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'Ní bhíonn bua mór gan contúirt'-A report from the back of the pack on the Dingle 50.

Dingle was alive and throbbing when I pulled in at 12 midnight on friday. A brief stroll and off to bed ( in the car).
I was awoken at 4.30 with the words: 'Can i rape you?' Luckily they weren't being addressed to me, but by a girl nearby who was surveying the passing males with her query. For any amateur sociologists who might be reading this, she got 7 acceptances and two refusals.For my part, I got no more sleep.

Six o clock soon came and so did the ultra runners, some applying sun cream in the dark, others getting their drop bags ready. Some good natured banter on the bus,as It promised to be a nice day. When we disembarked, a ten minute wait ensued as we made final preparations, addressed a few bushes and caught up with a few familiar faces-Thomas,Ger,Selina,Iveagh,Dipak,Kathleen..(apologies if im missing anybody)

Soon we were off, as pleasant a start as you'll find with the rising sun on our backs and a strong breeze to push us along.As we crested the first bump, the vista of Castlegregory and the Atlantic opened up in front of us.Magnificent scenery and fine company as I fell in with the club secretary on our descent towards the sea. As we turned left onto the long flat 15 mile stretch that would take us to the base of the mountains, the banter was good and the running easy.Along this stretch, myself and Ger chatted about life, the pursuit of happiness, how Ger channels his sexual energy, and the moralism and spiritualism to be delved from a Springsteen concert.As you do.

As we arrived at the bottom of the Pass though, thoughts turned to the beast ahead.We ran as much as we could , and when running was no longer possible for me, I powerwalked as best i could,Ger moving slightly ahead. As we rose, the wind whipped up more and more, and it really felt like something out of the Lord of the Rings at one stage. I put in silent earphones, as my ears were hurting so much from the wind. Up we went into the clouds. We passed a few at that stage who were clearly struggling.In hindsight, this stretch took an awful lot more energy out of me than Id envisaged. Over the top we went though and freewheeled down the other side at 8.30 pace, despite the best efforts of the gale which still was doing it's best to thwart us.We arrived into the 24mile aid station in good shape and headed out towards ventry. On the way out of town though I felt quite hungry and felt a tightness in my hamstring which I didnt need nor want.I ate a little and dropped my pace while Ger powered on to finish under 9 hrs.
I fell in with a dutch guy who was having some issues too, and into ventry we ran the flat sections and walked the inclines. He faded soon enough and I was left alone. It was a very lonely section up towards Slea head and I found it difficult to motivate myself and felt low on energy.I entertained myself by chuckling at the mile markers, some of which were quite witty.My favourite was 'Déanann tart tart'.Apt indeed.
At mile 35 i passed a coachload of french tourists by the roadside, one guy started jumping up and down, shouting Allez, Allez! My fried brain could only answer: 'Merci Madame' . His compatriots thought that this was hilarious. I'd say he was listening to it all night long.Further on, I was passed by a bottle.

I was reunited with my Jam sandwiches at mile 38, and felt slight better heading towards Ballyferriter. I calculated that I needed 10x12 minute miles to get in under 10 hrs, so I concentrated on that.It got very wet,dark, and in truth, quite dangerous on the 'bothar fada' into Dingle town. i was feeling a little woozy at this stage and had to concentrate quite hard on the traffic, though there was some mighty support from some of the occupants. It also helped that there was quite a lot of attention from ken and his gang at this stage-i was probably one of the last 15 people out on the road, and the support vehicles were passing by regularly.I finally made my way in towards the finish line and literally crawled over the line, (which is something ive done at every ultra ive run).

A word for Ken and his crew-they seemed very organised and attentive- credit where it's due.

A word also for the marathon club. Two years ago, i was advised by my Doc, a runner himself,not to run again.I got a second opinion( my own) and went back to marathoning, and attached myself to this club.This club makes the abnormal seem normal, and the extreme possible.I'm pretty sure that if the club didnt exist, I wouldnt be a 50 mile ultrarunner.

I learnt a few things in Dingle:

-If youre going to run for thiry miles in one direction, make sure its not westwards

-One 50 miler is WAY tougher than two marathons in a day

-Our secretary is an extremely interesting guy

-It is all in the head

-If youve run up the Connor Pass, youre my hero

and lastly-
On the third day, when God's architects were preparing the Connor Pass submission for Kerry county council,they didnt have an ultra runner on the advisory panel.