

In the short space between the wet and cold of the summer and the wet and cold of the winter is crammed the autumn marathon season, and this year has seen a number of Stratford AC runners performing heroics. Chris Seeney is as unassuming as they come, but at Berlin he has just achieved the fantastic feat of completing his 100th different marathon and his 151st in total.

His 98th a few weeks ago at Moray in Scotland saw Chris suffer severe problems with his left knee, and he had to walk the last 5 miles just to give him a time of 5:35 hours. Therefore his subsequent trip to Warsaw for his 99th race was a very tentative affair, with the emphasis on just getting round, which he did so in 4:55 hours. He claims that his preparation was better for this one, although the day before he did manage beer at Luton Airport, the registration, a bar in the afternoon and with his evening meal! The 100 Marathon Club have a very diverse membership! The Poles managed to live up to their stereotype with fairly dour support, but this didn't seem to stop the 2,121 finishers greatly enjoying themselves.

At Berlin, where the world marathon record fell again, Chris ran with three other people, including a chap with Downs Syndrome who needs at least two others with him at all times. Their aim was to get him to finish under 6 hours, which he failed to do by 2 seconds, but despite this and the cold Chris typically said it was a very humbling and special way to achieve his own remarkable milestone. In fact Chris himself has been raising money for the British Heart Foundation since the Oranje Marathon in Holland last year when he had severe sodium depletion. He had bad cramp after the event, eventually recovering completely, and luckily a routine blood test the week after highlighted the problem and stopped him from doing the Munich Marathon the next weekend.

His marathon career started in 1991 at London with a 3:57 finish, and his fastest was about 3 minutes quicker at Dublin in 1997. Amongst the 151 there have been 6 Shakespeare appearances and 65 off-road marathons, with the Fairlands Valley Challenge at Stevenage being the most common at 7. In addition to all of this, the stamina king has also done many ultra-races and counts his ultimate running experience as doing the Two Oceans Marathon in South Africa in 1998, completing the 35 miles in just under 6 hours.

Marathon racing has taken Chris all over the world, including running his 100th in Florida in 2005. The US has been a popular port of call with 7 visits including New York, New Orleans and Chicago, but Belgium tops his international list with 9, 5 of them being the 'Night of Flanders'. Foreign lands have also provided him with probably his scariest moment when, a couple of years ago in Bosnia, he discovered after the event that the field he'd nipped into for a call of nature was actually a minefield! The UK has seen the majority of Chris' outings though, with Loch Ness and Dumfries in Scotland, Lake Vrynwy and the extremely difficult Snowdonia Marathon in Wales, and the Isle of Wight and Isle of Man events amongst many others. Here's hoping that in 2023 we'll be reporting on this remarkable man's 200th event!

Another one of Stratford AC's great unsung heroes, Tony Hunt, recently made his annual pilgrimage to Nottingham for the city's marathon, which is one of the largest provincial distance road races and often described as the country's number 2 marathon. This was Tony's 11th marathon, but the figure-of-eight route through and around the city centre, which starts and finishes on the Victoria Embankment, keeps

attracting him back since it remains one of his favourite courses. It was a beautiful sunny day that greeted the field of 1,059, plus the 11,000 half-distancers who kept them company for the first 13 miles, although the very breezy conditions were fairly unhelpful on the more exposed sections of the course, especially around the National Water Sports Centre during the second part of the race. Tony completed this toughest of distances in an excellent 4 hours 6:34 minutes and, although he was well outside his marathon PB (achieved on this course) and disappointed to be over his 4-hour target, this Herculean effort put him 539th overall and well up in his male 50-55 age category.

To complete a memorable autumn for Stratford AC's long-distance runners Kate Wright produced a stunning run at last week's Loch Ness Marathon, crossing the line in a magnificent 3 hours 16:05 minutes, setting a new PB and club record in the process. One of the UK's most popular and scenic races, the course for this point-to-point event follows the south-eastern shores of the loch before crossing the River Ness to finish in the Queens Park Stadium, Inverness. The 1,445 competitors were bussed down to the south of the loch for the start, and on a fine day for running Kate used all the experience that she has gained over the last few years to perfectly pace herself. Her previous stomach troubles only surfaced briefly, so to speak, near the end, leaving her free to storm home in 116th place, 2nd in her 35-44 age group and 8th lady overall. Zakary Kihara (Kenya) and Banuelia Katesigwa (Tanzania) took the prizes in a good quality field with 2:23:17 and 2:55:03 respectively, and with Kate only 66 seconds away from a women's elite place we may yet see her line up alongside Paula!

This Sunday morning sees Stratford AC's annual autumn event over the Welcombe Hills, with the 10K 'Simply Run Welcombe Wobbler' and an alternative one-lap 5K option for those wanting a slightly more gentle introduction to off-road running. To enter on the day just turn up at the Leisure Centre from 10 a.m. onwards, giving yourself plenty of time to make the 11:30 start, or phone 07768 492865 for further details.