

Canberra Marathon 2013

By Paul "Bacchus" Marsh

Background

After the devastation of the GC campaign it took a while for the wounds to heal and think where to from here. One thing for certain was that wherever and whenever my next marathon was I was determined for it not to be another GC experience. Again I thought with another year of running under my belt sub 2:35, although a very bullish target, could well be achievable. At a very minimum I firmly believed that I should be able to go sub 2:38 and that this was not an unreasonable expectation.

Some early discussions with AL and PM had me thinking Canberra. Both had very high opinions of it (House less so) and I did not want to wait until October 2013 to run my next one so it worked perfectly from a timing perspective. Early indications suggested that a few Milers were keen also and soon enough we had a crew. Again I have aspirations of having a crack at one of the big races overseas one day so wanted to use another interstate marathon as a means of becoming accustomed to preparing for a marathon away from my home environment... maybe I should just stick to Melbourne. Also it was always going to be a cracker of a weekend with a few of us heading up.

Slowly got back into running post GC and gradually built up the kms. Had two weeks off in September to go overseas. Was able to keep some sort of consistency though the Christmas and New Year period and my form was starting to come back.

Training Recap

Over November and December last year was doing long runs in the mid 20s. Hit the hills for the first time late December and did a few more longer hill runs in the build up to Two Bays... used Two Bays as a starting point for the formal campaign (seriously if you have not done this run before make it a must next year). In this phase was doing about 75km a week. Turned to AL yet again for some advice. Last campaign I was time poor... this time around I decided I needed to get down to the Tuesday and Thursday sessions as much as possible to ensure I was pushing myself during the speed sessions. Some may accuse me of going a bit too far but thought I may as well employ AL in a formal capacity as a coach Relationship Manager to free up my time at work.

Without throwing the baby out with the bath water we tried to change things up a bit. First thing was to race more... wanted to try and learn to run to feel a bit more rather than being a slave to the Garmin. Second thing was to include a few more shorter, sharper reps to find some more speed with the idea this would make me more efficient and increase my cruising speed. Finally, I thought there was a danger in me doing more kms for the sake of doing more kms... wanted to ensure I did the work but remained somewhat fresh so I could brain the speed sessions... all good in theory. Around this time I ran into Moo during a long run on a Sunday morning along the beach trail and told him to sign me up to Waverly for the last part of the track season.

I was pretty much injury free the whole campaign and my motivation was up pretty much the whole time. Had a few niggles but this is to be expected when training for a marathon. Did have some posterior right knee pain after a run which was diagnosed and treated by Roger Moore... it was (and still remains) popliteal bursitis. I carried this into the race but in all honestly this did not impact as I only noticed after

a run and never felt it during a run. Had a few minor illnesses along the way but without doubt the smoothest build up of the three campaigns. The family / work / running juggle still proved difficult but not as much as last campaign and the reality is that every non professional athlete faces this.

Overall felt like I was flying along and getting through the weekly mileage quiet well. Biggest week was 127km. Certainly less mileage than last year but not a lot less. 5 runs of 30km+ with 2 of these in the hills plus many others in the high 20km range in the hills. Cruised through a shorter version of the Tilt 100 session 2 weeks out with Slips which had me going in reasonably confident. Last campaign I did a 15km run with 10km tempo @ marathon race pace i.e. 3:40 most Saturday mornings. This time around I replaced that with a shorter speed session e.g. 6 X 400m flat out. Used the track racing as my tempo running.

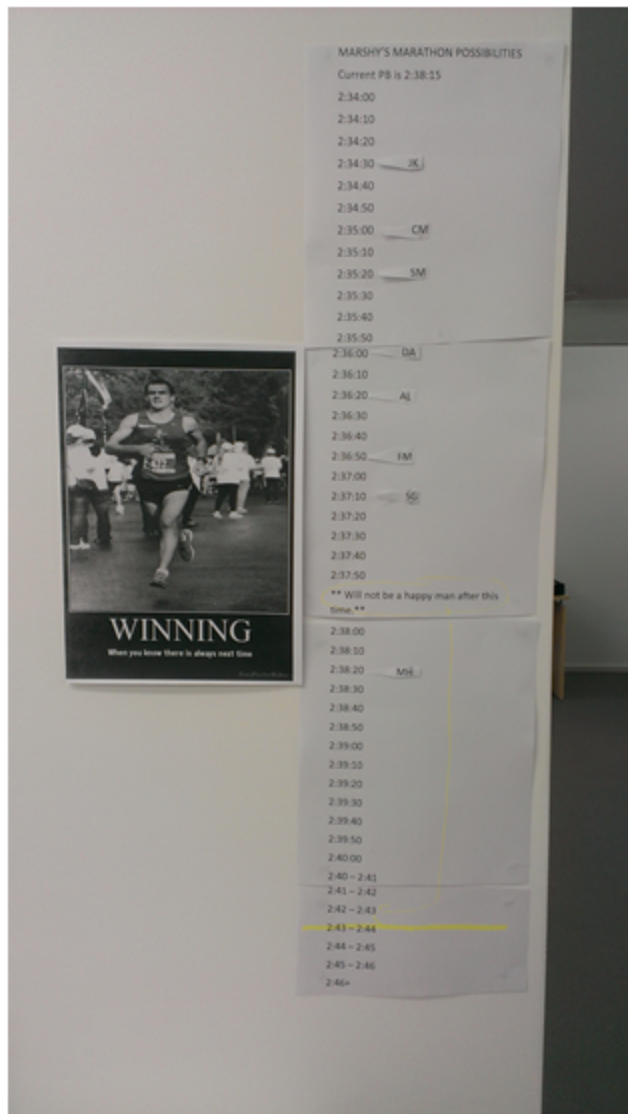
Finished the training off well and had a 2 week taper. Some training highlights included:

