

getting muddy

...so they don't have to!



Winter Nuts Challenge 3 March 2018 – Post Race Report

Our sense of apprehension for the day was already heightened because of the event falling in one of the coldest weeks for a decade, but as we arrived and beheld the frozen-over lake alongside the starting line and were informed about the huge number of cancellations the event had received owing to the shocking weather, it's fair to say we might have been experiencing one or two nerves.

However, we kitted up in all the neoprene we had been able to source beforehand and made our way to the start line just in time to see the 'mankini crew' finishing their one lap charity run, making their way to the finish line, waist deep in a river which was more ice than water. Whilst this spectacle diverted our attention for a few moments from the perilous course that lay before us, we weren't given much time to dwell on what lay ahead, as we were immediately ushered to the starting pen, where we had some brief ground rules and survival skills explained to us before being led in a token warm up ritual.

Before we knew it, the starting gun had fired and along with all the other die-hards, we trundled off through the muddy course. We reached our first river through which we were required to wade and were immediately grateful for the neoprene and protective gloves we'd sourced because - even with the mild protection these offered - it was freezing! The first set back we encountered was when Andy's foot got stuck in a tyre stack, as we all clambered

over a huge pile of muddy tyres. However, such was the camaraderie on the day, that he was soon pulled out and we were all on our way again.

One of the unforecasted perils which we needed to negotiate was the battering our ankles and shins took every time we plunged into deep bogs, which were covered in inches thick icebergs which some poor person would have had to have broken up (most likely with an axe or sledge hammer) at dawn, but we quickly learned to protect ourselves from these and managed to keep up a good pace, using team work to lift and pull each other out of the quicksand-like mud, which seemed intent on holding us back.

As we went round, we often came upon participants stuck in an icy bog or struggling to clamber over perilous obstacles and we were only too happy to stop and offer a lift, pull or push, being only too aware that it could be us in that position before long.

The obstacles included: scrambling up and down two-storey rope nets; pulling ourselves through claustrophobic 5 metre high steeply inclined pipes; snake crawling through icy rivers under barbed wire; clambering over slippery walls; grappling with heavy tyres over our shoulders up sheer and impossibly muddy slopes (often sliding back to the bottom several times,

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before eventually reaching the top); gliding down muddy 5 metre high firemen's poles (testing our appreciation of vertigo); floundering through smoke filled mazes; and all the while with occasional explosions, smoke or gun fire going off alongside us to keep us humble.

We completed the first 7km course, only too pleased to be able to get some much needed refreshment, but within a few minutes our body heat rapidly dropped and, only too aware of the need to keep moving, we set off on the second round, initially managing to maintain a good pace.

However, Jonny began to feel the effects of the chilly afternoon wind and being the only team member without neoprene socks, he shortly needed to retire from the water-based obstacles, owing to severe cramping setting in. However, he boldly trudged alongside us through to the last stage of the course, and at last we finally crawled through the last dark tunnel using our final strains of energy, before being greeted by our enthusiastic supporters at the finish line.

And so, with only mild emotional trauma sustained and more than a few bruises to

prove our plight, we went home, cars filled with sodden bin liners containing our wet belongings, telling the story that lay behind us, but with a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that we had vindicated our incredibly generous supporters, having raised enough funds to build not one, but two boreholes for those in Uganda, who have a much worse plight than us.

A big thank you to all those who have supported us. The question is, how do we eclipse this challenge next year?....

Andy, Simon and Jonny

