

Trans Britain 2011 started in overcast conditions as a small but beautifully formed group of ultra runners set off on the first day of a 156 mile journey starting in Scotland, finishing in Wales and with some of the best trails in northern England in between. For the first time the race had a real international feel to it as we were joined by 2 American runners, 2 Belgians and the first Irish runner tackling the course for the first time.



Ready for the off

By the first checkpoint at 9 miles the front runners had already shown their cards. David and Paul Oliver coming first into Metal Bridge accompanied by Gary Whittingham. Dean Scott briefly led the field as different routes were taken (at least some of these deliberately) through Carlisle and south towards the lake district, but this lead didn't last long as by the end of the first day a soon to become familiar pattern was to emerge. Paul Oliver won the opening stage in 7:02:17 followed 17 seconds later by his brother David with David Magill and Gary Whittingham coming home in third and fourth place separated by just 7 minutes. The winning time for the first day was inside the course record set in 2010 by Lee Chamberlain and resulted in more than 1 jittery text from the current record holder before the week was out.

One course record was assured to remain intact however as there were no forces teams taking up the challenge set in 2010 by JNCO RAF Regt. Their forces record for Trans Britain in 51 hours 57 minutes with 40lb packs remains to fight another day.

The weather was said to offer up the full range of options last year but proved to excel in 2011 as the tail of Hurricane Katia swept through the Northwest causing the cancellation of the Tour of Britain cycle race nearby. Trans Britain competitors however are made of sterner stuff and after a quick route change to avoid dangerously high winds over the high ground the race wove it's way south through the Pennines and into North Yorkshire. Finally on Day 5 racers were rewarded with beautiful sunshine and stunning views at the same time as they topped out at over 850 metres over Pen-y-Gent.



Tim Evans on top of Pen-y-Gent – Day 5

By the final day in North Wales all were looking forward to the finish at Ruthin Castle and the prospect of a well deserved rest. All runners finished in good shape and good spirits the prize giving dinner proved to be a great finale to a challenging and rewarding week. A ladies record was set and several runners were heard talking of a return to tackle the original course in 2012.

The day stages panned out as follows:-

Day 1

Gretna to Caldbeck, 36 miles – good conditions for running with little wind. Paul Oliver established the foundations for a race victory with a stage win in 7hours 02 minutes, His brother David finishing 17 seconds behind with David Magill taking third in 7 hours 16. In the ladies race Thalia van Acker and Emma Kelty swapped the lead at every checkpoint before coming home together in 10:19:00

Day 2

The weather took a turn for the worse for the 24 mile leg from Caldbeck to Mell Fell. Our 4 leaders from Day 1 stayed together for most of the day before David & Paul broke away to claim the days victory in 3 hours 14 minutes. David Magill and Gary Whittingham finishing together some 20 minutes later. At this stage the course record was in serious danger as the leaders had covered the first 2 days over an hour quicker than previous attempts. Our ladies continued to battle it out with Thalia showing more determination for the win and opening out a 20 minute lead ahead of Emma with Karen Storey claiming third.

Day 3

Due to the extreme weather overnight competitors, were put up in Swedish log style camping pods in order to get some shelter from the 70 mph winds. The planned route from Mell Fell to Rydal taking in (amongst others) Helvellyn, Dollywagon and Fairfield Peaks along the way, was not considered safe so an alternative route was drafted keeping to lower ground but adding mileage making this a fair compromise. This was still set to be a fair challenge in wind that when gusting forced you back on your heels. The amended course seemed to suit the 4 leaders as the Oliver brothers led the field home side by side in 4 hours 56 with David and Gary finishing together 30 minutes later. Undoubtedly the most courageous performances of the day came from the last finishers Emma Kelty

and Michael Macaninch. They had us all worried having failed to make the second checkpoint of the day at the top of Sticks Pass and losing contact for more than 4 hours. They navigated themselves over the top of Fairfield despite the conditions and enjoyed the glorious descent down into Rydal as the sun was setting for a well earned meal back at the race village. Courage and tenacity apart this left Thalia Van Acker with an unassailable lead in the women's race.

