

Emotional Roller coaster back to World Top 10 Taipei, Taiwan 25th-26th February 2006 World 24-Hour Champs

After the disappointment of running with a stomach infection in the Hull 24 hours back in October 2005 and not reaching the selection criteria I had no intentions of competing in Taiwan. The selection criteria was set at 215km for the women and given just three weeks notice to achieve this, this criteria was based on getting medals and to do that the criteria was based on the top 10 world rankings. I had come 14th at the previous world 24 hours in July 2005 with 200km.

I began training again in November and was to remain on medication for the stomach infection that disrupted my 24 hours until Christmas day. Training went well and after a good run in the Rotherham 50 miles decided over the Christmas period that may be a February 24 hours would be good to get my British ranking on its way before the big one for the year in July (Lands End to John O Groats). I had been British Number 1 for nine years and really wanted to round this up to 10 years and am not sure what my fitness will be like after LEJOG.

The decision made I then booked the trip with assistance from the Elite Athlete Scheme from Teesside University. I did a few sessions acclimatising to the heat and humidity in the Environmental Chamber at the University. The trip was to be a short one, I did not have the most pleasant experience the last time I visited Taiwan in 2003 for the World 100km, my memories were of snakes, spiders, earthquakes and inappropriate food, but the people were the most helpful ever met and the overall event and opening ceremony was the best I had ever been to. This was also to be the first 24 hours I had ever been to without the support of my husband Bill, a big challenge in itself.

I left at 5am on Wednesday 22nd February for the 24-hour journey from Teesside Airport via Heathrow and Hong Kong. At the airport in Taiwan I was with the German and Denmark team and the shuttle bus took us to the athletes village, which was in the Taipei Public Service Institute, somewhat like a boarding school style accommodation, basic but adequate with my own bathroom. I was on the fifth floor, which was only really a couple of floors up from the level arrived at. I got there in time for lunch and was curious to see what the food was like. It was Chinese style but had plenty of rice and vegetables and far more appropriate than my last experience. Alex and Marvin were the two men that looked after the athletes and kept us informed of all the latest itinerary. Alex explained in English what the food was and was always around to answer my questions.

In the afternoon I went for a short nap and then went to find the nearest shop to get water. I bought 12 litres and my arms were dropping off by the time I got back to the athletes village about a mile away, wished I had made two trips now. The evening meal was good and went to bed around 10pm. I slept very well and got up at 7:30am, my usual time. At breakfast they had obviously tried to incorporate western food with sausages and eggs, but had to make do with bread and jam. The other bit of good news was that Mick Francis came to meet me while queuing for breakfast; I had known him as a Scottish athlete many years ago who was now running for Australia.

It was good to sit with some other English speaking athletes and they also offered to support me (as had the Germans and Americans) but it was impossible with the change of course that had only recently been announced. I got given a pin badge of a kangaroo as a symbol to affiliate with the team, it was called Skippy!!

I collected my number and paid the entry fee (\$2600 equivalent to approx £50) and got a race shirt and pair of Adidas shoes (that now made the entry fee value for money).

At 11:30am I collected my lunch box as all the athletes were taken out for the opening ceremony. I sat on the bus at noon and ate some of my lunch, luckily I had brought enough snacks of my own to add to the lunch. The opening ceremony began at 13:00 at the Taipei City Government. The athletes were all allocated chairs with flags on representing their nation, I was pleased to see the Union Jack, as being part of the open race was not sure that I would be represented here. After the usual speeches the international teams were individually led on stage and their names announced. It was here that I met Peter, who was from Hong Kong but originally from Birmingham, he had run the race here previously. After the ceremony the buses took us to the race venue so that we could see the course. The course had been changed on the Monday prior to the race and was very disappointing. Apart from the fact that the course now looked like a maze, the open race was also separated in places from the world championship and was also a lot shorter than the original mile course that had been planned. There were several semi-circles, s bends and sharp corners that went through the middle of the park. The open race and world runners did an almost identical course through the middle of the park with all the twists and turns then the open race turned left around the outskirts of the park and the world runners turned right around the opposite side of the park. The open route was around 700m and the world route around 1000m. There was also a slight incline on the world route, but I would have preferred to run a slightly longer course so that I would not have to do so many laps around the maze in the middle of the park. The race was champion-chipped and plasma screens were to display the results. After the tour I tagged on to the Americans to negotiate the MRT (transport system like the tube) to get back to the athletes village, the route back from the station was up around 200 steps and would never have found my way back on my own and was grateful for the company.

By the time I got back there was only about an hour before dinner, so rested and drank well before dinner. This was supposed to be a pasta party, there was spaghetti but it was well outnumbered by the other dishes but was a very good meal loaded with carbohydrates, just a little cold. I sat with the Australians and listened to the rules from the technical meeting, nothing new as far as I was concerned. They also offered support but as I was in a different area for support they said if I needed help to tell one of the Australian runners and they would relay the message to the support crew. There were 4 men running in the Australian team.

