

Waterside D

The Back Marker's View – Once again!

Boy was it chilly at the start. Did we detect some smattering of hail/snow? However, I am getting ahead of myself already. At 0429hrs (yes we did put the clocks forward) we set off from Fleet for Devizes wondering what on earth made us even consider we could do this event. Arriving in good time we queued like everyone else in the cold for half an hour for one of 3 portaloos and then made ready. Did anyone else notice on the paddlers' list No5 K2 Senior "brian Boyles & Ian Mattison", No 280 K1 Senior "Bernie Boyles" and No 404 K1 Veteran "Ian Mattison". Once pointed out to the organisers though it was okay but the thought of paddling 8 hrs and then returning to do the K1 was a bit much I thought!!

Still, 0714hrs and we were off. All Cannings in the hour, Wootton Rivers dead on 3hrs and we were feeling good. Not bad for the first time ever down the Pound. Then the fun began. Bernie had not been in the tunnel before and myself once last year (in the back), so our enthusiastic entrance soon turned to utter panic as we were shouted at by all the frustrated paddlers behind who wanted to pass. Tough luck boys and girls; shouldn't be so fast eh! Quite tense once out of the tunnel (no we did not swim) we hopped out at the next bridge and carried the boat to the lock to get the legs working again, it told on our time though! Uneventful after this: we met our support, provided by my daughter Carla, at Bedwyn and ploughed on, overtaking a C2 about 8 times as we were faster on the water but slower on the portages. BCCC support with the shout "only 19 locks to go now!!" Who said that I wonder? It really boosted our morale but undaunted we set off with renewed vigour. Hungerford then Kintbury and the final stretch was in sight. Only 6 miles and 6 locks to go but we had lost time and it would appear more than 8 hrs was a distinct probability. More drink and food at Hampstead and we were on the home run. Bernie by this time was feeling his legs a lot, after an ankle twist on a portage, and me putting on my best stubborn face determined not to run out of steam now. We crossed over the final bridge at Guyers Lock and paddled like mad into Newbury. Crossing the line to cheers, wow thanks you lovely people! Carla announced 8hrs 0min 15secs but when the official times came out, whoopee! 7hrs 59min 31sec!!!! - and no swimming. Did we deserve our smiles? We think so. Now the DW. We've entered the Endeavour class, we have all the gear but, we hope, some better idea of our chances. Don't worry folks we will finish!

P.S. News soon for other Endeavour Class paddlers. My office at Horse Guards will be available for showers, changing and some refreshments for paddlers and supporters from 10am to 2pm Easter Monday. More on this soon for the BCCC web pages .

Well done to all and for being a great club BCCC, your support and help are invaluable.
Ian Mattison



Ed. Ian asked me to add my "smiles picture". Well, Ian is full of smiles but Bernie – well I don't think he can see what there is to smile about, or maybe the coffee's gone cold.

Strange fact: target 8 hours: result 7:59:31 = great happiness. Target time 8 hours: result 8:00:15 = great misery.