

"It's a pipedream...I know it may never happenbut how I would love to see 100 yellow t shirted Escape members crossing that finish line....." those were the words of our Chairman Chris, spoken in ambition/hope/jest last year that led to the FANTASTIC achievement made by you all on the 2nd April at the now infamous (not to mention annual!?) "ESCAPE MARATHON".

It was with great excitement and nervous apprehension that I awoke early on the morning of the Big Day to squally showers and a blustery wind, ..ideal weather conditions... I told myself as I donned my yellow t shirt 'n cap and sallied forth to SCAT to set up our meeting point for the start of the race. With the help of several Escape members who had arrived early to support the event we filled our helium balloons, tied them to anything that stood still long enough, set up our table, laid out the Jelly Beanz and prepared to greet the first Escape competitors. On cue, the heavens opened and the already blustery wind strengthened sufficiently to ensure the ballons flew horizontally at two feet above ground and the Jelly Beanz blew off the table along with the Jelly Belly Mascot who was subsequently anchored with an entire roll of parcel tape! Undaunted by this seasonal outburst, we retrieved the Beanz, dodged the balloons which were by now whipping back and forth like missiles and put on the plastic ponchos (I know they'd come into their own one day!). By the time we had re-organised ourselves the whole area was filled with competitors and supporters and a real party atmosphere had developed. Justine and her team had now joined us having set up a Portman Pit Stop on the half marathon route, and the Portman Bear was causing quite a stir amongst the ever increasing crowd.

Quite by chance it turned out that I knew the Race Commentator well and decided to steal the opportunity to grab the microphone and give Escape a bit of publicity..... and a noisy send off! Looking out of the commentary box above the crowd it was an overwhelming sight to see such a mass of yellow t shirts lining up to start. Chris' dream has come to reality and Escape has an entry that has exceeded all possible expectation. As the countdown began the excitement mounted and when the klaxon finally signalled the start of the race the roar of support for Escape must have been audible in Bridgwater!

Finally the months of preparation and training, those exhausting early morning runs, the blisters, the pestering colleagues, friends and family for sponsorship and that huge collective effort had all been worthwhile. The first female competitor home in the Half Marathon, the first competitor across the Fun Run finish line, the largest group entry and the highest number of disabled entries ever! All down to Escape. Many of you pushed yourselves through boundaries that you had previously thought impossible and every single competitor threw themselves wholeheartedly into the spirit of the event.

Watching every Escape competitor cross the finish line was one of the proudest moments of my life , to see everyone collecting their medals, smiling and congratulating each other was a sight that will stay with me for a very long time. It was a truly fantastic effort and proves that if you want something badly enough – almost anything is achievable.

Enormous thanks must go to Justine and her team from the Portman Building Society who so generously sponsored the Escape entry and also for their great support before, during and after the event. We shall hope to welcome them back as sponsors for next year! Thanks also to John Lewis, Marathon Race Director, who tolerated my constant changes to the entries and endless emails and requests for help and lastly, but most importantly of all the biggest thank you must go to ALL OF YOU, runners, walkers, pushers and supporters. Without your effort and dedication the 2006 Taunton Marathon would have been "just another event".....but we know different.

Rumour has it that some person or persons who shall be nameless for the time being, have rashly proposed to run the full Marathon in 2007.....We watch and wait! PRW you know who you are!!!

Joy Wood