

Completing the UK 'Big 3 Rounds'

On the 14th June 2026 I arrived back at Capel Curig at 10:33am having set off 23 hrs and 33 mins earlier to run a clockwise Paddy Buckley Round. After a Bob Graham Round in 2017, and a Charlie Ramsay Round in 2022, this completed a nine-year project to run the 'Big 3 Rounds' of UK fell running.

The attempt had been annoyingly postponed from April due to 45-60mph winds, hail, and rain. Rearranging hill support with relatively short notice proved very challenging, and so the attempt involved no hill support, just road support between the 5 legs. I did however have the company throughout of a friend (Colin) who also completed the trio of rounds. I was a little concerned about the additional weight to carry and water refills. However, there is much to be said for the simplicity of minimal support crews and being more self-sufficient. Not least for the logistics of trying to coordinate a group of people around weather forecasts and travel needs. Whilst it might seem daunting, it does add to the sense of achievement.



Overall, the Paddy went very well. The pace was controlled but purposeful, we fuelled well throughout and generally took things sensibly. Conditions overnight and early morning were windy and cold with reduced visibility. I had previously run two of the five legs, Colin had run none (largely because he lives about a 12 hr drive away). Because of this we paid close attention to the map throughout but probably missed some faster lines. Hiking up the ever steepening 'inclines' from Llanberis for the first time, in the dark, with limited visibility was certainly interesting. I think the Paddy has the most diverse variety of terrain to overcome. Like the Ramsay, it is also difficult to get a reliable split prediction (something perhaps taken for granted with the BG). We ended up 1hr 40 up on schedule after leg 2, only to then lose all that time on the remaining legs. We didn't feel this was a reflection of slowed pace, more inaccuracy with our schedule predictions. This was both frustrating, and a little concerning as we started leg 5. We started pushing harder to make sure we didn't have to make a return trip to Wales anytime soon! In the end, we had a fairly comfortable margin inside the 24 hrs, but a little more stressful than my experiences of the other two rounds time wise. I really enjoyed the round, the diversity, and the



places the Paddy goes through. The history and scars on the landscape are widespread and captivating to see.

Each of my rounds has been completed in different styles. For the BG I had two people on each leg, stopped for food, a change of socks and shoes at each road crossing, and generally fuffed about. For the Ramsay my hill support was reduced to one runner per leg with 'road support' only at Loch Treig Dam, and I kept stopping to a minimum. As above, for the Paddy, I had no hill support, just road crossing support, at which we were very efficient and quick. One consistent in my approach to the rounds was to run them as they had been created, I had deliberately stuck with original start locations and directions of travel, despite potentially faster options being available.

The 3 rounds are all fantastic routes, and true tests of individual fitness, strength, and determination. The obvious question a few have asked, is which was the hardest. For the reasons mentioned, it is difficult to compare, and the fact I've aged 9 years is a factor, though I am far more experienced now than I was in 2017. One measure might be to consider the time taken, and for me, as with many others, I finished the Paddy with the least amount of time spare under 24 hours (BG – 21:13, Ramsay – 22:39, Paddy – 23:33). I think the distance and variety of terrain on the Paddy requires a wider running skillset, albeit the Paddy does not have the big climbs of the Ramsay. Before the Paddy I found it hard to believe that it could be more difficult than the Ramsay given the scale of the Scottish mountains, the remoteness of support, and the length of the legs, but... I would now agree with most others that the Paddy probably is the hardest of the three, but it's close.

Duncan Archer has now taken over the record keeping duties for the Big 3 Rounds, which can be viewed here -

<https://duncanarcher.com/big3/Big%203%20completions.pdf>

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