

## Memoires of a Spartan Race, Nuneaton 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2011



**Mark Roe & James Hope-Gill**

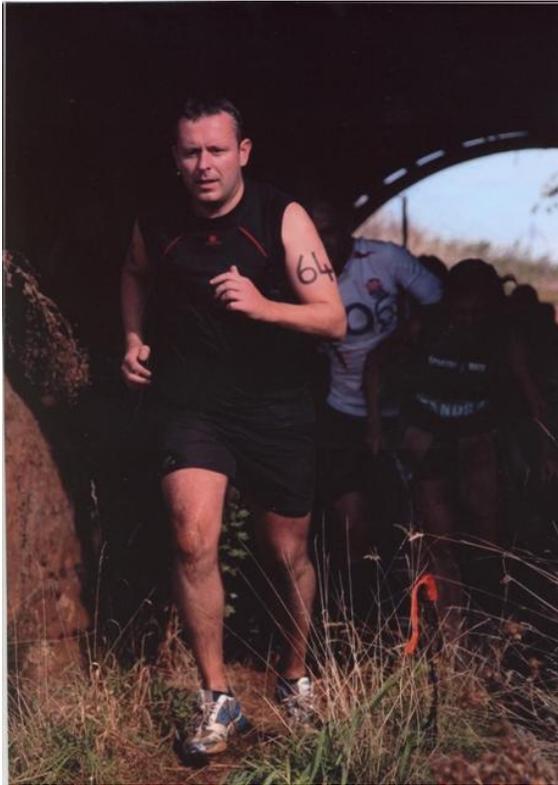
With little race specific training being done we arrived at the race with a lot of nerves building up between us. The race was held at Gamecock barracks in Nuneaton. As we left the car park to hand in our very specific liability waivers you could see a few of the obstacles we had to tackle later that day, which only intensified the nerves and butterflies we were both suffering from.

The races are spaced by thirty minutes to limit the likelihood of large queues at some of the more difficult obstacles. At the start line there was a lot of "AROO's" and male macho-ness being blurted out as racers psyched themselves up for what was ahead.

With the heat starting to blaze down on us and through a cloud of smoke and with music blaring, we were off. As with all races there are those which set off at a cracking pace. For me and Mark we decided that the game plan would be to maintain a steady constant pace throughout the whole course, at no point were we to walk but maintain a jogging style at all times.

The first obstacle, after a short run, was a crawl under some camouflaged netting through a sandpit. This is more taxing than it seems because of the sand creating an unstable environment to move in and the sandpit being a lot longer than you realize. Once out of there it was under and over numerous hurdles and fences as we made our way out among the fields with even more hurdles and fences to clear. All of which start to tax you a little more than you expect. We then came to a steel gate which could either be vaulted or climbed over. Once past that there was a small climb then a very steep drop which we were ordered to slide down on our backsides so that you landed correctly and then up a short sharp climb and along the grassy path down towards a rather smelly, muddy tunnel which we waded through.

On we kept running through the fields and dirt tracks and past some man-made lakes towards the one and only water station. With a cup in each hand it was one over the head and the other drunk as we approached yet more hurdles to tax our legs as we made our way towards a small woody enclave. Into the wooded area along a dirt track as it weaved its way through the trees to a larger hurdle jump to get back into the field we had just left.



It was then a series of up, downs and drops as we wove our way through the field and its various obstacles and towards our first barbed wire crawl. This was where we hit our first backlog which on the one hand lets you catch your breath a little but on the other is very frustrating knowing its costing you valuable time. Once out of the crawl it was over a couple of further obstacles and to the dreaded wall. This was about ten feet in height with no hand or foot grips for the men but some on the women's side. A quick sprint towards the wall, jump, foot out and hand up all working in sequence to get you up and over in one easy move. Mark being taller than me was up and over sitting on top of the wall in one and pulling "short-arse" Hope-Gill up and over.

After the wall there was a five rep log press then a short run towards a small hillock with some hurdle jumps to get up and over the other side as you made your way towards the log carry. At this point we had to pick up a log and follow the flow of the hillock as it went along the top, down one side and back up the other to where you dumped the excess weight as quickly as possible.

From there we made our way down and then back up a muck track and towards the fire jump. As you approach this obstacle your natural instinct is to speed up so that you can gain enough speed and height to clear it. Up and over we went and it takes your breath away. The heat was so intense I had to double check that the hairs on my legs were still there and we were both left having to blink numerous times because our eyes had dried up from the wall of heat.

Back down the dirt track we went and into the woods again with more hurdles to clear to a clearing where we had to do a lap of a 500 metres long grassy track whilst carrying a sandbag.

