

Kelly leading marathon effort for niece Flo

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Posted On: September 11, 2014



Kelly Sibley with her three-year-old niece
Flo

The European Team Championships is not the only important sporting event on the horizon for England players Kelly Sibley, Jo Drinkhall and Hannah Hicks.

Just weeks after their mission in Lisbon at the end of this month, the trio will be striding out in the Bupa Great Birmingham Run on October 19 to raise money for a cause close to Kelly's heart.

They will be part of RunTeamFlo, a 10-strong team of runners put together by Kelly to tackle the half-marathon to raise funds for Cancer Research UK after Kelly's three-year-old niece Flo was diagnosed with leukaemia in March.

"We literally found out straight after the Nationals in March," said Kelly. "She came to watch and she was absolutely fine – mad and running around like any three-year-old.

"But on the Sunday she was saying she was really tired and she was in pain in her legs, so my sister took her straight to hospital.

"They did some tests then, but it was when she was rushed back in on the Tuesday that she was diagnosed and it was one of the worst days ever.

"To see her in the hospital bed in so much pain, it wasn't very nice. For it to happen to your family is quite hard and I think when it's a little girl it hits you even more.

"My sister was pregnant, so it was a tough time, but the family all pulled together. It puts everything else into perspective."

Flo spent several weeks in Birmingham Children's Hospital for a course of chemotherapy, and it was there Kelly saw a leaflet advertising the event.

"I think it must have been a long day, because I thought 'that's a good idea'," she said. "Now I'm not so sure – probably the furthest I've run before is six or seven miles, so I've got to double that!

"There's about 10 of us now, including Jo and Hannah and it's great that they wanted to turn out and offer their support.

"We've raised nearly £6,000 which is unbelievable. We set a target of £2,500 and thought we might be pushing it."

Jo and Hannah are also going into the unknown in terms of the half-marathon distance, but both were happy to pledge their support.

Jo said: "For me it wasn't a question. I'm close to Kelly and I know Flo, so it means a lot to me too. As soon as I knew she was running, I wanted to take part to support her. It's a great reason to run.

"Running's not my favourite thing. I did cross-country at school and they told me I was quite good at it, but that's as far as it went. I never thought I'd be doing something that involved running, but some things are worth it."

Hannah added: "Kelly's a good friend and the news they received about her niece was absolutely dreadful. I'd like to support her through it.

"I'm training a little bit – you have to really, it's not something you can go into with no preparation – and I'll continue after the Euros."

The good news is that Flo has responded well to her treatment and Kelly said: "Birmingham Children's Hospital are absolutely fantastic. Flo has reacted well to the chemo and that's the most positive news we could hope for."

"We're hoping she will be there at the finish of the race."

If you would like to make a donation to RunTeamFlo, please visit www.justgiving.com/RunTeamFlo to support Kelly and her team.

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