I then prepared my race stuff for the next day. My kit was in one bag with my vest numbered front and back and a bib in case it rained and had to wear a waterproof. The forecast I had seen before leaving home had been for 19 degrees and rain, but high humidity of 90%. My bottles had all been prepared and labelled before leaving home, I just had to mix up the drinks and fill the bottles and was going to do this in the morning for fear of them going off if I made them the night before.

I went to bed at 10pm and slept until 2am. I was wide-awake and totally unable to sleep, the time difference of 8 hours ahead had caught up with me. I thought after sleeping so well the previous night that I had adapted well and was one of the big risks I was taking in arriving so close to the event. Last time I came to Taiwan I had 7-8 days to adjust. At 4am I was so fed up I started mixing my drinks and had some instant porridge (I had my faithful kettle with me). At 6am I mixed some milk drinks up (I had taken these back in the Hull 24 hours with the stomach infection that had caused a very acid stomach, the milk had neutralised this a little but had found they went down very well so gave them another go, Glycoslim from Mannatech). I only made up half the milk drinks as I did not want them to go off and had planned to mix the other half up about 12 hours into the race. I had some more porridge and this was the only bit of good news about getting up so early, I was well fed and hydrated in time to catch the shuttle bus at 8am. My suitcase was now incredibly heavy to lift down the flights of stairs to catch the bus and really struggled, not what I needed at this stage, but a friendly Brazilian lifted it onto the bus for me.

We arrived around 8:45am. The set up for the race was very good. Along the straight part of the course on the outskirts of the park was a line of tents (like gazebos with just the roof covered and no sides). Each tent was for 3 athletes and a big table and three chairs were provided per tent. This was very generous and I had been allocated a tent with Peter from Hong Kong and David from Canada. The first few tents were the official feed stations providing drinks from cups, coffee and food. I had brought all my own food with me – I had custard, jelly, tin potatoes, milk rolls (sweet bread like brioche) nutri-grain bars and maltesers. In terms of drinks I had 4 litres of sports drink made up, 4 litres of water, 4 litres of milk drinks (only 2 litres made up), coke, fruit juice, lucozade and a flask of coffee (for after the race I had malt loaf and mince pies). I had five shoe boxes for my supplies, a box for water, sports drink and milk shake was placed at the front of the table, on the second row was a shoe box with coke, lucozade, juice and coffee and a shoe box with the food in. Under the table were another 4 litres of spare water and the flask and behind the table I left my suitcase with my spare kit in, shoes and first aid and wash kit.

It did not take long to set up the table and David and Peter arrived with just a few bottles of drinks and energy bars and spare kit. I was told my set up looked very professional, well I have been doing this for some time and know what I need!! The course was open to the public and then seemed to gather quite a lot of attention from passers by and other athletes in the open race. Many were taking photos, the table next to me also kept asking questions and began bugging me. David had a pb of 219km and Peter of 209km, I had been hoping to break my pb of 217km, and so we were all of similar ability. David had recently run a marathon in 2 hrs 38 mins and Peter in 3 hrs 51 mins. My most recent marathon was in the Draycote 35, which I did in around 3 hrs 32 mins while on a steady run.

I dressed and put my shoes on ready for the race, my thermometer was now reading 22 degrees and it felt very sticky and humid. Hilary Walker, usually the team manager for GB, came to see me, she was out here on IAU (International Association of Ultra runners) duties and although unable to support me she said she would be able to visit intermittently if I needed anything mixing or filling bottles. I told her of my set up and mainly that the milk drinks needed mixing after 12 hours for the second

half of the race and other drinks such as water and coke and juice that could be refilled.

I then sat there contemplating the task ahead, I had three main goals to fulfil from this race:

- 1) I desperately wanted to come in the top 10 positions of the world championships (I was 14th with 200km last year).
- 2) I wanted a pb (pb is 217km) or at the very least to gain the 215km that was selection criteria.
- 3) I wanted to set a distance that would be good enough to rank me as British Number 1 for the tenth year (I guessed approximately 200km would be good enough for this).

As I sat there thinking about all the twists and turns in the course, the fact that I had no support from Bill to hand me food and drinks and encourage me, I had so little sleep in recent days with the travelling and only 4 hours sleep the night before, the weather was hot and humid now and predicting rain later, I began to wonder what I was doing here, no way was I going to get a pb with all these obstacles in the way. Although my fitness was very good the odds were stacking up against me and reality set home that I had set my goals far too high. If I could have just flown home here and now I would have done, how could I expect to travel for 24 hours, have just 24 hours to recover, then run a 24 hour race, what was I thinking of, this was just impossible and thought it would take all my strength just to run this let alone setting any goals, I really wished I had not come and could turn back the clock, but I was here and just had to try and see what would happen. I needed Bill, I needed reassurance that I could do this, I had left my mobile phone at the athletes village as everything was open access to everyone and there was no security for my stuff, also it was about 2am back home so I bet Bill was glad that I had left it there otherwise I am sure I would have rung him as I was feeling that down and depressed.

I paid a last visit to the toilet, my body system had not adjusted to the changes and knew that I would need to visit again early on in the race, just another problem to slow me down, and the last disadvantage – the toilets were squats, the only time I get to sit down in the race is on the toilet and now even that has been taken from me!!

