

## **3<sup>RD</sup> EUROPEAN MOUNTAIN RUNNING CHAMPIONSHIPS KORBIELOW POLAND - 4<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2004**

**by ADRIAN WOODS (GB TEAM MANAGER)**

Following a telephone call from Tim Davies telling me he possibly wasn't going to be able to run due to a virus two weeks before the event and the withdrawal of Simon Bailey with a similar illness prior to travelling the signs weren't looking good. Tim did travel but he wasn't one hundred percent.

When we arrived at our accommodation, "The Hunters' Lodge," in the small Polish village of Korbielow things got worse. The building was full of wild boar skins on the floors and walls, which Tracey Brindley was obviously allergic to and she immediately had difficulty breathing. Needless to say all the dead animals were thrown outside five minutes after our arrival and our hosts must have thought us strange but as they didn't speak any English we'll never know. This was just the start of our problems.

Despite John Brown, Tracey Brindley and Natalie White all needing lengthy medical treatment in the ambulance we still managed to win the Men's Team Silver Medals and the Women's Team Bronze Medals in dramatic circumstances.

The start of the men's race had to be delayed when John cracked open his head on a metal staircase adjacent to the starting pens one minute before the official start of the race when he decided it was time for a last minute pee. He was carried two hundred metres to the ambulance by two Irish runners in a Sudan (?) chair to have a two inch gash on his scalp treated. He was being followed by his teammate Andrew Jones repeatedly stating, "He can't run like that." John, however, insisted he would run because otherwise the Team would not score. I had to dash back and forth to the race officials, 200 metres up and down the hill, to obtain a delay of five minutes while John received First Aid.

When John arrived at the ambulance it was already full of GB athletes with both Tracey Brindley and Natalie White still receiving treatment following their race. Rumour has it that the ambulance was later seen driving off with a GB flag painted on its side.

When the course commentator announced that John would be racing, all of the other competitors in the starting pens cheered as he emerged wearing a hairnet and a UK Athletics cap borrowed from me covering the wound to help stop the bleeding. When he finished 13<sup>th</sup> in 46 minutes 40 seconds, he was still bleeding and after more treatment, when it was confirmed two hours later that we had won the Silver Medals, the wound was still leaking blood. John told me later that he had taken one look at my face in the ambulance and had no doubts that he would be running. The fact was we both knew he had to run.

There was a great relief all around when Andrew Jones finished in 16<sup>th</sup> in 47.10 and Tim Davies 20<sup>th</sup> in 47.38. The relief turned to joy two hours later when, after much scrutiny, the judges announced the team result.

The invincible Italians had won with 10 points, but only four points covered the next four teams and the GB Team was placed second with 49 points from Switzerland (51), Czech Republic (also 51, but placed fourth on the count back of individual finishers) and Slovenia (53).

John Brown was definitely the hero of the day. Before the start, we thought we had no chance and to come through all the problems and get the Silver Team medals was an absolutely fantastic feeling for everyone involved.

It was a similar story with the GB Women's Team who also kept the Doctor and ambulance crew busy on their way to the medals ceremony.

Tracey Brindley who had been allergic to the animal furs in the hunting lodge needed oxygen for an hour after collapsing as she crossed the finishing line in sixth place in 37:37. Again, we had thought we had little chance of a medal as we were without the brilliant Angela Mudge who had had to withdraw through injury.

Tracey's heroics in running herself to a standstill were magnificently supported by her Carnethy Hill Running Club colleague Lyn Wilson, who finished 10<sup>th</sup> in 38.27, and Jackie Hargreaves 21<sup>st</sup> in 40.15 after coming in as a late replacement for Mudge, while Natalie White defied a crashing fall two-thirds of the way through the 7.2km race to battle on and finish 50<sup>th</sup> in 44.56.

Natalie suffered cuts and bruises pretty much all over her body, but she fought off race officials who wanted to pull her out and take her for medical attention. She spent some time in the ambulance afterwards getting cleaned up, until John arrived for treatment, but she was OK in time for the medal presentation. The key to us winning the medal was Jackie, though. She was called in after Angela had to drop out and had a fantastic run. The race consisted of one small lap and two large laps. The team had all grouped together in the mid-20s on the small lap and had paced it most sensibly. Natalie was limping quite badly by the time she crossed the line but nothing was going to stop her finishing. I think that summed up the whole Team's attitude on the day.

The GB Team finished third of the 17 nations with 37 points behind all conquering Italy (18) with Austria second, but ahead of fourth placed France (45).

Many thanks to everyone who helped with the team's preparations on the way to this event. A special mention must be made of the tremendous help and support of Sarah Rowell, Chris Robison, Brian Martin, Robin Morris and Martin Hyman and last but not least to Alan Barlow, Assistant Team Manager, who sacrificed any chance of seeing the Men's race to look after our Ladies recovering in the ambulance.

Let's beat the Italians next year on July 10<sup>th</sup> in Austria.