

RIDELONDON 2019 BLOG



August 4th. It's the day of RideLondon, and the day dawns sunny and bright. It doesn't actually as it is 2.00am and I am getting ready to travel up to the Olympic Park. I should be used to this routine by now but it still seems to be an unearthly hour to get up for a bike ride. I pull on the Save the Children jersey – it is the 3rd time I have ridden for this charity, and still makes the event more special in the knowledge that a lot of money has been raised for under privileged children. I have a start time of 6.20am this year, which is my earliest yet, but at least it means getting started before the majority of the cyclists. There will be 40,000 bikes out on the roads of London and Surrey. Most are good cyclists but the

sheer volume means there will be crashes and holdups. The later the start time, the greater the chances of being delayed.

I have arrived at the Olympic Park (this is a wonderful place to start) in good time, find my wave, and wait until we all move forward to the start line. Each wave can choose the song that is played as they start. This year it is by the Foo Fighters – I think. In the past we have had such iconic tunes as Come on Eileen and Fat Bottom Girls. Their significance to cycling escaped me at the time, and still does.

The sun has broken through and it is a very pleasant temperature. These should be almost perfect conditions. This year, I have cycled over 2000 miles, which equates to 143 hours in the saddle, burning 100,000 calories. I am as ready as I will ever be.

This route is the best you can imagine. Out from the Olympic Park, down through Canary Wharf, through the City of London, the West End and across Chiswick Bridge out into Surrey. Richmond Park is looking magnificent as we ride through into Kingston and on to Hampton Court. This is the 25-mile mark and I seem to be going reasonably well. My target time is 6 hours and so far I am on track. As we get further into Surrey the roads get narrower but this does not cause any problems (thank God for the early start). I know some of my friends who had later starts could not say the same.

At about 45 miles, we reach Newlands Corner, which is the first of the Surrey hills, the most challenging part of the course. At this point, I take my one and only stop (9 minutes), and then it is on to the infamous Leith Hill and the famous Box Hill. At this point, I am 68 miles into the ride and feeling very tired, but most of the climbing is over. Through Leatherhead, Esher, Kingston and on to Wimbledon Hill where most of the charities have stands. It is the most wonderful atmosphere and gives such a buzz when you are cheered on by your charity.

The ride into London from the top of Putney Heath is usually very quick, even on tired legs, although it does slow up a few times mostly through sheer number of bikes. I think I am still riding ok as we go along the north bank of the Thames towards Westminster. It is a slightly different route to the finish because of some

work that is being done to Admiralty Arch. I am not completely sure where we are, but we turn a corner and there is the finish line with Buckingham Palace in the background. A glance at my watch and I think I have beaten my target of 6 hours. This was later confirmed as 5 hours 50 minutes, so I am reasonably pleased with that. A slow ride back to the car park at London Bridge and back home. It has been a long but a very satisfying day.

It is now 5 days since the event, the photos have been downloaded and it is a good time to reflect back. This really is a magnificent event, the best route you can imagine and really well organized. I am not sure what the organisers could do differently, except maybe provide beer and burgers at the end!

I would also like to thank all those people who sponsored me, and made the ride possible. In all, 4 club members who were unsuccessful in the ballot obtained charity places. The charities were the Royal National Institute for the Blind, Demelza House, Children with Cancer, and Save the Children. (I think there may have been other members who voluntarily supported a charity). Collectively, close on £2500 was raised for good causes.

Jerry