Day 4

Finally the winds had died down and some brighter weather was forecast for the 36 miles from Rydal to Dent via Kendal. Our 4 leaders spent the entire day in each others company, joined for the first time by Simon Tait who was managing to keep with the pace despite feeling unwell for large parts of the day. All 5 finished within a minute of each other just inside the 10 hour mark. This was the day which finally saw the surrendering of the attempt on the course record as some navigation errors cost the leaders over an hour and a half on the previous best and left them concentrating on finishing the week strongly in first place.

On a day when many competitors had to dig deep to find the personal strength to complete a long day the heroes of the day were once again Em and Mike who battled for almost 14 hours finishing well after the sunlight had disappeared.

Day 5



Runners enjoyed spectacular views on the penultimate day

For the run from Dent to Stainforth the weather was perfect with miles of visibility and at last the competitors were treated to some fantastic views from the top of Pen-y-Ghent, one of the Yorkshire 3 peaks.

For the second day running Paul, David, David, Gary, and Simon ran together cresting Pen-Y-Gent in glorious sunshine a little after 1 pm and storming home in under 6 hours.

Everyone arrived in the camp buzzing from the day's run with one of our American brethren claiming that this was "the best run anywhere in the world". If only we could have given you the views over the Pennines to compare this with on day 3 Gary, but the Yorkshire Dales is a pretty inspiring second choice !

As an added bonus runners were treated to physio services offered by Dave Bryant from North Ribbleside RUFC which were fully welcomed and released some of the build up of 140 miles of racing.

Day 6



Leading the way for the entire week. Paul & David take a breather during some fast paced running.

Following a bus ride to the start near Wrexham the field set off for the final 18 miles to Ruthin Castle where a bath, comfortable bed and an evening of socialising and swapping stories of the Trans Britain adventure awaited them. There was a shake up of the anticipated order as navigational challenges led to a new stage leader heading the field by 8 min

at the half way stage. Tim Evans took this as his last chance to claim glory and set off like a man possessed, the familiar quintet were keen to make up for lost ground and a battle royal ensued over the closing stages with the lead swapping hands on at least 3 occasions. Ultimately the experience of Paul & David Oliver proved decisive as they arrived home first for the sixth time in as many days. Tim finished just 3 minutes behind comfortably making this his best days racing.

Ruthin Castle proved a great venue for the finish with the now customary champagne celebrations at the finish. Following a video of the week's events the meal and the prize giving got underway followed by ever elaborate swapping of stories from the week and the alcohol consumption increased.

Great people, a challenging mix of weather, fantastic scenery and glorious trails making this third running of the event truly memorable.

Results

TRANS BRITAIN ULTRA 2011 Overall Results Summary

Position			Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Total
1	Paul	Oliver	07:02:17	03:14:55	04:56:02	09:58:06	05:59:40	04:57:09	36:08:09
2	David	Oliver	07:02:34	03:14:55	04:56:02	09:58:06	05:59:40	04:57:09	36:08:26
3	David	Magill	07:16:50	03:36:59	05:26:28	09:58:06	05:59:40	04:47:25	37:05:28
4	Gary	Whittington	07:23:40	03:36:59	05:26:28	09:58:30	05:59:40	04:57:09	37:22:26
5	Simon	Tait	09:40:39	04:19:20	05:26:28	09:59:29	06:14:57	04:47:30	40:28:23
6	Gordon	McMullan	08:24:20	04:19:20	06:09:35	12:15:35	08:34:27	05:34:20	45:17:37
7	Dean	Scott	08:24:20	04:19:20	06:09:35	12:15:35	08:34:27	05:34:20	45:17:37
8	Thalia	Van Acker	10:19:00	04:54:20	06:59:59	13:05:26	08:01:18	05:34:20	48:54:23
9	Tim	Evans	10:19:00	05:33:10	06:59:59	13:04:49	08:01:18	05:00:50	48:59:06
10	Emma Tamsin	Kelty	10:19:00	05:15:00	09:17:27	13:51:31	08:34:27	05:35:25	52:52:50
11	Michael	Macaninch	10:19:00	05:15:00	09:17:27	13:51:31	08:34:27	05:35:25	52:52:50
12	Karen	Storey	11:06:00	05:39:48	09:15:28	23:59:59	08:06:15	05:35:20	63:42:50