I stood on the start line not feeling at all excited, nervous or hyped up, I just wanted to be back home tucked up in bed for this 10am start that was really 2am for me. The gun went and the long journey started. The twists and turns were very tight and in places the course was narrow, only allowing enough for two runners. Based on the loop distance of approximately 700m I had calculated that 10 laps would mean 7km and 10.5km should be 15 laps, I wanted to run at 10km an hour and so estimated 15 laps an hour at 4 minutes per lap would give me 60 minutes exactly. This was just the pace not to go faster than but if I ran slower then I would not increase the pace to achieve this.

By the end of the first hour I was almost on the dot on 15 laps, David had lapped me and Peter was just a few metres ahead. By the end of the second hour it was 14 laps but not particularly bothered at being a fraction slower. I was concentrating on my drinks and found it quite easy to collect my drinks from the shoe boxes, only losing a few seconds to divert up the kerb to the table, it was becoming apparent to me just

how rutted this part of the course was, the road was extremely uneven and stumbled in many places, I thought this was just another obstacle to slow me down and hurt my ankles in the latter stages. My other thoughts were of the traffic that was building up next to the course, on this back straight where the tents were was parallel to a busy road, the traffic was stationery with traffic lights at the end and was two lanes of polluting car exhaust fumes. I began to worry that my breathing may turn asthmatic breathing in the pollution but there was a bit of a breeze that was blowing in the right direction to blow the fumes away and could not smell too many fumes. It is one of the things my asthma is very sensitive to. It was now reading 25 degrees and guessed the humidity was around 90 percent as it felt very damp. The plasma screens were recording the world championship runners but the screen on my side was reading an earlier relay race, I had guidance to how many laps I had run by the manual recording. I had a cute little boy who barely looked beyond 14, he was very enthusiastic and jumping up and down on his chair when I came round, he turned the numbers over on a small pad and held it up to me, at the bottom was my race number of 14 and the order of the laps recorders was also in race number order so he was relatively easy to find amongst the 70 or so open race runners.

The race progressed and by the end of the first 4 hours had already paid the first of many trips to the toilets, not something that is usually anticipated so early in the race. I was now running more contently and pleased at myself for arranging my drinks so well and was not missing this part of my support crew. Into the next four hours and David was forced to retire around 6 hours into the race, the corners were affecting him, he had blisters to attend to and his left knee was hurting on all the twists and bends. I was aware that my pace has slipped well below the 14-15 laps per hour and was struggling in my head to work out the number of laps required to 100km. On the principle of 10 laps for 7km, that made 100 laps for 70km and 150 laps for 105km, take off 10 laps makes 98km, I was guessing it was around 143 laps, I can't remember exactly what my laps were now but was aware it was below this figure and was beginning to worry that this was going to be a really poor run. My lap recorder changed at 6 hours and the plasma screen was now recording my laps as well. It took a while to figure out that the first screen was the open 24-hour men, the second screen the open 24 hour women, the third screen the World 24 hour men and the fourth screen the World 24 hour women. The screens were also not that easy to read on approaching as the writing was quite small from the distances we were at. As my laps were shorter than the world 24-hour laps I could not compare the laps. I had spoken to Peter a couple of times while lapping him and he said the actual lap distance was written on the road, I had seen the odd marking but not really taken a lot of notice, on closer examination it was obvious that the 700m mark was some way short of the finish of the lap which made it longer than 700m and eventually saw a 732m mark near the champion chip mats. Now I was getting a little upset, 10 laps was now 7.3km, this meant the 15 laps in the first hour was too fast and was the reason for slowing down, but just what pace was I now running out, had I run too fast and was I now on a downward spiral. I just knew this was not going well and was beginning to get frustrated at not knowing exactly how far I had run, were the constant turns making me run slower, were all the other athletes experiencing this or were they running well? I began to feel lonely knowing there was no Bill there to turn to for information.

By the end of the 8 hours it was getting dark now, I was aware the temperature had dropped slightly and some of the runners were putting on more clothes, I put my long sleeve top on around 10 hours and was now wondering how far I had really run, I had been running blind for 10 hours and although I knew exactly how many laps I had run I just could not multiply that in my head by 732m. My food and drinks were going down well but my feet were beginning to get tender on the turns and had already stumbled a few times on the uneven surface, also my left knee was beginning to ache on the twisting course.

At 10 hours the open race runners then had the disadvantage of 12 hour runners joining the course, I had heard there were 200 runners in the 12 hours race, there had been 69 entrants in the open race and had already struggled to overtake several times on the narrow sections. I saw them all gathering and looked at the clock, there were 2 minutes until the hour and so I should be at the far end of the course when they start and so will have time to settle down a bit and spread out by the time they lap me. It did take some time before I was lapped and they were wearing black numbers compared to our green ones (the world runners were wearing red). There didn't appear to be as many as 200 and although the course was a little more crowded it wasn't as bad as I was expecting.

I could see Hilary in my tent refilling the milk shake, I was pleased at this as it meant that I didn't have to stop and waste time doing this myself. Seeing that all my water bottles and the coke and juice had been refilled I felt a bit happier, if I had just been a bit more observant I would also have seen that she had actually left a note informing me of the top women in the World 24 hours and that my distance at 11 hours was actually 108km and that this was 7th place in the World 24 hours and only 9km behind the leader, unfortunately I didn't get this until I was packing my stuff away at the end of the race, I was just too focussed on just getting what I wanted from my boxes and although the note was extremely prominent at the end of a shoe box I was just oblivious to it.

