



Distance 250 Km in the Moroccan Sahara, First started 24 years ago, It is the brainchild of Patrick Bauer , there are 850 Participants. The stages are 30km, 38km, 40km, a whacking 75km, 42.2km, then the final stage is around 15km. Temps 40-50 degrees daily. 3-10 by night.

The more I speak to other runners about their motivation for the race, the more I am sure there is no one thing, just an “I can do personality” or a need to see if they can survive in such harsh conditions and to prove that in these days of high tech wizardry and no real need to strive for survival they can still cope.

Sophie took 17 gruelling hours to complete stage 4. I fell asleep in my tent wondering if I should wait up. She arrived back at 2am and I missed her. When I woke I went to her tent to check if she was back. I felt kind of responsible. I asked how she got on. “God that was the f***ing pits!” She said. I was not sure what she meant at first. She was disappointed with the time. She also said how she was hoping I would be at the finish line. I felt bad.

Her blisters were now bleeding; her body was sore yet she still laughed. Then slept again.

Having witnessed this amazing race from the “other” side I would say that the feelings when you finish are

so mixed between pain and elation but are primarily of a huge sense of achievement. My respect for the runners of the MDS has ballooned. Just watching from the trail or a helicopter you appreciate the enormity of it all.

The MDS has a profound effect on everyone whether they run, walk or {both} their way through the 250 km’s. But also for those who work it like me. There are 500 staff that all volunteer to go back each year and it has as big an effect on them as it does the runners.

Sophie finished brilliantly. Happy, hurting, sore but has come home “flying”. She is a brave girl and this last week will leave a positive mark on her for life. She will also do it again, I know.

For me, I had another great week. I met the most fantastic people both in the race and on the organiser side. I sit at my desk trying to comprehend what has just gone by. When you run it your head goes down and you just do it. When you document it, chat to the runners; see the distance, weather and terrain and what they achieve, its inspiring.

And guess what? I am running again in 2010!

Photos: Mark Gillett, mark@junglemoon.co.uk