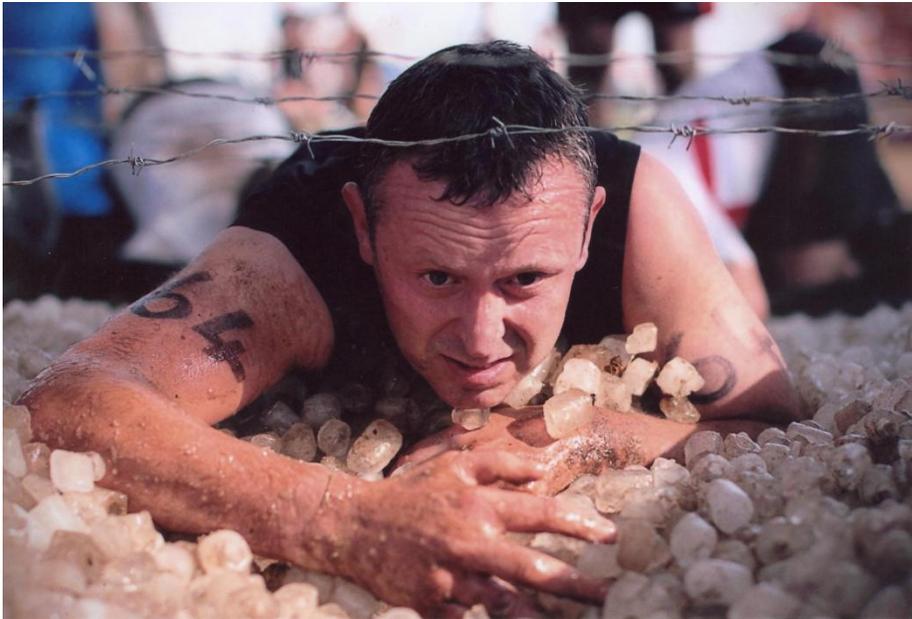
Once our lap was completed it was down with the sacks and over a hurdle and back into the wood with a few camouflaged nets to crawl under and along a winding wooded path which led to the rope climb. This was hard on the hands and you had to have total control as you went up and down the rope or it was a 25 burpee penalty.....Mark took the burpee's. Then it was the cargo net which was made more difficult by being hung at different levels and angles, at one stage you were climbing up and over in an up-side-down position.

Yet more hurdles were the order of the day to tax your legs and upset your rhythm before we hit a very very long barbed wire crawl along hard ground that was littered with peddles, small stones and sticks which cut into your knees, elbows and arms. As we made our way through this maze (or pain) we hit a section that was water logged and as you hit that section you just sank in the mud. Caking you from head to foot in heavy smelly mud which then made all the loose earth stick to you as you went through the last part of the crawl on loose earth.

After this was a log winch which wasn't too hard for either of us. There was then a decent run along the winding dirt track to a final hurdle that resembled something out of the Grand National. We then entered another field after a steady run to the spear throw challenge which involved hitting the straw Spartan target. Then on to the tyre challenge which was a simple throw of a tyre so that it landed in a square a short distance of about 10 metres away. Failure to complete either of these tasks was the dreaded 25 burpee penalty.

Onto the finishing straight now with a short run and then a sprint up the “Slippery Wall”, using the rope if needed to help clear the top and get over the other side. We were then faced with the electric fence. For this you had to cup your hands around the barbed wire and move then along next to it trying to avoid getting a shock as you went up a step then over a seesaw.

Then it was the ice pit. A huge pit covered with barbed wire and stuffed full with thousands of ice cubes. In you go and the cold hits you but because the ice cubes move it makes getting to the other side harder and take longer. But that was not all. As you got within a breath of the end of this ice crawl a wonderful cheerful chap dumps a couple of shovelfuls all over your back and head. That shocks you and you can’t throw yourself up to get the ice off because of the barbed wire above your head.



As you stumble out of the ice pit you’re met by two burly Spartan Warriors armed with giant pugil sticks all ready to knock your block off or sweep your feet from right under you resulting in a face plant into Terra Firma. A short sprint and you’re over the finishing line.

Once the racing was over the sense of satisfaction we both felt was immense. We were tested and we came out the other the better for it.



We are both determined to do the race again and are in the process of getting a team together to run the Spartan Race on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2012 in Cambridge and use it to raise sponsorship for Sheffield Children’s Hospital.....this is a 5km race which can be doubled to a 10km.

We’re also aiming to run the 20km Spartan Beast on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012 in London.

If you want to be part of the team, let us know.

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