

# Melbourne Marathon 2010

By Stephen "House" Paine

I made the decision to race the Melbourne marathon fairly late. This doesn't mean that I hadn't been training fairly solidly, but if I hadn't been selected to run for Victoria, I was intending to pace the 3 hour group. We found out we were running for the Big V with just under 4 weeks to race day and it was certainly a great honour – something I had wanted to cross off the list. To have a fellow Miler, Thorny, also selected, was a bonus.

I'm heading back to Lake Kawaguchi again this year, which meant that now I was racing Melbourne, I'd be racing two marathons, 7 weeks apart. Given I was wearing the Big V in Melbourne and given my trip to Japan is almost fully paid for apart from the airfare, I felt obliged to run well in both races, so the goals for both races were simple – no secondary or back-up goals:

< 2:30 – success!

>=2:30 – fail.

During the 12 weeks leading up to the marathon, I averaged 105km per week which included only 62 kms for the week 12 taper. Somewhat less than the 140-odd km per week I'd averaged leading up to the last two trips to Japan and even the 120km I'd averaged leading up to the 2010 Phuket fiasco. I still had vivid memories of gradually falling apart and getting slower and slower in Phuket and after a couple of good marathon results before that race, Phuket had renewed my respect for the marathon. I knew sub 2:30 wasn't a formality! Nevertheless, despite the reduced mileage, the quality and the weekly long runs had still been completed, it was just the 'junk miles' running to and from work that had been eliminated.

Race week arrived and I attended the pre-race cocktail party (but didn't indulge) on the Friday evening at which we heard from Ron Barrassi, Rowan Walker and some of the elite Africans. On Saturday afternoon I went in to the G to drop off drinks for Thorny and I and to attend the pre-race elite athlete briefing. Enough with the formalities, by this stage I was ready to get the race over with – I was already looking forward to the first beer at the Precinct.

Finally Sunday morning arrived and the first part of the plan had fallen into place – to make it to the start line injury-free and in reasonable shape. As far as the race itself went, my plan was to get through the first half at no worse than 3:30/km pace i.e. in no worse than 74 mins but no quicker than 73 mins. This would allow me to drop off a couple of minutes in the second half and still sneak under 2h 30mins.

It was great to see so many familiar faces at the startline, both competitors and other Milers out for support and thanks to the Elite start, the whole process seemed very relaxed and it was also great (and unusual?) to start on time.

Although near the front when the gun went off, somehow, as always, I'd been shuffled back into the third or fourth row so it took me a little while to catch up to Thorny up ahead but by the 1km mark we were running together and had clocked a solid 3:28 km.

As we made our way down St Kilda Rd past the 2km and 3km markers, we were mainly surrounded by other competitors who were also representing their states. Unfortunately I waited too long to write this so I can't remember a lot of the details but I think Thorny and I were accompanied by Dave Criniti (before he withdrew) and a couple of others. At this stage the Africans were already well ahead and even the leading woman had opened up a sizeable gap on us. The Fury rode much of St Kilda Rd beside us with his video camera, giving us great encouragement. Several times I felt as though we

were going a little too quickly for my plans and a couple of times I fell off the back of our small group as we passed through 5km in 17:04. At one point as I trailed the group and the Fury rode beside me, I remember commenting to him how fit Thorny looked, a far cry from the croissant munching, out of form battler of a couple of season ago. I can only assume that based on what I've seen in three different specimens, Powercor requires large weight fluctuations from its employees every now and then...

By the time we hit the lake I was back with Thorny and a couple of others and it was great to receive so much support from so many Milers as well as mum and my brother who were on Fitzroy St with my wife (crikey, still getting used to using that word!). Dad was in for a long day too as he'd volunteered to work the finishing line at the G.

Thorny and I passed 10km in 34:23 – 17:19 for the last 5km – based on the Garmin which suggested that some of the km markers were out a bit. We still had a couple with us and at this stage I felt pretty good. We passed the Collingwood guys at the pit lane drink station and received some raucous encouragement and then encountered Biggers on his bike at the turnaround, about 12km into the race. It was great to see Slips and Bacchus moving well in the other direction. We also saw a few other runners pretty close behind us: Nick van Raaphorst, Andrew Selby-Smith, Tony Russo just to name a few.

PM travelled beside us on his bike for a while – I think by this stage it was just Thorny, myself and one other. I vaguely remember chatting to PM for quite a while as he rode beside us then wondering if all the conversation was annoying the other guy.

We pushed on into Fitzroy St and hit the 15km in 51:46 with the last 5km having been covered in a solid 17:22. We were a handy 44 seconds ahead of my goal pace but after a quickish first 5 kms, the last 10km had felt comfortable enough and Thorny and I had been feeling good enough to share a bit of conversation.

