

**Start Time: 23.00**

	MY SCHEDULE		COMPARISON vs 23 hr schedule	
	Time between summits	Actual Time H:M	Between Summit times (m)	Overall Difference Vs 23 hours
Moot Hall	0	23:00:00	0	0
Skiddaw	79	00:19:00	-5	-5
Great Calva	61	01:20:00	16	11
<b>Blencathra</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>02:32:00</b>	3	14
<b>Threlkeld - Arrive</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>03:08:00</b>	5	19

**Leg 1 Pacer: Mark Dyer**

A very mild evening and we were slightly surprised to find ourselves the only group here. We set off at 23.00 to goodbyes from a handful of supporters and weaved through the bank holiday punters outside the Lion pub, oblivious to our little adventure. I was warm straight away and felt good to finally be able to stretch our legs across Fitz Park – Mark immediately warned against not getting carried away with the pace but after a few days of trying to keep still and restless day spent trying to sleep it felt great to be on our way at last and burning off a bit of nervous energy. We successfully navigated our way out of Keswick without embarrassment and were off.

Straight away I had stomach pains, probably due to nerves and drinking too much too quick; I hadn't expected things like this quite as early on, but it subsided as we hit the cairns towards Skiddaw. We were excited about the excellent visibility (a first for both of us up here) and arrived 6 minutes ahead of our 23hr schedule. A quick photo for the first peak and we set off picking up the style easily in the clear conditions.

Turning eastwards properly, things suddenly got very dark! We paused briefly to shine torches out into the gloom. On my recommendation of "just go dead east, the path will reveal itself" we descended but the path petered out; I had reced this section only weeks before, but as we descended further the sound of the Caldew got louder and it was obvious we had drifted badly to the right. Frantically, out came the map and compass as we tried to figure out what we had done. Contouring NE to find Hare crag we picked up and lost numerous sheep trods but eventually found ourselves in thick heather. At one stage we turned off the torches and attempted to pick out Great Calva against the sky but it was still too dark. Sensing that time was ticking, finally we resolved to a straight E line to pick up the Cumbria way and crossed some horrendous bog, streams and deep heather. The inevitable tumbles provided some comedy along the way but it was a huge relief to find the manicured path of the Cumbria Way tucked away amongst the foliage and begin the ascent to Great Calva. The relief at being on a familiar path once again made the climb a pleasant one and we set about casting the experience in a positive light; it was early in the round if the forecast was correct, this was about as bad as it would get visibility wise. We hit Great Calva with Mark asking if I wanted to know the split, which rarely heralds good news...I answered "yes" and was told were now 11 minutes down on a 23-hour schedule - 16 minutes lost since Skiddaw.

I had opted for a direct SE line off Great Calva and up Blencathra which we hit it perfectly and the darkness was slowly lifting as we traversed across to the summit. Mysterious lights dancing about revealed

themselves to be the reflective logos of the tents - wild campers were dotted everywhere on the saddle – a strange taste of civilisation at 2 in the morning after the last 2 hours of isolation.

Things were still gloomy but we finally caught sight of the predicted ‘super moon’ a memorable sight but unfortunately too low in sky to have been any help to us 2 hours earlier!

It was still very dark and I had planned to descend via Doddick Fell, but unable to see anything to my left and feeling a bit risk averse, Halls Fell was right in front of us and seemed the more inviting option so down we went. It was slow going as we slightly improvised the top section but were enjoying ourselves and in good spirits as we resumed running and the first light of dawn emerged. It was looking like being a glorious clear day as forecast, and the prospect of warm food at Threlkeld helped us along.

Doing our best not to wake the dogs up, we hit the road and Mark immediately cramped up so I ran on towards 2 torches shining at me; my next pacer, James ‘Jambon’ White and Mark’s partner, Seila, (who was slightly concerned as to where he was). Unlikely as it was to be anyone else at 3 in the morning, I asked who they were but just across the A66 everything was in place; my wife Miki and Jambon had found a lovely spot next to the United Utilities Sewage treatment plant; it seemed to bother them much more than it did me.