After 11 hours I was sinking again, I really wanted to know how I was doing. How many kilometres had I run? What was my position? I had seen from the plasma display that a Japanese woman, Yasuko Kanehira had been leading the open race and that I had just taken the lead by a couple of laps, I assume she must have had some time out for me to get in front, on paper she was the next person on the list behind me had a pb of 184km and was surprised that I was being challenged. My feet were hurting, I knew I had a couple of blisters, my knees were beginning ache more and I was getting more and more frustrated, I really needed Bill now to snap out of it, I was thinking what would he be telling me now if I was going through a rough patch? Well I know I would just come out of it and get over it, I just had to persevere and get through it. Why did I come? I knew I had made the wrong decision at the start line. I sat down in my tent and decided to have a drink of coffee and try to pull myself together tears rolling down my face. How could I really expect to run well? What do I do with myself now? Do I drop out and admit defeat? It is a long, expensive way to come for a 12 hour run and fail to complete any of my goals, I can't give up this easily, I must find out exactly how far I have run, and what about the Australians, I was in trouble and needed help, although I really didn't want to bother them I was close to quitting and really needed someone to talk to. I got myself up and walked on and stopped at the lap recording person to ask how many kilometres I had run, the

answer was how many laps, she didn't understand, I repeated it several times and some of the neighbouring recorders looked on, no-one understanding, I repeated several times the word kilometres in hope that someone would understand. I left in even worse state and decided I must summon help. On walking through the middle section of the course I managed to catch an Australian shirt, on asking for help to be relayed to his support crew the response was that most of the team were struggling and Mick had passed out and may be some time before help could come. I carried on walking very upset and decided to just walk for a bit not knowing what to do with myself, if I did drop out there was nothing to do so may just as well carry on. My thoughts were going back to being British Number 1 for the last nine years, this may be my only chance to keep that record going for another year, what would be the minimum distance I would be satisfied with to achieve this? On walking through the lap recording area, did I hear 119km for 12 hours, well that is 1km ahead of my schedule, I had planned 10km an hour for the first 10 hours then dropping to 9km an hour for the next 6 hours. No sooner had I heard this than I heard Mick's sister, also called Hilary, she would meet me at my tent, and it had only been about 10 minutes since I had asked for help. I started running again to get to the tent. I was in a state and was hard to console, she rang Bill but only got the answering machine and so left a message to ring back, she told me everyone was suffering and that about 30 athletes had already dropped out, the Australian team were suffering with sickness and the course was taking its toll on all the athletes, even the Russians were struggling and the top man, last years World Champion was in trouble. This was making me feel so much better, I really wasn't alone with my suffering, if everyone was hurting then may be distances would be poor and may be I could make the top 10 after all with less than 200km. The tears had stopped and I was ready to go again, if I really had done 119km then I wasn't running so badly. Just as I left the tent the mobile rang, it was Bill, I just burst into tears again but it was so good to hear him, he was as supportive as ever telling me how proud he was that I was prepared to come here on my own to compete and that he was so proud that I had even tried to do this alone, he said if I wasn't enjoying it then don't suffer and injure myself there are other events I can do to achieve my goals (namely the Hull 24 hours in May). After 20 minutes on the phone I was on a high, my distance wasn't as bad as I thought, everyone was suffering. Hilary said to go out and try and do another couple of hours to see how things were and that she would return in two hours time to see me. I went out renewed, my feet felt better, the niggle in my knee disappeared and I was enjoying running again. By the time I had finished the next lap Hilary was confirming my distance was 119km, but this distance was for 13 hours as an hour had passed in my depressed state, my splits later revealed just 7km for 11-12 hours and 4km for 12-13 hours, I had lost 10km being in my emotional state.

However, that was in the past now, ok I had lost 10km but my planned target was 220km, that now meant I could achieve 210km, was that so bad? That would still probably leave me as British Number 1 and probably make the World top 10, that's two goals achieved. I was on a high again and floating, the pain had all gone and was aware that I was running faster than many of the World Championship runners when the rain started, it just got heavier and heavier and the course was waterlogged, ankle deep in places and the rutted road filled up with massive puddles. Did I get down about the rain, no, I noticed that the field had thinned out, the rain was finishing them off or they were taking a break to avoid it, but there was no avoidance, it was set in for most of the remainder of the race. The only news I was a little disappointed with

was the fact that before my “blip” in running I had just taken the lead in the ladies open race by 2 laps and by the time I got myself going again I had now slipped to 8 laps behind the leader, I had anticipated any challenge in this race as on paper my pb was 30km better than any other female in the race. I just hoped that I would be strong enough to pull back a lap an hour to win the race.

