

Monster effort by ultra distance runner Michelle

There were no reported sightings of the mystical monster but spending 24 hours by the shores of Loch Ness was still an experience Michelle Young, from Penicuik, will never forget.

For the NHS systems analyst not only completed the gruelling Loch Ness 24 hour endurance race with minimal stoppages but her 23 x 7k laps meant being third placed female finisher and top runner in the category from Edinburgh and the Lothians. A total of 80 females took part in the solo – as opposed to team – event.

“Getting a podium position was purely a bonus” reflected Michelle who was persuaded to try ultra distance running by a neighbour at a party marking her husband Ian’s 50th birthday in 2017.

“I had started running 10 years ago and in 2015 completed an Edinburgh Marathon; ultras seemed the next step.

“Loch Ness was a tough shift but I didn’t go out to race against other people.

“The aim was to complete 100 miles; I didn’t know if it was doable.

“To fulfil that target I didn’t let myself stop or sit down for any more than 10-15 minutes and I was fortunate to have a

couple of friends throwing food at me after every lap. They saw me through the night.

“All the time I was thinking ‘do I have enough in me to do 23 laps?’”

How did Michelle keep her mind occupied throughout never mind ensuring she had sufficient stamina?

“I tried listening to music at one stage but that didn’t help. To be honest my running time is when I do my mental filing.

“A lot of it is trying to do the maths, working out how many miles are behind me and how many I can complete.

“I also ask myself ‘how are you going to feel if you don’t do this?’”

And once the race is over?

“My two friends and I had hired a motor home which had to be returned so there was no time to hang about even if the camp site hadn’t been wet and muddy.”

And far from thinking ‘never again’ which might be a natural post race reaction Michelle was quickly planning future events.

“I’ve usually got races booked well in advance – my favourite is the West Highland Way – and the ultra distance scene in Scotland is exploding so there is no need to be thinking of competing abroad.

“For a few days after Loch Ness I wasn’t able to run and I was like a bear with a sore head as I couldn’t go out on the Pentland Hills.

“It is addictive but I love it – especially trying out different views” said this determined Penicuik Harrier who estimates she will usually clock up 50-70 k a week on the

roads or more testing terrain.