**Leg 2 Pacer: James White –**

	MY SCHEDULE		COMPARISON vs 23 hr schedule	
	Time between summits	Actual Time H:M	Between Summit times (m)	Overall Difference Vs 23 hours
Threlkeld - Depart	10	03:18:00	5	24
Clough Head	49	04:07:00	-9	15
Great Dodd	30	04:37:00	0	15
Watson Dodd	9	04:46:00	0	15
Stybarrow Dodd	9	04:55:00	0	15
Raise	17	05:12:00	-1	14
White Side	8	05:20:00	0	14
Helvellyn Lower Man	15	05:35:00	-3	11
Helvellyn	6	05:41:00	0	11
Nethermost Pike	8	05:49:00	-2	9
Dollywaggon Pike	12	06:01:00	0	9
Fairfield	45	06:46:00	3	12
Seat Sandal	27	07:13:00	2	14
Dunmail Raise - Arrive	<b>18</b>	<b>07:31:00</b>	-7	7

I was down a further 5 minutes on the descent Blencathra. The whole changeover was probably a bit of a disaster time-wise. We agreed a 7m turnaround on arrival but my times tell me we spent 10m there instead of scheduled 5. But in myself I was just happy to see the daylight and to have negotiated a leg safely – more importantly I felt nice and fresh and ate without any problems.

With soup, fresh water and a new top I felt good getting going – it was getting light really quickly and somewhere up Clough Head the torches had been dispensed with and we could enjoy the sunrise. I never enjoyed any recce of this climb but I was amazed how quickly it passed and we had plenty of conversation

on the way up. The rest must have done me good as we took 9m out of the climb to leave us 15m over our 23 hour schedule.

In reality I would have been over the moon with a 23.59 round, but 23 contained a bit of wriggle room (and conveniently is also on the Harvey map!) The amount I hovered above it now became become the magic number to which we referred to all day.

Off the top was great to get running again (almost like a rest) and we held onto time over the Dodds – then, with the tops coming in quick succession, time was passing rapidly and we were level or taking small chunks of time out of the schedule on every summit. I was even able to lift my head up occasionally to enjoy the view of a fabulous morning materialise – a definite high point of the day. By the time we hit Dollywagon Pike we were back to within 9m of our 23 hours. It was now getting hot (I was down to a t shirt from 5.30am) and despite a nice climb in the shadow of Fairfield I dropped time here and up Seat Sandal. However, a good descent to Dunmail Raise ensured we arrived within 7m of schedule.

**Leg 3 Pacers: - James White, Dan Weller, Marion Crawford**

	MY SCHEDULE		COMPARISON vs 23 hr schedule	
	Time between summits	Actual Time H:M	Between Summit times (m)	Overall Difference Vs 23 hours
Dunmail Raise - Depart	10	07:41:00	0	7
Steel Fell	28	08:09:00	3	10
Calf Crag	23	08:32:00	3	13
Sergeant Man	38	09:10:00	3	16
High Raise	10	09:20:00	1	17
Thunacar Knott	16	09:36:00	1	18
Harrison Stickle	7	09:43:00	-3	15
Pike o Stickle	14	09:57:00	2	17
Rossett Pike	48	10:45:00	3	20
Bowfell	34	11:19:00	-1	19
Esk Pike	24	11:43:00	-1	18
Great End	25	12:08:00	0	18
Ill Crag	14	12:22:00	-1	17
Broad Crag	10	12:32:00	0	17
Scafell Pike	14	12:46:00	2	19
Scafell	38	13:24:00	6	25
Wasdale - Arrive	34	<b>13:58:00</b>	-1	24

A more successful stop timewise! After a full change of shoes, socks and some food we were up Steel Fell. The next few summits were not a lot of fun – the heat had kicked in and eating had become chore which left me short of breath. My mind started to think ahead to how far we had to go which I promised to myself I wouldn't do. I did nothing else than follow in the footsteps of my pacers who did a great job of force feeding me and kept me moving; we steadily lost time in 1s and 2s which wasn't great. Sergeant Man was particularly long and grim and I was pleased to put the first section of leg 3 behind me.

