

Rise to the Challenge

Michelle Payne

The Emperor's Challenge is an experience in ones life that one will never forget. If someone told me three years ago that I would be taking part in a ½ marathon up the side of a mountain, I would have laughed at them.

The first year I did the Challenge was in 2005 and I went into the walking category. I finally decided to do it about two weeks before, with no training other than Flatbed Loops, which my family had been regularly attending. I was usually on the flat loop with my 5 year old. I completed the challenge in 4:45. My time was not much to brag about, but I was proud that I walked 21.1 km and that I was part of a great event. When I finished the race I said next year I want to beat my time. What, was I crazy, already thinking of next year, while my feet were still aching?

The next year came quick. More Monday night Flatbed Loops, and I was a little bit more serious about training. I was able to take almost one hour off my time. I was as proud of myself for accomplishing this. Both Challenges seemed totally different and yet I was proud to say that I did it again.

I have never been much of athlete - always stayed away from sports but enjoyed a nice hike. You don't have to be a super athlete to do this, yes it is tough, but the reward of finishing is worth it. The last two years my children have taken part in the kids' events. My daughter, Caitlin, and Kelly Fry took first place for their age in 2006.

My brothers Rob and Pete, my father Bob and I will all be doing the race this year, individually as well as a team. My father turned the big 60 and has never done anything like this. We are all proud of him. The crazy things families get you into...

I took on a different challenge this year when I agreed to be the volunteer coordinator for the Emperor's Challenge. My family had a choice: "volunteer or race" (family joke), so if you get a call from me don't be surprised.

I would like to thank all of the volunteers. Without them the event would not happen. If anyone is interested in helping out, please call me at 242- 2088 or email me at mpayne@xplornet.com

