

Ivan finishes crossing full of marathons

LONG RUN
Ivan Hollingsworth at the Monument in Newcastle

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STOMACH bugs, cracked ribs and damaged knees could not stop a triumphant team of athletes from finishing a gruelling charity challenge.

Inspirational dad Ivan Hollingsworth led the determined group into the sea at Tynemouth, marking an end to three exhausting days on a Coast to Coast challenge to raise money for the hospital where his son's life was saved.

For the third year running, the former professional athlete orchestrated a twisting journey from Whitehaven in Cumbria to Longsands beach in North Tyneside involving cycling, swimming and running. Dubbed C2C3, day one of the chal-

FUNDRAISERS

Ivan Hollingsworth with son Seb and wife Nadine



lenge saw Ivan cycle 100 miles to Brampton, throwing in a one-mile swim across Derwent Water along the way.

On day two, the Whitley Bay man ran a double marathon – 52 miles – to Close House Hotel in Heddon-on-the-Wall, Northumberland, before finishing the challenge yesterday with a final marathon to the coast via Newcastle City Centre.

He has not been alone as a team of 11 have done all three days, and some 60 people have taken part in sections of the journey, including his wife Nadine who ran the final stage to Tynemouth.

And there were one or two mishaps along the way.

A gastric bug affected most of the group, leg injuries were rife and one group member, Tam Fowler, was rushed to Hexham General Hospital on day two suffering from chest pains.

It turned out he had a cracked rib, caused by a bike accident suffered in a final training session and after receiving strong

medication, he rejoined the group before completing yesterday's marathon too.

"I was just grateful to get strong painkillers from the hospital," said Tam, a policeman from Heaton in Newcastle.

Nadine, 35, a business manager, said:

"Tam is quite literally an Iron Man. He went to hospital, had treatment and then carried on.

"Watching him finish the run was the most inspiring thing I have ever seen.

"There have been a lot of poorly tummies too. One or two people had to run into fields every few minutes along the way, but they still did a double marathon."

Wracked with pain and exhaustion, pharmaceutical rep Ivan shed a few tears – and his trainers – as he and his wife Nadine got to the finish line to be reunited with their son Seb, aged three, who is the reason behind the whole event.

Born with a heart defect, Seb was just 16-weeks-old when he had complex surgery at the Freeman Hospital.

Since that operation, the couple have raised more than £200,000 for the Children's Heart Unit Fund through their fund called Seb4CHUF, and the C2C3 challenge has brought in at least £30,000.

Ivan, who ran 100 miles in less than 24 hours for CHUF in April, said: "It's been painful, I've got a very dodgy knee.

"I've been overwhelmed by how generous people are.

"I'm having a big rest after this. We need some family time and some time away because physically and emotionally I am spent."

Tonight sees the concluding part of the fundraiser: a glamorous ball at Close House Hotel complete with a fundraising auction hosted by Ivan and Nadine's close pal, Sky Sports presenter Ben Shephard.

To donate to Ivan's challenge for Seb4CHUF, please text CHUF99 £5 or £10 to 70070.



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