As Hilary Walker was back in my tent again doing another refill she got my jacket out assuming I should put it on, I came in to get a cap on to keep the water from my eyes, I was in two minds as I didn't feel that cold, but it is always best to put extra kit on before feeling the cold and she recommended it and so went with the recommendation. I often find it hard to put on extra clothes and Bill normally keeps an eye on the field and informs me when people start putting on kit as I am usually so focussed on the race and running and don't feel the cold until I am really cold or start to slow down. I looked at the temperature gauge, it read 16 degrees, I was already soaked and thought that if I do start to slow down I will get cold so it probably wise to put it on now. I put on the jacket and numbered bib and cap and asked for a coffee to make use of Hilary Walker while she was there, she did this and handed it to me on my next lap.

The hours ticked by and Hilary from the Aussie crew returned and had already checked my distance for me, can't remember what it was now but I was happy that I was back on course and was now aiming for the 200km mark and that was my next request, how many laps make 200km so I have a goal to aim at, after checking she came back with 274 laps and that I had to do 10 laps an hour for the remainder of the race to achieve that goal. By now I had run 16 hours, two thirds of the race done. I was not really feeling that bad at all, my feet were tender still but was happy within myself.

The rain eased off for a short while but then returned with a vengeance, in one place there was a wooden ramp to ease a drop from a kerb, this began floating in a big puddle and was difficult to use. Also the lap recording area seemed to collect a stream that had to be splashed through. Hilary Walker returned around 17 hours and managed to get another coffee poured out, and it was when returning the bottle I saw the soggy bit of paper updating me with the 17 hour splits, I had run 153km, my schedule had been for 162km so was still maintaining my pace and was now 9km from my schedule, may be this result was not going to be as disastrous as I believed, the shock I also got from the paper that I found hard to believe was that I was in eighth place in the World 24 hours, this was beginning to be worth the effort, would Bill believe this after the state I spoke to him in?

At 20 hours I got the confirmation from Hilary Walker that I was in 8th place still, the plasma screens had begun working again, I had been slowly pulling back on the Japanese lady leading the open race and was now within 3 laps of her, I was confident that I had paced myself well and that the race would be mine. The last 4 hours had often been my worse part of the race until I conquered the psychological problem I had with this stage of the race last year with the help of Laura Fleming from the University of Teesside. Just like last year I was now really looking forward to the last 4 hours to see just how well I could run this time, I feel this is the area where the race is won or lost, I was losing and could I win?

I was still maintaining pace, my distance at 20 hours was 178km, my plan said 186km, I had pulled another km back, I now began to believe that 210km was really on the cards, far better than the 200km I had been aiming at since the half way struggle. That 274 laps was getting closer and closer as day light came. The Japanese lady was faltering and I was moving in fast, around 21 hours I noticed there was just a lap difference when the plasma screens went again. The next time I was to see the leading lady, who was race number 10 was as I approached her close to the lap recording area, with the screens being down I looked at the lap recorder of race number 10 to compare her laps with mine, with her number 10 and my number 14 being close in the order of lap recorders and me being right on her tail they were both held up at the same time and both recorded the same distance. She must have noticed to as she glanced behind to see me and initially tried to put an effort in to respond, but it was very short lived, with just under 3 hours remaining it was going to be hard to hold me off, I overtook her and tried to put an effort in to get away, she must have been very demoralised and it was not long before I lapped her again and could breathe a sigh of relief that I had now opened a short winning lead.

I felt as though I was running incredibly strongly and knew this was probably going to be my best ever last 4 hours of the race, I was happy knowing I had conquered my fear of this section of the race yet again and it was going to mean the difference between winning and losing. The 12 hour race finally ground to a halt at 22 hours into the race, one of the 12 hour runners had spoken to me to say that he thought I was a very good runner, he was doing a 12 hour race, I was doing 24 hours and I was overtaking him, he wished me good luck.

Hilary Walker was now at the lap recording area and keeping me regularly updated on my distance, she was aware that I was closing in on the 215km criteria, I thought this was far beyond my ability having had such a bad two hours in the middle of the race. I finally went through 200km or 274 laps with 22 and a half hours on the clock, this left just 90 minutes to run 15km to get the criteria, that was 10km an hour for one and a half hours, impossible at this stage of the race, I start at 10km an hour but I was determined to get as close as possible. This could be my second best race ever and just kept trying to maintain pace. At 23 hours it was 205km, I asked how many laps to reach 215km and the next lap she shouted the answer, it was very difficult to hear now as the supporters had come out in force around this area and cheering very loudly. It was also now difficult to even see my lap recorder as people were getting in the way and the plasma screens were completely surrounded by supporters. I had noticed that David from Canada was back and cheering me on. I was running as hard as I could and dare not even stop to take on food for fear of taking up too much time, with 15 minutes remaining I was beginning to slow again, the intense pace at this stage of the race was taking its toll, my feet were really hurting now and was just running out of steam, it was just one challenge too far, the slight uphill to the lap recording area now felt like a mountain but the time passed really quickly and finished just a few seconds beyond the lap recording area when the count down to the finish ended. I sat on the ground and didn't know what to think, was I pleased or not? I was happy to have finished the race having had such a bad spell at half way that I came so close to dropping out, I knew I had probably achieved two of my goals, namely to get back to the world top 10 and hopefully run a distance that no other British female can match (can't remember the last time another female has gone over 200km) so that I maintained my British Number 1 ranking for the 10th consecutive

year. I knew I had not reached 215km and guessed it was around 213km. I was glad just to sit for a while and wait for the measuring people to come around but I really wanted just to take my shoes off as my feet were so tender.

