



Who's that with Paula?

IS there no shame to the hob-knobbing lengths Robert Spencer will go to!!!! Here's the Stubby vet at the end of the BUPA Great South Run offering some advice to Paula Radcliffe.

"I managed a bit of banter after the race with Paula," said Robert. "She only shaved nine minutes off her personal best - I managed 14 minutes off mine in only my second ever 10 mile race (1hr 41min 56sec)!"

On a rain-soaked day in Portsmouth, Paula shone radiantly in her first race since the marathon disappointment at the Beijing Olympics, by breaking the British 10-mile record with a dominant front-running display in a time of 51min 11sec. She missed out on the world record by just 21 seconds!

A total of 19,000 runners entered for the south coast showpiece, although with rain dogging the event for the third year running, the final numbers who took part will have been considerably less.

A total of 43 Stubbies took part in the race, cheered on by thousands of spectators, including a large contingent from the club.

While it was the likes of Mark Le Gassick, with 24th place in 52min 58sec - 107 seconds behind Paula, and the in-form Zippy Grice with 55.03 for 34th who led from the front, the day was made for the likes of Robert who revelled in the carnival atmosphere and who, at the same time, ran their hearts out with personal best times.

Robert picked up an Achilles' strain for his pains, but was still delighted with his run, and meeting the Queen of running!

Julie Woodman, who has been running real well lately and seen regular improvements at Monday night training, was "really chuffed" with her 1hr 21min Great South run.

John Blake crossed the finish line in Southsea having slashed an incredible 12 and a half minutes off his personal best for 10 miles. "I think those Thursday nights with Glen, Tom and the rest of the gang have really paid off," he said.

"It was an odd day with the cold, wind and rain on the coast, but warm in the city itself. It was a great day in terms of the running. I managed a steady pace throughout the race."



Jon Henderson was also a happy camper. A week after setting a marathon personal best with a 3hr 38min result at the Abingdon Marathon, he was at it again in Portsmouth.

Thanks to a final mile of 6min 42sec, Jon ran five minutes quicker than his Great South time 12 months ago with 1:11.51. "A week after a big marathon PB, I'm pretty happy with that," he said afterwards.

The Great South Run is full of many stories, and though it is those at the front of the pack who steal the headlines, it is the rest of the field who make up the rich character of the race.

John Randall is one such character. A modest fellow, he has had a tough time of it recently through illness with cancer of the bone marrow and is currently undergoing chemotherapy. Yet the Stubby turned up to Portsmouth and completed the race in 1hr 57min 10sec. Now that is courage of the highest order. Well done John, well done everyone!