

# The Gauntlet Games in Trent Park, 30 May 2015

Being a person who tries to find fun ways to exercise (the idea of plodding along on a treadmill for hours scraping away at my already barely existent soul does not appeal to me), I have become part of the bizarre "OCR" craze of the 21st century (it may have been around last century, but I was a small child at that point who's only interest was pretending to be a pony).

Just to be clear, I am not fanatical about the GCSE exam board OCR (whether or not that still exists I have no idea, I'm old now and I don't know what's going on in today's schools apart from catching the odd TV programme where a psychotic five year old is throwing a hissy fit about not being allowed to use his iPad during lesson time – iPad, really?! When I was that age our entertainment was the sandpit and dress up corner and it was great) – the OCR I am referring to stands for Obstacle Course Racing. Yes, some people find it odd that I and thousands of others enjoying being suffocated by mud and possibly farmyard animals' excrement, climbing up tyres, carrying logs (the wooden kind) and risking electrocution but essentially all it means is that you are given permission, in fact obliged to partake in activities that are frowned upon in society and generally reserved for the under 10s (electrocution excluded).

At the beginning of the year I was searching for fun fitness events for 2015, my laptop held up by my Christmas belly, and I came across The Gauntlet Games. Not badly priced for this type of event at around thirty quid (for a 10k event like this, that is one of the best prices you're going to get) and with the promise of being chased by topless men dressed as Gladiators, I decided to sign up.

So when 30th May arrived, I got up bright and early and ate my eggs and toast and toast (I had extra toast as I knew I needed to "carb up" as the gym bros say) and got on my way to the event. Based in Trent Park in Barnet, right at the end of the Picadilly line, it was a bit of a way from leafy Kent but I decided it would be worth it.

After a long but easy journey, I arrived at Cockfosters tube station and walked two minutes down the road to the lovely Trent Country Park. Being in such a glorious green, unpolluted open space, it was somewhat hard to believe I was in London. Trent Country Park is also one of the sites to the popular "Go Ape" event which involves zip wiring, climbing up and over various contraptions and slamming into cargo netting. I can imagine it's also great for drunken picnics and romantic walks.

Compared to other events I've been to, the Gauntlet Games seemed rather quiet, but this soon changed as the first wave started to set up and the enthusiastic warm up guy got everybody going. I watched this as I awkwardly ate my banana which is a really horrible thing to have to do in public (still carbing up at this stage). I picked up my bright blue t shirt and got my race number on and got ready to go. As I waited I got chatting to a couple of girls also running alone and we discussed what we were letting ourselves in for.

Soon enough it was time to get warmed up and a gladiator came running around slapping us with his foam wand of doom. We did everything from holding hands and jumping, to burpees, to

pretending to swim. It was a lot of fun. Once warmed up, we all counted down from ten and off we went into the wilderness!

The run in itself was quite pleasant – mildly hilly but no horrible vertical slopes to have to crawl up. Less than a km in we had some hay bales to climb up with a lovely friendly gladiator helping us and making sure nobody fell, following by a pit of strange, painty water which a less friendly gladiator pushed us into. This was followed by a short flat run and then an amazing slide covered in water and bubbles which we slid down on our fronts, losing our race numbers in the process.

After this, we ran for what seemed a while through woodland – there were a couple of near misses with rabbit holes and bits of stick and twig protruding from the ground which almost caused a twisted ankle but we were lucky! As we had lovely weather, it was really refreshing to jog through such picturesque surroundings, but the warmth meant that we were grateful for some cheery volunteers providing us with water followed by an adult sized paddling pool which I did not protest being pushed into as it helped to cool my burning cheeks.

On we jogged to a “net” of tyres to climb up and over which wasn’t too bad until I got to the top and had to get my incredibly inflexible thunder thigh over the top – but I just about managed it and moved on. More countryside running followed and then – my favourite part – an inflatable castle filled with bubbles and foam and another gladiator – muscles rippling and ready for a fight. We had a bit of a grapple, him jabbing me with his wand (dirty minded people rejoice), me pushing back and almost knocking over one of the other ladies in the process! Then there was just a little bit more running and success – we crossed the finish line! A volunteer was there to meet us with our medals and we worked out the course took us around 1 hr 10 minutes.

I have done quite a few of these events now and I have to say the Gauntlet Games was a belter or a course – up for a laugh, approachable staff and fellow runners, and a great sense of camaraderie. As we stood and watched people coming over the finish line, every single one of them had a massive smile on their faces despite being covered in crap. The Gauntlet Games have more events throughout the year in different locations, so have a look at their website for more information, if you fancy a laugh: <http://thegauntletgames.co.uk/>

After changing into some warm clothes, we headed home, me for a power nap and a bit of Come Dine with Me.

Thank you Gauntlet Games for a great day – I would recommend this to anybody.





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