I walked back to my tent, it was disappointing as there was no one here, no one to look after me and tell me I had done well, I threw all the shoe boxes and bottles away so there was hardly anything to pack. I guessed it was best just to find the showers now so that I could get changed to stop me from getting cold now that I had stopped. I knew they were close by in the football stadium but not sure exactly where. I wondered where Peter was, his stuff was still next to mine and he had run a good race, probably just short of his pb and was aware he was on the leader board for the men. As I began walking slowly up to the stadium a local supporter came out to help me, he was very insistent he must help and take my suitcase and was very friendly, typical of most of the people I had met out here, he asked where I was going and told me to wait while he ran ahead to find out where the showers were and take me there, this is what Taiwan is about and ultras, the extremely friendly people that go out of their way to help you, he boosted my spirits enormously. As he came running back having found out where the showers were Hilary Walker found me to see if I needed assistance. I was fine by this stage and the local supporter took me to the showers and I thanked him for his help. Hilary also informed me that I had run 214km that was more than I had anticipated and was very pleased to hear that.

Many of the other athletes arrived in the showers shortly after and walked to the presentation area with the German team. The presentation was at mid-day and sat outside near the stage. I was quite cold now but at least it was not raining. There were some dancers to start with and then a few speeches before the presentation started. It took a while for the local Taiwan Championships, the Asian Championships, the World Championships, the Asian and World team awards and finally the open race. These are always long drawn out affairs, probably partly because the athletes are also so slow in getting onto the stage, myself included as it is hard work after running for so long.

There were awards for the top five in all the races. I initially received a small glass trophy that had said 4th place, but there were not enough awards made so they were taken back and just given for the display and told it would be sent on by post later. The presentation over it was back to the shuttle bus to be taken back. We were given a Chinese style packed lunch with chicken, rice and vegetables, I didn't find it that easy to eat with the chop sticks but it went down well and needed the food at this stage. I sat on the bus behind Harry Arndt from Germany, the official course measurer that I have known for many years, he showed me a copy of the World 24 hour results, I was amazed I was 6th place, just two Japanese and three Russians ahead of me, I felt very disappointed that I had not been representing my country and had not been included in these results, my results were listed separately.

Back to the athletes village and I had the stairs to contend with and my suitcase, the Aussies came to the rescue again and insisted I couldn't carry my case up, I didn't argue because I really couldn't carry my case up, it was hard enough to get myself up the stairs. I rested on the bed with a cup of tea and checked the time, it was 4pm now, that would mean it was 8am back home and so rang Bill to give him the verdict. When I said you will not believe what I did after I had talked to him in a state at half

way and thought I would be dropping out, he replied I know you would have carried on and finished as you are too tough to drop out, he knows me well. He was shocked at the distance I had run and was as proud as ever given the obstacles in my way, it was great to talk to him again, although I had coped very well with the food and drink without him I had really not coped well with not having the emotional support he gives me which is obviously really essential to success for me.

The Aussies soon knocked the door again as it was time for dinner and just checking I was ok really, again very nice to know someone cares, I went to dinner with them and another good meal, not that many people were up to eating much. Alex gave me the hourly splits that Hilary Walker had managed to print off, most were for the second half of the race which is really the key hours when the running starts to slow down. After dinner I packed my bag and Marvin gave me the information that I would get the shuttle bus at 3am to take me to the airport with the Italians.

I went to bed at 10pm and was wide awake again at 2am, same as before the race, it didn't matter though so just had a cup of tea and waited for 3am for the bus. It arrived at 3:15am and was beginning to get worried it was not going to turn up. We then got dropped off at the wrong terminal but the driver had obviously realised and came back in to take us to the correct terminal. When we got there it was just as deserted. My flight was the first flight of the day at 6:25am to Hong Kong and as it was now 4:30am was surprised there was no one at check in. I chatted to some of the Italians while waiting, they are probably one of the biggest teams here and know many of them well as have raced several times in Italy. I waited and eventually at 5:10am the check in staff arrived. The flights were all on time and arrived back to a very cold Teesside at 9pm, just 2 degrees as I walked down the steps from the plane. Bill was at home when I got there at 10pm, he often stays out with his job as a lorry driver so was pleased he was actually home for once. The next day I awoke to snow and knew I was home, it was freezing.

On reflection now although I feel disappointed at not getting a pb or getting the 215km for the selection criteria it was a very good performance given the many obstacles I had to face. I really think I had probably set my sights far too high and not been realistic over the problems I would face. Given this I am now content that this was a good performance and am really chuffed that I have managed to get back into the World top 10, 6th place is probably higher than I could have anticipated and just shows how tough our selection criteria is. I really think that UK Athletics has gone well over the top in setting unrealistic criteria. If all countries based their selection criteria that same as UK Athletics there would be just 10 male and female athletes taking part.