We now had some occasional breeze and getting running again did me the world of good. I was talking and moving along nicely and even managed a fall (plus rolls) into the soft grass near High Raise as we passed through the Langdales and towards Rossett Pike. I felt better as we picked up the first bit of time on leg 3 at Harrison Stickle but were still dropping time overall and did so again on Pike o’Stickle and Rossett Pike. The latter climb was also not much fun; hot, sunny and bit of a drag through the grass. I was happy to see it off and get the grassy stuff out of the way.

Bowfell felt like it might make or break things...however I had probably climbed it more than any other part of the route and always really enjoyed it. I treated as a new start and was looking forward to a change in terrain. On the first ramp the special treats came out of the bag and I was handed a vanilla crown pastry! It went down amazingly well and we found the perfect line all the way up. A one-minute saving seemed a miserly reward for the effort but Bowfell felt like a major milestone and afterwards lots of things came together; food, breeze, and the novelty of different terrain. I hadn’t expected it, but having the general public around also really picked me up. Marion left us (at Scafell Pike I think) to organise lunch orders in Wasdale, and we moved on to Lord’s Rake, which amazingly was completely deserted and a lot of fun. Possibly too much fun as we lost 6m moving through it and the West Wall Traverse! The descent was tough but a really enjoyable highlight of the round none of us had found the scree slope successfully previously – today we got it right and we were treated to a nice fast descent towards Wasdale. We were able to all too briefly treat knees and legs as we hit the river which I would have stayed in for hours if I could...

**Leg 4 Pacers: Dan Weller, Jake Muskett**

	MY SCHEDULE		COMPARISON vs 23 hr schedule	
	Time between summits	Actual Time H:M	Between Summit times (m)	Overall Difference Vs 23 hours
Wasdale - Depart	9	14:07:00	-6	18
Yewbarrow	54	15:01:00	3	21
Red Pike	53	15:54:00	2	23
Steeple	24	16:18:00	0	23
Pillar	<b>35</b>	16:53:00	1	24
KirkFell	56	17:49:00	5	29
Great Gable	46	18:35:00	3	32
Green Gable	21	18:56:00	6	38
Brandreth	21	19:17:00	3	41
Grey Knotts	<b>12</b>	19:29:00	4	45
Honister - Arrive	<b>17</b>	<b>19:46:00</b>	4	49

“Get to Wasdale in with a chance” I was pleased to be here and (relatively) ok - the river had really helped freshen me up although I was desperate to pick the stones out of my feet from the descent - my leg 3 shoes were soaked and getting all the gravel out proved impossible so a full shoe and sock change a return to my red X talons from legs 1 and 2.

We set off early from Wasdale and headed up Yewbarrow which was long and hard – but despite a few choice words, not as bad as I had feared. It’s always entertaining to watch the reaction of someone else experience Yewbarrow for the first time – thanks Jake for keeping me amused on the way up! 3 minutes

down again but another big milestone gone. We met a very encouraging group of walkers at the summit and found the traverse without any problems. I hadn't fully recce'd this part but the conditions were perfect and to be running and exploring felt good - we chatted away throughout. The long slog up Red Pike put paid to that initial energy and now it felt like a case of holding onto the time I had as best I could. There was a long way to go still and, going up at least, I felt like I only had one gear – I just hoped it was a fast enough one. Small time drops were manageable but a bit demoralising at this stage; we agreed that a general "more or less on schedule" comment would suffice as a time check unless things got really got bad...

Everything seemed to slow down - the scenery was stunning but I tried not to taking in too much as I could see exactly what was coming up and most of it was big! Also, the cloud had completely gone by this point and the temperature remained high all the way to Honister. I had 2 things to look forward to; Steeple was approaching and my favourite peak of the round, and 2 extra pacers, Martin and his son Luke who I had taught at Primary school the previous year would be joining us before Kirk Fell. I was back in "just move forward" mode but fortunately had no other major discomfort. The patches of runnable path off Scoat Fell and Pillar were welcome breaks and on any other day I would have loved the spectacular scenery.

