I stopped running 'properly' in March 2020 when I limped out of the Bath Half with a foot injury. I was almost relieved to be injured. I'd started running semi-seriously in 2017 and always remembered a piece of advice I'd read to 'never outrun your love of running', but in the winter of 2019/20 I'd managed to do just that. I chose a challenging training plan and aimed to hit 60 miles a week by the middle of it, but doing this on the streets and bike paths of Bristol largely in the dark, and with a nagging pain building under the toes of my right foot, was a pretty miserable slog.

The 'peak end' rule is one of hundreds of cognitive biases that we, as humans, are susceptible to. It basically means that the peaks and the end of a particular experience shape one's thinking about the whole of that particular experience. The 'end' of my running career has certainly shaped mine, and despite having finally shaken off my foot injury (top



tip – don't just assume it's plantar fasciitis, go and see a podiatrist!), I'm in no rush to go back to being a 'proper' runner. I don't miss long runs, I don't miss dragging myself out for a midweek 45 minute plod in the dark just to tick it off the list, and I don't miss the lung-bursting speed sessions I used to do on the track with my other club. I also don't miss my single-minded approach to exercise and I've really enjoyed getting back into squash, football and cycling while taking up weightlifting in the gym.

But perhaps I'm letting the 'end' dominate the narrative – perhaps I should try harder to remember the peaks.

A run from Lynton to the Valley of the Rocks as the sun set on a hot day in July 2018, with goats and splintered stones silhouetted against the darkening sky. An exceptionally windy run along the coast in Orkney. A long run before a wedding along the River Lee in Cork, and a long run around Phoenix Park in Dublin. Finishing first at a couple of parkruns. A perfect race at the 2019 Cardiff 10k and a better-than-expected PB. A Christmastime long run in Aberdeen that doubled as a brilliant excuse for an hour away from the inlaws.

And then there's all the runs I've done with Tach, which loom large and lovely in my memory bank. A run under a star-specked sky somewhere around Failand. Breathtaking carpets of blue under the trees of Priors Wood on my first Bluebell Run. The Spring Classics special from the Nova Scotia around the cobbles and climbs of Bristol city centre. The epic treasure hunt from the Pelican in Chew Magna on a glorious summer's evening. Sloe gin around the bonfire on Karen's Halloween run. Being knee-deep in cow-churned mud somewhere near Warmley. Being knee-deep in the stream on the Keynsham Dandy. There are many more.

I'm enormously thankful to Tach and the Tachers who made all of these happen – apologies that I can't name many people individually! I don't think I'll ever get back to being the PB-chasing obsessive that I once was, I hope my future running career contains more of these moments. One obvious way to ensure that would be to start coming on Tach runs more regularly, although for now I'm committed to a beginners' French class on Thursdays until summer, and I've lost any real urge to drag myself out for a run in the dark, wet or cold. So summer it may be – I hope to catch up with many of you then!

Review of the Columbia OutDry Extreme Titanium jacket **Andy Grant**

Or to be more precise a review of the new technology it and other jackets like it (Gore-Tex shake dry is another) use to try and keep us dry. Most of the lighter weight jackets we use for running have 2/3 layers in their construction, the lining layer if it's one with 3, the waterproof one and the outer DWR (Durable Water Repellent) treated one on the outside. We can all guess what the taped waterproof layer does but that bonded on outer layer also does an important job to, it gives the jacket its durability and because it is treated





chemically to repel water this stops the outside of the jacket “wetting out”. This water repelling property of a jacket's outer layer is often overlooked but without it you're getting wet! here's why – the taped inner layer of your jacket is breathable and waterproof, it works by containing millions of tiny holes, big enough to let water vapour escape but small enough to keep the water out, this water vapour (your yucky sweat) then escapes through the outer layer and hey presto you stay dry.

The trouble is with time the DWR coating of that outer layer starts becoming less effective and stops beading water off, this allows it to get wet through (known as wetting out), you would think this wouldn't be a problem right, as nothing will still get through that nice taped waterproof layer underneath, but it definitely is. If the outer layer is wetted out it can't let the water vapour pass through and your sweat can't escape, it stays under the jacket till it finds a cold surface to condense on, now sadly because the outer layer of the jacket is wet-its cold, if the water on it starts evaporate it will cool it down even further (the very same effect that cools us down when we sweat), so now the trapped water vapour starts to condense on the cold inside surface of the jacket and hey presto your wet inside and out, this effect has fooled many people over the years (including me) into thinking their jackets are no longer waterproof, when in fact they have just stopped breathing effectively.

