

## Slaughterford 9 2009

I ran the Slaughterford 9 for the first time in 2008 with a mate who swore that he saw David Walliams taking part, they were sure of this fact because they had recognised him with his Mother at the start. This year there were no celebs but there was lots of mud. Unlike two weeks earlier at the Rough n' Tumble where we saw Blue Peter presenter Helen Skelton, she was being filmed taking part in her first race as a precursor to a 78 mile ultra event in Namibia later this year. Aforementioned friend was next seen overtaking Helen on a hill during the televised show!

Last year the Slaughterford race took place on a cold day and my abiding memory of the event was the massive hill at the end of the race. This time round it was a warmer day but the course was a whole lot tougher with the muddy conditions and there were a lot more hills than I remembered. The week of wet weather had also created numerous interesting water features to traverse, as well as the contrived paddle through a stream around the 8 mile point.

The race has a Le Mans like start with a mass jog from the sports centre to the actual start point. Having done the event before I knew a glance to my left would give me a view of what was to come at the end and a quick check confirmed that it was as steep as I recalled. Definitely something to look forward to ...

The first mile is mainly downhill on road and then continues further downhill on rough track. After a short steep up on rocky track it's a sharp left to follow an extremely muddy track to the half way point at Slaughterford and the first of the hills I'd forgotten about. The route then traces back south towards the finish across rolling farmland. With the big one in sight you approach a large Farmhouse where the whole family was out supporting the competitors and offering drinks and oranges. I wasn't sure about the vitamin C fix, so didn't go for an orange segment but maybe it was what's needed to get you up the last hill. As I slowed down to as fast a walk as I could manage I had time to ponder that question. Finally, it was back onto the road where the race started and uphill to the finish.

Slaughterford 9 is a great event, very well organised and marshalled by enthusiastic people and thoroughly recommended for a January morning!

Andy Hindson

27<sup>th</sup> January 2009