The race for me was probably my best ever run, when I set my pb of 217km this was in ideal conditions on the superbly flat mile loop around a park in Apeldoorn, Holland with none of the sharp twists and turns, just four rounded corners and no congestion on the course. Given the travelling, no support from Bill, far from ideal course and weather conditions and a two hour blip in the middle, this now gives me the confidence that in better conditions on a better course with back up 225km should easily be within my reach, possibly 230km. I still find it hard to believe I came back so strongly after coming within a whisker of withdrawing from this event and getting such a distance on the winding course and poor weather after taking a long time out.

From the split times below my 4-hour splits are approximately:

Hour	Split (km)
4	40
8	40
12	35
16	30
20	33
24	36

My split times that I am aware of

Hour	Position Open Race	Total Laps	Total Distance	Laps per hour	Kilometres per hour
1		15		15	10.98
2		29		14	10.24
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11			108		
12	9	158	115.67		
13	12	163	119.33	5	3.66
14	9	175	128.12	12	8.79
15				12	8.79
16				12	8.79
17	6	210	153.74	11	8.05
18	5	221	161.79	11	8.05
19	4	233	170.58	12	8.79
20	4	244	178.63	11	8.05
21	3	256	187.42	12	8.79
22	3	269	196.93	13	9.51
23		281	205.72	12	8.79
24	3	293	214.56	12	8.84

Food and drink approximated.

3 litres water
 3 litres sports drink
 4 litres Glycoslim milkshake from Mannatech
 200ml orange juice
 250ml lucozade
 300ml coke
 1 litre coffee

5 tubs jelly
 6 tubs custard
 3 ginger nutri-grains
 2 mini bags maltesers
 1 milk bun (brioche)
 300g new potatoes
 4 small cups pasta

Results of open race

2006IAU 24 UltraMarathon 25-26/02/2006

Report 24Hrs Open Man Top 5

Pos	Gender	Num	Name	Nat	Lap	Distance_m
1	M	1	MOTOHISA TADOKORO	JPN	321	235054
2	M	2	HIROYUKI NISHIMURA	JPN	311	228071
3	M	4	RYOICHI SATO	JPN	281	205770
4	M	15	PETER TANNER	HKG	276	202170
5	M	41	Min-nan Tsu	TPE	272	199664

ChampionChip Nederland 2006/2/26 12:08:51

2006IAU 24 UltraMarathon 25-26/02/2006

Report 24Hrs Open Woman Top 5

Pos	Gender	Num	Name	Nat	Lap	Distance_m
1	W	14	SHARON GAYTER	GBR	293	214568
2	W	10	YASUKO KANEHIRA	JPN	285	208810
3	W	9	EMI KATO	JPN	264	193324
4	W	11	ROYOKO MOTOKI	JPN	261	191111
5	W	42	Bi-lien Huang	TPE	236	173126

ChampionChip Nederland 2006/2/26 12:09:12

Results of World 24 hours

2006IAU 24 UltraMarathon 25-26/02/2006

Report 24hrs World Challenge Man Overall

Rank	Gender	Num	Name	Nat	Lap	Distance_m
1	M	55	RYOICHI SEKIYA	JPN	276	272936
2	M	20	MAGROUN MOHAMED	FRA	251	248563
3	M	74	VLADIMIR BYCHKOV	RUS	249	246098
4	M	42	OSVALDO BELTRAMINO	ITA	248	245698
5	M	54	MASAYUKI OTAKI	JPN	247	244572
6	M	22	HOBLEA FABIEN	FRA	246	243709
7	M	59	KENJI OKIYAMA	JPN	241	238061
8	M	45	ENRICO BARTOLINI	ITA	238	235100
9	M	64	KIM KWANGBOK	KOR	236	233522
10	M	75	ANDREI KAZANTSEV	RUS	236	233415
11	M	3	MARTIN FRYER	AUS	236	233239
12	M	58	KANAME SAKURAI	JPN	235	232894
13	M	23	GUYOMARCH JEAN PIERRE	FRA	235	232140
14	M	43	GASTONE BARICHELLO	ITA	231	228879
15	M	76	VLADIMIR TIVIKOV	RUS	231	228846
16	M	39	TONY MANGAN	IRL	231	228299
17	M	24	PROVOST DOMINIQUE	FRA	230	227666
18	M	32	THOMAS WENNING	GER	230	227414
19	M	82	SLAVOMIR LINDVAI	SVK	228	225910
20	M	49	MARIO PIROTTA	ITA	227	224665
21	M	56	KURODA MUNEHARU	JPN	225	222301
22	M	91	WU SHENG MING	TPE	224	221901
23	M	99	JOHN GEESLER	USA	224	221859
24	M	109	JEON SEONGHA	KOR	223	220683
25	M	103	ALEX SWENSON	USA	221	219272
26	M	44	MARCO BAGGI	ITA	219	216944
27	M	85	REIMA HARTIKAINEN	SWE	217	215187
28	M	89	CHEN CHUN YEN	TPE	217	214453
29	M	101	ROY PIRRUNG	USA	215	212969
30	M	2	MICK FRANCIS	AUS	212	210213
31	M	14	VLASTIMIL DVORACEK	CZE	208	205863
32	M	69	AUGUST JAKUBIK	POL	207	205088
33	M	92	CHEN CHIN CHAI	TPE	206	204152
34	M	35	DOMAN GABOR	HUN	206	204109
35	M	86	OTTO ELMGART	SWE	206	203751

