Mission Mt Somers Leith Runners Report Nolan Hill 2nd Nov 19'

Saturday morning started warm!..we were in for a scorcher! 30+degrees Celsius

Together with Steve Tripp and Jamie Gardner, I set off from the 7am start line to circumnavigate Mt Somers in the 42k race. With an initial cool down thanks to x5 river crossings we then climbed a steep spur to 1100mtrs and the bush line, I was running with Steve at this point, and enjoyed the banter and very technical trail as we sidled around the various creeks and Manuka bush trails, constantly surrounded by amazing views out across the Canterbury plains (you'd have to stop to see them however, otherwise you end up on your face!)

Just prior to the 22km mark we descended a very slippery switchback all the way down to the river, where the half marathon event starts from -this tested foot placement to the extreme, as the stones were like marbles in places. At this stage I was feeling good, strong in the legs, lungs keeping up, and head still clear, sitting around 18th place.

Out the back of Mt Somers, Steve was just in front, but sadly that was the last time I saw him, as cramp set in and curtailed the rest of my race, limiting me to periodic jogging with much fast walking as the cramp monster returned with every new effort to run. My run (now 'tramp') turned into a hot dry tussock climb back up to 1100 metres before a super technical and stunning decent over bolder fields and down into the welcome shade beneath the bush line again. Now running a little more freely, (due to the makeshift Manuka walking poles) I exited the forest and hit the last aid station at the 35km mark. When you leave the forest and hit the road, one thinks the race is almost over, however, in one last cruel test of endurance, the organisers sends you into a farm and over some rolling hills, before finally arriving on the final straight road run to the finish.

On the finish line Steve, Jamie and other supporters were there to welcome me home and I learned that they both had a good day, with both Jamie and Steve slicing 30 odd minutes off their previous bests. Well done guys!!

While frustrating watching the field past me as my inner thigh muscles screamed with cramp, the surroundings made for a beautiful day out, with water falls, snow-capped peaks, golden river beds, beach forest and bird song.

I cannot say enough about this race, it is well organised and takes the competitors around and over some amazing terrain. The whole event feels very community focussed and many Mt Somer's locals come out to lend a hand. I recommend to you each to consider this race if you want adventure, friendly competitors and a super fun day out!

Nolan.