After an eternity we made it to Black Sail pass and it was a real lift to see Martin. He had already dispatched Luke who we could hear calling us somewhere on Kirk Fell above. He had also brought along several proper bottles of fresh water which was a lovely change from lukewarm squeeze flasks. We took a long, sandstone chute up the left side of Kirk Fell which was probably a bit slow but gave us a welcome break from the sun. I was reminded what a trek it was to the summit (again my mind had conveniently forgotten this) but fortunately Luke was bounding with energy and led the way for us.

Leg 4 was long but as time passed, I appreciated the fact I had less to weigh up in my head. Decisions about pace were long gone (I was moving as fast as I could) there was less navigation in front of me to worry about, and by now the 24hr figure was the only relevant one.

By Great Gable I did allow myself to think about possible success for the first time. If I didn't fall away hopelessly on the way up, I was in with a good chance. As expected, I was slow to the top but another big obstacle passed, and as a treat my pacers allowed me 30 seconds stopping time at the top which I appreciated.

From there the rest of leg 4 was very enjoyable, and the sun was finally relenting. But I was dropping more time than I realised. Despite a good line off Grey Knotts, since Pillar we had lost 22 more minutes. I arrived to a beautiful evening at Honister, but a fairly dramatic changeover...

**Leg 5 Pacers: Mark Dyer, Seila Blanco**

	MY SCHEDULE		COMPARISON vs 23 hr schedule	
	Time between summits	Actual Time H:M	Between Summit times (m)	Overall Difference Vs 23 hours
Honister - Depart	5	19:51:00	0	49
Dalehead	35	20:26:00	2	51
Hindscarth	17	20:43:00	-4	47
Robinson	25	21:08:00	-1	46
Keswick Moot Hall	96	22:44:00	-5	41

I wasn't really up to the maths at this point but it was evident from the activity around me that things were a bit tight. I was more or less dressed by helpers and sent packing in under 5 minutes. Mark kept the instructions simple; I had to pick it up and run to schedule, but if I did, we would make it. He and Seila were both very reassuring up Dale Head. I felt better for the break and but it took a little while to get my head around what I needed to do. Essentially, I had 10 minutes spare in the bank to get in under 24 hours. At some point on the way up the penny dropped and I found some urgency - we powered on up. Dale Head was another classic "I don't remember it being this far" sort of a peak but Mark was off and beckoning me from every false summit to keep me going.

After what I thought had been a solid climbing performance, I had lost a further 2 minutes...it was a long time since I had been out on leg 5 and with the time so tight, I started having doubts about finding the right cairns and whether my pace had gone. Mark remained unbelievably positive. I descended as fast as I could and fortunately my legs responded – the adrenaline must have been flowing as I recall even running uphill to Hindscarth, and we arrived 4 minutes up on that section. Robinson seemed further away than I had remembered and I had no recollection of where the true cairn was. Mark and Seila continued to yell encouragement and through the setting sun we made out a distinct trod which leading to the summit. Mark piled on the encouragement and reminded me if I could stay on time to Robinson, we still had at least 10-minutes in the bank to take with us to Keswick.

I was moving better for the running in my legs and hit the final top another minute under. A speed celebration and off again – fortunately we found a good line off the top and an even better one to bypass the second craggy step. I remember seeing 21.25 on my watch which seem good to me!

I had been dreading the steep grassy drop to Scope Beck but found an easy set of footsteps down. I Mark shot off in front to find Marion and I ran with Seila along the novelty of a grassy flat path and felt good. Marion met us at the gate and despite a long and drawn out run along the private road (which again I'd erased from memory and was no fun in X-Talons) we were in Littleton where coke and road shoes were waiting. My feet were sore but intact and the new shoes felt fantastic.

I'd heard stories of fast final miles and high spirits on the run in to Keswick but knowing I was back on track, after a mile or so on the road the adrenaline wore off. I had wanted to savour this moment, but as the light faded I got really drowsy following the wandering torches and flashing red light on Mark's bag – I was looking forward to the end and Marion was a welcome sight as she ran us over the bridge ensuring we didn't miss the gate for the Cumbria Way. Hitting the shops, for the first time on the whole round the distance felt shorter than expected! All over. 23h 44m. An unforgettable day and a genuinely humbling experience to be cheered home by all the people who had done so much to get me round; an amazing team, and I can't wait to repay the favour one day. Huge thanks to all of you.