

Dear Trustees,

Below is a brief report of my recent trip to Austria which was supported by the John Taylor Foundation;

"Unfortunately my trip did not have the smoothest of starts due to the tragic events in London on the 7<sup>th</sup> July. I was due to travel to London on this day where I would spend the night at my parents house before going on to Stansted the next morning from where I was flying to Klagenfurt. After a very drawn out journey which involved catching trains that went half way around the country I finally arrived home where I snatched a few hours sleep before making my way to the airport in the morning.

After our arrival in Austria, we were driven to the village of Heiligenblut, which was the main base for the weekends activities. Our accommodation was a four star hotel less than a minutes walk from the race start. After a jog and a stroll around the village it was time to register and eat. Lunch and dinner was served in a large hall close to the hotel, and meals were a large buffet of excellent quality food of which we could have as much as we could eat, as well as free beer and wine (a temptation I managed to resist until after the race). Initial impressions from those who were old hands at these events were that it was one of the best event organisations they had ever seen.

Saturday involved a trip to the finish of the course at 2500m, watching the finish of the open race. There was a group of us who came up in the bus but none of us were too keen to hang around long as we were all feeling some altitude effects so it was back to the village for some lunch and relaxation.

The evening involved the European trophy opening ceremony, with a procession of the teams from the town square to the race area led by an Austrian folk group, however by the end most people seemed to be more interested in getting to the event hall for there dinner.

Unfortunately for those competing on Sunday there was a party starting after the food for those who had raced the open event on the Saturday. Most people did manage to pull themselves away ready for the next day's events however.

Sunday morning brought with it rain. Having been assured that the course would be fine to race in flats the majority of people set off with these on their feet. After leaving good tracks after about five kilometres of racing I began to regret this decision, although most people seemed to be in the same boat, with people slipping and sliding around. The course was a tough one, and although mainly uphill did have some small technical descents, on which I generally made good ground on people (more as a result of their bad descending than good descending from me). The last kilometre was a nightmare, involving approximately 350m of climb at altitude which left me gasping for breath and with burning quads, but allowed me to overtake quite a few other runners and brought me in 37<sup>th</sup>. I was slightly disappointed with this result, having wished to finish in the top 30 somewhere, although I think this was probably due to my start being too steady.

Although slightly disappointed the race was a fantastic, and slightly humbling, experience running against some of the very best mountain runners in Europe, and was definitely worth the effort of getting there. The experience of running in such a stunning environment has given me a definite desire to want to travel to these European races again.

After the race was more eating, both at the finish and then when our bus arrived back at the race venue where lunch was just starting. This was followed by a few hours to relax before the presentations and closing ceremony, again though by the time this was ending people were again more concerned with dinner and the subsequent party.

After the food the party was ready to begin (with the free drink being appreciated by now). A dodgy Austrian pop group were left to entertain us until about midnight at about which time I gave up and went to bed.

The morning bought with the trip back to England and the end of an excellent weekend marked by an excellent race in some stunning scenery and with fantastic organisation.

As I mentioned previously I found the weekend to be an excellent experience and I am extremely gratefully to the John Taylor Foundation for helping me to take part".

Many thanks

John Heneghan