

Lakeland 100
Friday 27 – Sunday 29 July 2012
Report by Kay Farrow of Beverley Athletic Club



One of Beverley Athletic Club's ultra athletes, Pete Watkinson, spent last weekend in the Lake District tackling the gruelling Lakeland 100, one of a series of events he has undertaken this year to celebrate his 60th birthday on 10 June. He is pictured after the Wales Marathon which took place on his 60th birthday.

Advertised as the most spectacular long distance trail race in the UK, this ultra tour of the Lake District follows a circular route from Conistone taking in the whole of the Lakeland fells. It includes 6,300m of ascent and is almost entirely on public bridleways and footpaths. The event requires competitors to be experienced ultra

distance runners with excellent navigation skills. They have a maximum of 40 hours to navigate their way round the 14 checkpoints to complete the 100 mile course. The winners are expected to finish in around 23 hours but the climbs, descents, rugged terrain, darkness and tricky navigation usually ensure a 50-60% failure rate.

An experienced ultra athlete, Pete ran 105.5 miles in the 24-hour race at Costello Stadium in 2009 and 68 miles in 12 hours in the Hell on the Humber event last year. Despite this experience and a demanding training schedule he found the Lakeland 100 the toughest event he had ever taken part in.

The race began at 5.30 on Friday evening. Pete started well and was happy with his pace and progress but struggled going up Wasdale Head in the dark with the light from his head torch dwindling as the batteries ran low. He was relieved when daylight came and continued to make good progress until he realised that he had missed a compulsory self-check point. He decided that it was too late to go back and continued on his way. Unfortunately he then took two wrong turns and had covered an extra mile by the time he found the right route. At this point he had covered half the course but he knew that even if he finished he would be disqualified for missing a checkpoint. He was feeling very disillusioned and for the first time in his long and successful running career he decided to retire from the event.

He admitted "I totally underestimated the race. I hadn't been on any of the recce runs and hadn't taken it seriously enough." He remains very positive about the experience and has learnt a lot from it. He would love to try again next year. He said: "It was a steep learning curve and I have to prepare much better and brush up on navigation skills which are vital in long trail runs."