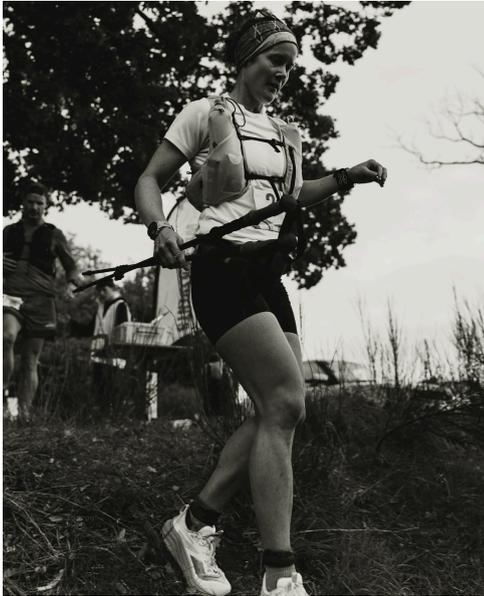


## The Highs and Lows of the Ochils

**What?** The Ochil Ultra 2025. A 50-ish-mile (82km) ultra across the Ochils. Also, the Scottish Ultra Trail Championships and my first ultra.

**Where?** From Stirling to Perth. Well, slightly beyond Perth. It starts from Stirling University and finishes on an industrial estate just north of Perth. The course is mostly beautiful but sometimes boggy paths in the Ochils, with ~10km of road running at the finish.



**When?** At the beginning of September. It's not too hot, there's a decent amount of daylight, and it's probably not been raining too much, so it's \*probably\* not too boggy.

**Why?** Peer pressure? This was my first ultra, and I entered because Aly posted on the PRC Facebook group that the club would like to get a team together.

**The race.** An ultra is a series of highs and lows. These, in roughly chronological order, were mine:

High (0km): Feeling smug because I booked a hotel right around the corner from the start line for the night before the race. This meant I didn't need to get out of bed until 5am, despite the 6am start. I know everyone says to eat breakfast at least a few hours before you start a race, but I

wasn't planning on starting out running fast and sleep seemed more important before a big day out like this.

High (15km): The first big climb! I umm-ed and aah-ed over whether to take poles or not. In the end, I took them, and I think they really helped me on the ascents. I genuinely enjoyed all of the up.

Low (20km): The first big descent. I am not good at running downhill, and I got overtaken a lot here and also fell on my bum. Fortunately, not in a boggy bit.

High (the whole race?): Snacks. I love snacks. My snacks of choice for the race were: decathlon "sport jellies" (which are basically just big flat fruit pastels), nerd clusters, SiS gels, apple puree, peanut butter sandwiches, and a cheese sandwich. All of these were excellent except for the cheese sandwich, which I threw in a bin.

Low (22km): Somewhere before checkpoint 2 there was a long stretch of quite boggy, rough ground. Me and bog are like dogs and fox poop. If you put me in a field with some bog, I will find it, and I will get in it. It wasn't long before I submerged one of my feet completely.

Low (25km): Sitting down at checkpoint 2 (25km) to change my socks into non-boggy socks and finding it surprisingly hard to stand up again. Too early for my legs to be giving up.

High (41km): Turning on my iPod shuffle and dancing through the halfway point to my playlist of cheesy hits from the 2000s.

High (48km): Reaching aid station number 3 by myself and realising I felt good and was genuinely having a fun day out.

Low (50km): The cheese sandwich. I just wasn't in the mood for a cheese sandwich.

High (52km): Spotting the woman in 3rd place up ahead of me...

Low: ...and accidentally following her off course. Navigating us back on course, only for her to immediately drop me. We spent the remaining 30km of the race role-playing the tortoise and the hare, with her repeatedly running off into the distance, and me catching her up when she missed a turn. To be fair, the course markers were sometimes quite subtle, and I was glad I'd reccied the last 25km of the route in training. In the end, I finished less than a minute behind her, but I think she ran at least 2 miles more than me.

High (~60km): Reaching the point of the course with the scary cows and discovering that the scary cows were not on the path.

Low (62km): Sitting down on the floor to tape up my first and only blister, and putting my hand in a spiky plant.

High (66km): A can of Coke and a sachet of apple puree at checkpoint 4.

High (~70km): Seeing Perth in the distance.

Low (75km): Reaching Perth. The endless stretch of road running through Perth.

High (82km): Finishing. Chips.

Would I do it again? Definitely! I had a great time, and the highs far outweighed the lows. The only thing I would do differently is to leave the cheese sandwich behind.

**PRC results:** Donald (3rd), Alan (8th), Me (4th lady), Sarah C-G (7th lady), Aly (8th lady), Tracy (10th lady). And PRC won the Ladies team prize.

Photo top left by Clorroec Cam ([www.clorroecam.com](http://www.clorroecam.com))