The field was beginning to spread out and it also seemed that a few in front were beginning to come back to us a little. The only one I recognised was the lead woman whom the results show had been 23 seconds ahead of us at the 10km timing mat (which incidentally was at about 10.6km into the race). We picked her up (along with a NSW team member I think) by the time we made the u-turn in Beaconsfield Pde and she tacked onto the back of us for a few km. 20km came up in 69:11 with the half marathon coming up in about 73 mins, right at the quicker end of the goal pace. Surely I could manage a 77 minute 2<sup>nd</sup> half to break the 2h 30 barrier? I still felt pretty smooth and Thorny looked fresh as a daisy.



We continued along Beaconsfield Pde to the 25km – 17:16 for the last 5km – still cruising along at better than goal pace and now a full minute ahead of the 3:30 race plan. By now the lead female had fallen off the back of our small group and we had been joined by Nick van Raaphorst who had been a mere 8 seconds behind us at halfway. The km markers now seemed to be back on track too, coinciding with the beeps of my Garmin every 500m, no doubt to the annoyance of the others in the group.

At about 27km, we approached the turn around at the furthest point from home on the course. We headed through the car park down at Elwood and past another drink station where I grabbed what I thought was my drink only to realise seconds later that it wasn't actually mine. I didn't want some poor bastard to freak out when his drink wasn't there as marathon runners can be a somewhat obsessive-compulsive bunch, so I looked over my shoulder, let the drink-station attendants know, and tossed the drink back. Unfortunately at the moment I chose to look back, I tripped on one of the only speed humps on the whole course and came crashing to the ground, bruising my hip and taking a bit of skin off my knee, elbow and hand. Not too much damage was done however, apart to my pride, and a few hundred metres later I had made up the ground to rejoin Thorny and van Raaphorst.

Having turned for home, we passed 30km and by now Thorny had disappeared. One moment he was there, the next he had bounded effortlessly into the distance with no discernible effort. I felt as though I was taking 3 tiny steps to each of his. For me, the last 5km had been covered in 17:48 and the last km had been the slowest so far at 3:42 though admittedly there was a small rise as we approached Fitzroy St. We had passed one of the Africans who seemed to have blown up quite badly but van Raaphorst had also started moving away from me. Slips and Bacchus still looked good heading the other way though my encouragement was becoming less vocal. AL, Smoothy and several others were still regular appearances out on the course and provided great support and the odd drink.

Heading up Fitzroy St was tough as I was pretty much on my own at this stage. 30km in 1:44:16 meant I had 45:44 to cover the last 12.195km. About 3:45/km would get me there but I was gradually starting to battle. It was tough work 'climbing' the small undulation in Fitzroy St before turning into St Kilda Rd and I was still on my own. Until, that is, I was joined on the by Stevie Williams and The Fury on the bike. I told the Fury to head off to find Thorny as he would no doubt provide greater entertainment running through the field – by now he was pretty much out of sight. St Kilda Rd was very empty compared to last year when it was a nightmare trying to pace the 3h 30min group through

the half marathon field. Stevie advised that James A was just ahead of me and in about 10<sup>th</sup> place in the half marathon but I never saw him. I told Stevie I was hanging by a thread and that 2h 30m would be touch and go. He stayed with me for quite a while and provided great support. We passed the gallery and saw mum, Deb and my brother again. It later turned out that somehow they'd been hanging out with some other spectators who had a relative representing Victoria - Thorny's family. Gradually one or two half marathoners caught me and I was able to hang on to them for a while before somehow managing to run away from them again. We embarked on the reverse lap of the tan, a nasty part of the course as not only is it uphill, but psychologically it doesn't help that you're running away from the finish line after 35km. The last 5km had been completed in 18:08, the slowest split yet. Nevertheless, at 2:02:24 overall, I was still 6 seconds up on 3:30/km pace which meant I had the best part of 3 mins up my sleeve over the last 7.195km to break 2:30. Although hurting, I was now pretty sure that if I could negotiate the hill to the top of Anderson St, I'd be OK.



Running the Tan past the Shrine and the Observatory was so familiar and though painful, it felt as though I was on home territory. I think I may have re-passed van Raaphorst here, offering some encouragement. He was still travelling pretty well on what I think was his marathon debut. I pressed on up the incline and was surprised to see Jay Philpotts coming into view fairly rapidly. He'd gone through half way a good 2 minutes ahead of us, obviously hoping to smash the impressive 2:25 he ran at this race last year. I wished him all the best and finally turned into Domain Rd, the last of the hills behind me. With 4 or 5 kms to go, I knew sub 2:30 was in the bag and just tried to push on without losing too much time. From Domain Rd we turned into St Kilda Rd again and after 1km or so, merged with a pretty decent number of half marathon runners. Most of them stayed out of the way but I pity the marathon runners who were running around 3 hours – the traffic must have been very annoying.