Not a problem right? You just wash the jacket and treat it with some of the widely available products from the likes of Grangers and Nikwax. But no matter how carefully you follow the instructions they work at first but never seem to last very long – not surprising considering that outer layer is very thin and being bonded to a waterproof layer underneath means it can only absorb a small amount of the waterproofing agent you retreat it with. It gets worse, turns out the products that were formally used in the manufacture of new jackets and the treatment products for older ones contained very nasty PFC “forever chemicals”, thankfully they don't use them anymore, but the downside is the ones that have replaced them are now effective for an even shorter length of time and need reapplying more often.

So how does this Columbia jacket approach solving this problem? Easy – it just does away with the outer layer of the jacket, there is a very thin lining inside and then the taped waterproof layer is the outside of the jacket, it has no waterproof coating to lose and beads water off nearly as good as a DWR treated would, but it will do this forever. It makes the jacket lighter and permanently more breathable. The jacket itself is well designed with a full-length waterproof front zip, two zipped front pockets and a non-hooped hood, it is very well made with the waterproof tape over the seams being very well bonded on to it even if it does look sometimes as if you've paid a lot of money for a jacket made from a grey bin bag. Talking of money, the price of these jackets can often be up around the £200 mark but they can often be found discounted for a lot less and I got mine for £110 direct from Columbia's own website.

So what are the downsides, just one really - but it's a big one - durability, there is nothing to protect the waterproof layer from normal everyday wear and tear, hydration packs will also eventually take their toll on the shoulders where the straps sit, I have only snagged it once on a hawthorn bush and this resulted in a tiny hole, I repaired it without any problems but I would recommend that anyone wearing one gives spikey hawthorn bushes and brambles



etc a wide berth just like I now do. And I wouldn't scrunch I up and store it in a hydration pack either without first stashing it in a protective bag (I use a small drybag). Treat it with a bit of care though and what it will do though is be the lightest, most breathable water proof jacket you will ever own, from the day you buy it to the day you have to throw it away because it's worn out, so if you get one don't keep it for best – keep it for worst! Off to spend a cold winter day out in the rain running 'round the Welsh hillsides, this is what you should be wearing. How do I know? I wore this jacket when I ran the Exodus race (103 miles of the Brecon way) in December 2019. During the race Wales was battered by storm Atiyah. I ran the last 24 hours of that race in 70mph+ gusting winds and torrential rain, when I finally arrived at the finish in Abergavenny I was dripping wet and looked for like I had just jumped in a river, but when I took that jacket off underneath I was still warm and dry.

Here are some pictures of me doing a crap job of modelling the jacket (a very roomy men's medium) and trying not to look too much like Debbie Harry in the video for "Atomic".



What would you like to see in future editions of Rough Running News? Email us your ideas at comms@tach.club, or chat with your new editors, Luke Merrett and Tricia Allen, on a TACH run sometime, and we'll try and make it happen.



The Benefits of Trail Running*

By ChatGTP



Trail running is an increasingly popular outdoor activity that combines the health benefits of running with the beauty of nature. Whether you're a seasoned runner looking for a new challenge or a beginner looking to get into shape, trail running has something to offer everyone. Here are just a few of the many benefits of hitting the trails:

1. **Improved cardiovascular health:** Trail running is a great way to get your heart pumping and improve your overall cardiovascular health. The varied terrain of trails helps to engage your muscles in new ways, providing a more dynamic and challenging workout than running on flat surfaces.
2. **Stress relief:** There's something about being surrounded by nature that just naturally helps to reduce stress and clear the mind. Trail running allows you to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life and focus on the present moment, which can help to calm the mind and reduce feelings of stress and anxiety.
3. **Increased strength and agility:** Trail running requires you to navigate uneven terrain and obstacles, which can help to improve your balance and coordination. The constant need to adjust your stride and engage different muscle groups can also help to build strength in your legs and core.
4. **Lower impact on joints:** The softer, more forgiving surface of trails can provide a lower impact workout for your joints compared to running on hard surfaces like concrete or asphalt. This can be especially beneficial for runners who may be prone to joint pain or injury.
5. **A sense of adventure:** Trail running allows you to explore new areas and discover hidden paths and trails that you may not have known about otherwise. It's a great way to get outside of your comfort zone and try something new, while also enjoying the beauty of the natural world around you.

Whether you're looking to improve your physical health, reduce stress, or just have a sense of adventure, trail running has something to offer everyone. So why not give it a try? Lace up your shoes, hit the trails, and discover the many benefits of this exciting outdoor activity.

* Please see the editor's note on page 2 for an explanation if you're puzzled by this article.



Leading a TACH run

Everyone is encouraged to “do their bit” and to lead runs. It's great fun introducing people to your favourite run (and pub). If you need more information, chat to the [Run Meisters](#) or some recent run leaders in the pub, and take a look at our [guide for leading runs](#).

Runs are registered on the [TACH Runs Spreadsheet](#). There is also a Google Calendar you can subscribe to using [this link](#).

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