

No One Remembers Who Comes Second.

There it is that awful statement and Oh how true it is. The sad news is that we were that team at the Southern 50 this year. Now I don't want to state the obvious, but nearly any race worth taking part in does have a team or individual that comes second. Not only are you stuck there in second place where no one remembers you, but also you tried damned hard to win.

Picture this we have just done 50 miles, pretty good navigation, fairly well sorted pace, really gutsy performance. Now we are sitting on some chairs at Tring School and some really pleasant bloke is congratulating us and explaining where we can get changed and something to eat. We were just blank, no expression no chat. The only noise we managed was the thwack as Chris threw the map on the floor. No animosity in the team, no reproaches for the map reading errors or the failing boots, no thought that any one of us had let the team down, just disappointment. Second place and we missed out on the satisfaction that all the other teams felt as they completed the massive challenge.

Now I am probably the team member considered to be the most competitive and should have held the most disappointment, but as we got back to the cars and started home for a nights rest I felt easy with it. Was I getting old, as has been widely rumored? I don't think so, by the end of Sunday mornings presentation I felt good. No I didn't feel good about coming second. If I am ever pleased with that, then it will be time to retire. What made me feel good was the event. Only Scouting can produce an event like that. Did you see all those Explorer Scouts, young teams, old teams, and so many mixed teams. All so proud to go and receive their certificates. Some walked easily, but most either had the full on limp for maximum sympathy or tried to walk strongly to the front, while their face told us of the blisters on their feet.

Then there were the leaders and I guess many of them like me have only met an event like this through Scouting. It is great for us to get the chance to show our ability and make sure that we not only know about hiking and map reading and fitness, but that we can actually do it. I was proud to be a part of that.

Top marks to the team that delivers such a superb event year after year. I hope they know how much we all get out of it. It epitomises for me just what Scouting is about, team work, mental challenge, physically demanding, outdoors, following the rules, encouraging new found friends and making lasting memories. Our everyday adventure.

So do you want to hear a bit about our walk?

We were confident, we met for a Pasta Party at Simons house with a few supporters. The mood was good, after all we were winners last year and the training had been going well.

Saturday morning did not hold quite the same fear as the year before, the kit was well sorted. I was a bit disappointed that no one looked at my stove. I had worked hard to get it that light. A few tense moments and then we were off.

The first checkpoint was easy navigation. Dave stopped briefly to adjust his sock and then onto checkpoint two. Half way there and Dave has fished out a dressing from his personal first aid to stick on a blister!!!. What, we only just set off and he has a blister. I stuck the dressing on and had to try and look as if I thought it was OK, but I just thought that's gonna hurt.

We pressed on, our supporters were enthusiastic about our speed and the other teams we met seemed less pleased with our rate of progress, that is the teams hoping to win.

Last year we made almost no map reading errors. The map was waterproof and we constantly marked up with permanent ink. This year the rain made a mess of that plan. The pens just did not work in the rain. This led to one or two map reading errors. Nothing to get us far off of our chosen route, but not great for morale. I always teach my cubs to read the map first and then go in the right direction. We found ourselves leaving a couple of checkpoints without the route decided. I think the route planners did a good job this year, or was it a bad job. Whichever it was they had us thinking hard, I am still not sure which was the best way over or round some of those hills, and weren't there some hills!

Speen was the first time I noticed that our supporters were trying to talk things up. We were slipping and no longer setting the pace, but conversation was good. I only noticed looking back that Simon wasn't as confident as usual. His feet must have been coming apart sooner than he let on. We had a fuff, as we know it, in the woods before Longdown hill. Then Dave had an emotional moment after Lee clump when he realized that there was still a considerable amount of pain to endure.

By the time we reached Northchurch I think I was resigned to second place. Obviously the "Late Finishers" were still on their guard as their spy continued to haunt us. Our supporters urged us on for a further push, but there was some physical weakness, not from me you understand I was still as fresh as a daisy.

As the end drew near we had a good surge across Asheridge Park, a little local knowledge helped and we gained back some time. I had a session of excellent map reading in dismal visibility followed by a session of continuous cursing as I turned the map over and over and found nothing of any use.

The penultimate checkpoint was tough. Chris picked up the map reading and the motivation, but as we tried to skirt the contours to avoid going over the hill we were left struggling along a sheep track with some very sore feet. Chris pulled

out his famous trump card and started feeding us Haribo and after a final blast we made it home. Weary, beaten and second.

I hope to see you all again next year and don't forget to spare a thought for the team in second place.

Andy Honour.
Psychic Pop Tarts.
1st Chesham Bois.



Here we are stretching our legs at Redland End



Look at the superb visibility and excellent underfoot conditions on Coombe Hill.