40km came up and I'd covered the last 5km in 17:49, actually speeding up a little. Back into Flinders St and it felt as though we were on the home stretch. A 3:39 for km 41, a 3:25 for the downhill km 42 which took us onto the G and I was almost there. I crossed the line in 2:28:01 where I saw many familiar faces in the stands and dad at the finish line. Blood trickled down the knee and elbow but I was pretty happy with the result and hung around the finish long enough to see Nicholas Browne (Melb. Uni.) and Nick van Raaphorst finish, both delighted to have broken 2:30. I also had time to say g'day to James A in the stands who'd run a pretty good half.

That was enough. As much as I would have liked to have hung around to see Slips and Bacchus finish, I was moved on into the bowels of the G and hobbled back to the Elite room, hoping to catch Thorny (before he made his quick getaway back to Sleepy Hollow) and hear how he'd gone. Sure enough, there he was, looking very happy indeed. It turned out he'd run 2.25-ish with a negative split, made the gold medal winning Victorian team and (most importantly?) taken my pb down. He still looked fresh and it would be a brave man to suggest that he won't go quicker again in Boston 2011 given the right preparation (and given we can secure a start at the sold-out race!) Very impressive run indeed! Great also to see a pretty happy Scott Rantall who'd also run a big pb and made the top 3 for Victoria.

I shuffled out of the G and was happy to bump into Bacchus and Slips who were both over the moon, and deservedly so. Awesome runs by both, and to share the experience for virtually the whole 42.195km makes it extra-special. At the risk of indulging in a bit of man-love, I think it's fair to say that AL, Dozer, Smoothy and I have some pretty fond memories and a bit of a bond after the Oxfam ordeal.

Well done to all the other Milers who ran a half or a marathon and a special mention to Selim who has been plagued by some pretty bad luck. I completed a couple of my longer training runs with Selim at the Bellarine Rail Trail and around Beach Rd and in my mind his preparation was pretty much perfect. In a way it's good to identify the reason for his failure to crack the 3 hours – if he can get to the start line in the future without the same issue I'm sure he will smash 3 hours (if his wife ever lets him run another marathon again!)

Anyway, after I met up with the family again, we headed for Yum Cha and on to the Precinct for a few drinks where it was great to catch up with many friends and good to see the Milers represented by Dizzy, Cans, Hutz, Hally, and AW amongst others.

To sum up, I was very happy with the time and hope to do it all again in 7 weeks time in Japan before re-loading and having a real crack at something special in Boston. Thanks to Deb, my family, training partners and Milers and all who were out there supporting on the day. Stevie W in particular got me through some pretty tough stretches.

Note to self: don't leave it so long to write a race report, things get a bit fuzzy after a while.

Finally, as always, for the statisticians, below are the 1km Garmin splits. I thought every 500m might be overkill...

<b>KM No.</b>	<b>KM Split</b>	<b>5KM Split</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	03:28.3		
2	03:23.4		
3	03:21.1		
4	03:25.3		
5	03:26.2	17:04.3	0:17:04.3
6	03:24.8		
7	03:24.5		
8	03:32.8		
9	03:28.0		
10	03:29.3	17:19.4	0:34:23.7
11	03:26.7		
12	03:30.4		
13	03:30.7		
14	03:30.4		
15	03:24.2	17:22.4	0:51:46.1
16	03:28.7		
17	03:32.5		

<b>KM No.</b>	<b>KM Split</b>	<b>5KM Split</b>	<b>Total</b>
18	03:30.1		
19	03:26.2		
20	03:28.3	17:25.7	1:09:11.8
21	03:28.6		
22	03:29.1		
23	03:24.5		
24	03:28.0		
25	03:26.4	17:16.5	1:26:28.3
26	03:30.4		
27	03:31.5		
28	03:34.0		
29	03:30.0		
30	03:42.1	17:48.0	1:44:16.3
31	03:32.5		
32	03:36.2		
33	03:40.0		
34	03:38.8		
35	03:41.1	18:08.5	2:02:24.8
36	03:10.0	Garmin error?	
37	03:42.5		
38	03:36.0		
39	03:38.7		
40	03:41.9	17:49.1	2:20:13.9
41	03:39.1		
42	03:25.2		
273m	00:46.6		2:28:04.9