

Chop, chop Ray!

Iron man athlete completes incredible 150-mile endurance run ... fuelled by a nice lamb dinner!



Story by
TOM SHARPE

A VETERAN runner completed an amazing 150 miles in just 41 hours as part of a gut-busting endurance challenge, before insisting: "piling on the miles rolls back the years."

Ray Matthews completed three laps of the gruelling 50-mile course of Rowbotham's Round Rotherham Run in aid of Blind Veterans UK and Whiston's Newman School.

Ray's super-human effort — which took place from Friday until Sunday — came as a record field of more than 400 competitors completed the event, which takes in a rough lap of the borough via Manvers, Thorpe Hesley, Harthill, Firbeck and Maltby.

The first member of the Rotherham Harriers Athletics Club — which organises the event — to complete the route was 30-year-old Nils Hofman, whose achievement capped a fitness drive which has seen him shed more than ten stones since taking up running in February last year.

But super-fit Ray (71), from Maltby, had to overcome sleep deprivation, fatigue and mental exhaustion to cross the finish line only 30 seconds outside his target time, just after 10am on Sunday.

A delighted Ray said: "I just felt great, got my head down and got on with it."

"After the run it was like I didn't know what to do with myself, but then I went straight to the pub for a slap-up meal and I even treated myself to a pint."

Ray, a fitness trainer at Parkgate's Energie Gym, has run numerous marathons and endurance events in the past, including the epic 100 kilometre Del Sahara desert race.

He set off from Deame Valley College, Manvers, at 5pm on Friday and ran through two nights, defying the pain of a leg injury.

Ray said: "After 70 miles my hamstring seemed to go. It was as though I'd been shot in the back of the leg."

"That reduced me to walking and I was worried I might be running out of time."

"After about six hours the pain just lifted all of a sudden, though, and I was eventually able to pull the time back."

Ray had to consume 30,000 calories on the way to completing his challenge, eating meals — one of which included two lamb chops — as he ran.

Calories have a different meaning for Nils, from Stag, who completed his transition from overweight to athlete at the weekend.

The dad-of-one completed his 50-mile effort in eight hours and 45 minutes just 20 months after he found himself gasping for breath after chasing his three-year-old son up the stairs.

A delighted Nils said: "It was hard work but I enjoyed it and it's amazing when I think about how far I've come."

"In February last year I weighed



PICTURE : Steve Mettam

around 23 stone and although I'm six foot two tall, that's still pretty overweight.

"When I started running I knew that it was something that would work for me."

"Finishing as the first member of the Harriers at the weekend was amazing, it gave me a great sense of pride."

Nils described Ray Matthews' 150-mile run — which came two years after he tackled the 100km Del Sahara desert race — as "unbelievable".

Responding to research carried out by Age UK which suggested over 70s could preserve their brain function best by taking part in regular exercise, Ray joked: "I should have the best IQ of anyone in

the borough. I've no doubt running keeps me feeling fit and younger than my years ... and I'm not done yet."

SLIM WIN: Nils Hofman as he was and with his trophy



ON THE RUN: Ray Matthews during his run (left) and setting off from Dearne Valley College (right) on Friday 121731-2. Ray is pictured below during the Del Sahara desert race 1217731.



PICTURE: Kerrie Beddows



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