

# **My Ramsay's Round Record**

## **By Finlay Wild**

For a runner living in Fort William, Ramsay's Round presents one of the most obvious long distance challenges. I took a long time to feel ready to go the distance, but in doing so had the pleasure of many fine days out exploring progressively longer days in the wonderful hills of Lochaber. I first ran the 60km Tranter's Round in 2016, after my first forays into longer distance races in the shape of the Tromso and Glencoe Skyline races earlier that summer. On that 2016 Tranter's I remember briefly looking east to the greater Ramsay's route beyond and not really being able to visualise running that far.

In 2020 as COVID restrictions eased I was able to build on my distance base training by spending a lot of time in my local hills. I then ran record times on some great routes, like the Ring of Steall, the Mamores Round and Lochaber Traverse. Something had clicked for me in a combination of increasing experience, confidence in my endurance and pacing, as well as more solid racing nutrition and hydration. I redid the Tranter's Round record taking 75 minutes off my own 2016 record. This time, at Sgurr Eilde Mor looking east I could imagine continuing out along the Abhainn Rath river section to Beinn na Lap and beyond. Add in a few more reccies and another long race-pace run in the form of the Mullardoch Round record and I felt ready. I could visualise the whole round, what it would feel like and how I would pace myself.

I don't have much experience of running with support runners; I like the simplicity of just heading out into the hills on my own. The Tranter's Round felt fine as a self supported effort and by now I felt confident that adding another 30km and 6hrs wouldn't need a significantly different approach. It was great not to have to worry about the logistics and dates involved in arranging support. I decided to set off boldly, on a 15-hr schedule - which was generally slightly faster than my 2016 Tranter's split times but slower than my 2020 repeat. I had a good handle on how much I would need to eat and drink, and thankfully it all fitted in my race vest. I took a dozen raw bars, about a dozen gels in soft flasks, fruit and nut mix, some energy chews and Tailwind energy drink powder. Knowing the route well I was confident in finding plenty of water on the way, so took 1L water capacity. Running in good weather at the end of August I was able to take the bare minimum of extra kit - a headtorch, spare layer, emergency blanket, map, compass, phone, jacket and gloves. My race vest weighed about 3.6kg with full water bottles and before I started scoffing food.

A weather window arrived and I knew it was time to go. I didn't sleep much the night before, a mixture of nerves and anticipatory excitement which I haven't felt so strongly for a long while. Leaving the Youth Hostel at 4am exactly on 31<sup>st</sup> August it just felt great to have started - I'd spent a lot of time thinking about this route over the past four years, now all I had to do was run. In the dark going up Mullach nan Coirean I felt I was working quite hard, and my pack felt heavy. I felt a bit apprehensive but tried not to worry about it. As daylight arrived I felt better and my confidence grew as I got slightly ahead of schedule on the technical familiar ground. By the end of the Mamores I had found my pace, felt good, and was looking ahead with focus. I had imagined still feeling relatively fresh for the Abhainn Rath section and this is how it was. I smiled to remember jogging this part in the opposite direction last winter with Es Tresidder on a Skimo Ramsay's Round attempt - the 10km low level run had felt much harder then laden with skis, boots and heavier bags.

Up Beinn na Lap I remembered a comment that "Jasmin had been running this bit" so tried to keep the pace solid. There was a strong southwesterly wind so my jacket, buff and gloves came on and off frequently depending on how exposed to this I was. I'd only seen two

people thus far, but from Stob Coire Sgriodain there were more walkers out enjoying the perfect visibility of this last day of summer. The descent to Fersit dam is quite awkward and tussocky but I actually didn't find it as bad as expected. The long climb up onto Stob a' Choire Mheadhoin was my low point however - I felt some nausea and had to ease off on fuelling and drinking for a while. This was a concern as I knew from experience that I needed to consume lots to keep this effort up. The bad patch passed though and I was eventually up onto Stob Ban, still on schedule.

Getting to Stob Choire Claurigh is a favourite section as you suddenly see the stretch of the Grey Corries merging into the Aonachs and Ben beyond. It was still windy but the sun came out intermittently from here on. I was on the final stretch and I felt confident that - barring any major catastrophe like a fall or injury - I was on for the record by a fair margin. I wondered if sub-15 hrs would happen, and dug in to try and make this a reality. Particularly going up Carn Mor Dearg I pushed to stick on the split time (and actually ran faster than my Tranter's record split here).

Descending Ben Nevis was a great way to finish, the sun came out and I took the paths I know so well from years of training and racing on this hill. I felt quite emotional as the Youth Hostel came into sight, one of my most memorable long mountain days was coming to an end. It had basically gone exactly to plan; I lay down in the grass at the hostel feeling deeply satisfied. My new record was 14h42m40s.

[MAJS] – Es Tresidder set the previous record in 2019 of 16hrs 12mins.

## Split times

31/8/20	Split	Cumulative
Glen Nevis Hostel	00:00:00	00:00:00
Mullach nan Coirean	01:01:12	01:01:12
Stob Ban	00:28:10	01:29:22
Sgurr a' Mhaim	00:33:49	02:03:11
Sgor an Iubhair	00:14:44	02:17:55
Am Bodach	00:13:01	02:30:56
Stob Coire a' Chairn	00:16:30	02:47:26
An Gearanach	00:13:27	03:00:53
Na Gruagaichean	00:34:50	03:35:43
Binnein Mor	00:15:40	03:51:23
Binnein Beag	00:22:33	04:13:56
Sgurr Eilde Mor	00:35:58	04:49:54
<i>Abhainn Rath</i>	00:31:20	05:21:14
<i>Loch Treig</i>	00:30:22	05:51:36
<i>Railway</i>	00:17:49	06:09:25
Beinn na Lap	00:39:48	06:49:13
Chno Dearg	00:54:01	07:43:14
Stob Coire Sgriodain	00:21:59	08:05:13
<i>Fersit</i>	00:27:21	08:32:34
Stob a' Choire Mheadhoin	01:04:20	09:36:54
Stob Coire Easain	00:14:03	09:50:57
<i>Lairig Leacach</i>	00:17:20	10:08:17
Stob Ban	00:37:28	10:45:45
Stob Choire Claurigh	00:28:13	11:13:58
Stob Coire an Laoigh	00:25:13	11:39:11
Sgurr Choinnich Mor	00:22:16	12:01:27
Aonach Beag	00:49:29	12:50:56
Aonach Mor	00:14:47	13:05:43
Carn Mor Dearg	00:32:17	13:38:00
Ben Nevis	00:29:16	14:07:16
Glen Nevis Hostel	00:35:24	<b>14:42:40</b>