36M	46LUCIO BAZZANA	ITA	205	203229
37M	36TRESO GABOR	HUN	205	202491
38M	104DANNY RIPKA	USA	204	201765
39M	57NOBUMI IWAMOTO	JPN	200	197590
40M	115JEONG CHANGSOUN	KOR	199	197263
41M	40MARTIN REA	IRL	195	192931
42M	48MASSIMO PETRUZZELLI	ITA	194	192162
43M	87KJELL-OVE SKOGLUND	SWE	193	191349
44M	100SCOTT EPELMAN	USA	191	189361
45M	90CHEN CHING HUI	TPE	191	189179
46M	15JAN ONDRUS	CZE	188	186412
47M	66KIM SOOYEUL	KOR	188	186398
48M	34BOGAR JANOS	HUN	188	185688
49M	1PAUL EVERY	AUS	187	185015
50M	47ANTONIO MAZZEO	ITA	184	182483
51M	10NADEEM KHAN	CAN	181	179186
52M	4SIMON PHILLIPS	AUS	179	177533
53M	116JEON BYOUNGCHEOL	KOR	179	177509
54M	65KIM BOKLEUL	KOR	166	164659
55M	37RICHARD DONOVAN	IRL	166	163958
56M	13LEKO SITPE	CRO	165	163040
57M	21CONRAUX EMMANUEL	FRA	162	160443
58M	17ALEX CV HENRIKSEN	DEN	161	159740
59M	70WALDEMAR PEDZICH	POL	159	157695
60M	112KIM HWEI	KOR	159	157485
61M	111YOUN JANGWOONG	KOR	156	154098
62M	93YANG HSIN FU	TPE	154	152811
63M	8MICHEL GOUIN	CAN	153	151905
64M	41SERGIO ORSI	ITA	153	151118
65M	5LUCIANO PRADO DOS SANTOS	BRA	149	147607
66M	38EOIN KEITH	IRL	147	145192
67M	9SYLVAIN BERNIER	CAN	144	142968
68M	71CZESLAW MACHERZYNSKI	POL	127	125438
69M	73ROMAN SALIY	RUS	122	120499
70M	7JULIO CESAR LATINI JUNIOR	BRA	117	116549
71M	72ANATOLIY KRUGLIKOV	RUS	115	113586
72M	6HEROI FUNG	BRA	100	99373
73M	102RUDY AFANADOR	USA	73	72102
74M	16TOMAS RUSEK	CZE	52	51360
75M	84IMRICH SOLTES	SVK	51	50373
76M	83MICHAL SERECIN	SVK	16	15803

2006IAU 24 UltraMarathon 25-26/02/2006

Report 24hrs World Challenge Woman Overall

Rank	Gender	Num	Name	Nat	Lap	Distance_m
1	W	60	SUMIE INAGAKI	JPN	240	237144
2	W	80	LYUDMILA KALININA	RUS	234	231356
3	W	61	KIMIE NOTO	JPN	232	229146
4	W	77	GALINA EREMINA	RUS	225	223208
5	W	78	IRINA REUTOVICH	RUS	219	216913
6	W	18	KAREN MARIE BROEGGER	DEN	216	213427
7	W	68	CAROLYNNE TASSIE	NZL	214	212348
8	W	95	CHIOU SHU JUNG	TPE	208	206287
9	W	67	JANNEKE CAZEMIER	NED	206	203625
10	W	81	RIMMA PALTEVA	RUS	205	202705
11	W	28	FIRMIN NATHALIE	FRA	205	202589
12	W	50	LORENA DI VITO	ITA	204	201929
13	W	51	MONIKA MOLING	ITA	202	200315
14	W	33	ILONA SCHLEGEL	GER	200	198511
15	W	27	JEHANNON VERONIQUE	FRA	199	197285
16	W	98	CHU MEI JUNG	TPE	199	196963
17	W	26	BEC BRIGITTE	FRA	198	196298
18	W	29	BERTIN MARTINE	FRA	196	194322
19	W	106	SANDY POWELL	USA	193	191336
20	W	107	PAM REED	USA	193	191336
21	W	79	IRINA KOVAL	RUS	191	188935
22	W	63	HIROKO OKIYAMA	JPN	190	188265
23	W	97	LIN MONG CHI	TPE	184	182165
24	W	108	SUE OLSEN	USA	183	181696
25	W	94	HUANG YEN LING	TPE	181	179586
26	W	12	MCGRAFT LAURIE	CAN	175	173677
27	W	53	CARMELA DI DOMENICO	ITA	171	169354
28	W	88	TORILL HARTIKAINEN	SWE	170	168194
29	W	11	CHARLOTTE VASARHELYI	CAN	169	167354
30	W	105	LAURA NELSON	USA	158	156057
31	W	52	NUNZIA PATRUNO	ITA	148	146180
32	W	96	CHANG MEI LIEN	TPE	147	145192
33	W	62	NAOMI FUJITA	JPN	122	121101