- The Two Bays run
- The ALs to Olinda 33km hill climb solo (got through this really well and had me quietly confident).
- The Yan Yean Reservoir 34km with Rafa, Dozer and Mitho leading into the golf weekend... can't say the kangaroo we came across felt that this was a highlight
- The many long runs at Churchill with Slips, Smoothy, Mitho and Licka with Hungry Jacks afterwards for brekky.
- The BRT run with Rafa which was the last long run of the campaign... always a good feeling
- The track racing... still have NFI on how to go about racing this stuff but geez it is good fun. Clearly got some work to do on pacing myself with some big blow outs including running a 3km pb in a 5km race.
- Yasso session with Slips at Glenhuntly in the rain and dark
- Pacing Hutzy in the Albert Park 10km... this might sound weird but this run got my confidence up. 36 low 10km and seriously felt like I was jogging.
- The Wang Half win was also pretty nice... particularly having the family there.
- A 12:06 Tan pb... a pb is a pb but oh how I want you sub 12! Thanks to Thorny, Smurf and Lurch for pacing.
- 5Ms... enjoyed the win, felt very strong and ran well.

In summary felt I had a great training block and most things went according to plan. Was much more pedantic about diet etc and also did more core, strength and stretching work... as always can still improve with this. Racing weight was 75kgs. I certainly had a degree of confidence leading in although once bitten twice shy... was determined to respect the distance as deep down was too cocky leading into Gold Coast.

The Days Before

Did not go stupid with carb loading like previous campaigns. Was feeling really good leading up to the race. A few butterflies the days before particularly when trying to coordinate drinks etc with MJ and the rest of the crew. Peely provided some invaluable advice on where to go for a post race beer. My business partner had some very kind words for me as I left work on the Thursday which made me choke up a bit. AL set up a tipping comp in the office for my target time:



ALs office tipping sheet

The week flew by but the drive up didn't. Not that I am superstitious but the family didn't come up to Gold Coast and I had a shocker so told Kathryn that she was required for the Canberra trip. The Hume with three kids takes a while... my youngest Jane was recently toilet trained... good to see her have her first squat half way up the Hume. The positive was that we had plenty of stops and therefore opportunities for me to get out and stretch a bit. Mum, Dad and my youngest sister decided to convoy it up with us so I had plenty of support. Kathryn had cooked up a storm as usual and I had plenty of her marathon muffins on the trip up. Drove up on the Friday so had plenty of time. Saw the Bombers somehow beat Fremantle. Bad omen... Hally and I watched them knock off the Bulldogs the night before GC.

Slips and Rafa flew up Saturday morning and popped over for some marathon muffins before we headed off to the expo to meet the rest of the crew. Cleary Slips and Rafa were a hit with the kids particularly the older two, Lucy and Will.

Caught up with Dozer and his family, MJ and Lurch at the expo on Saturday late morning and did the drinks handover. Luckily I also dropped a few off in the preferred start section as a back up. We then parted ways... we went to Parliament House, Dozer to the AIS and Slips, Rafa and MJ to Manuka Oval for the StKilda GWS game. Got my stuff ready for the next morning... put race bib on singlet only to

find I am a safety pin missing. Swore I packed more than four safety pins. Not to worry will grab one before the start. Pasta for dinner and then crashed early. Had a few marathon ~~dreams~~ nightmares... problem is they came true.

Had a heap of good luck messages and phone calls in the lead up... much appreciated.

Pre-race

Woke up at 5:30am. Two slices of bread with jam and some sports drink. Get ready and watch the US Masters 3rd round while doing some stretching. Tape up the nipples and put the Vas on all the required places. The family woke up not long after and started their cheer squad preparations. Made sure I booked accommodation close to the start line... had a 500m walk. Felt something in my shoe... need to fix that before race start as that will be very annoying for 42km. No wind and cool conditions but wishing it was colder... not a cloud in the sky. Left a bit after 6:30am. Got there and found a safety pin at the race tent. Saw Lurch and proceeded to fix my shoe only to find that missing 4th safety pin in there! Now that would have been a real prick! Saw the others, went for a bit of a jog to warm up. Dozer and I jagged a preferred start so nice to feel better than you actually are by warming up in front of a big crowd with personalized bib (got a heap of "Go Marshy" out on course... clearly they don't know where Bacchus Marsh is). Wish the Milers good luck and all of a sudden it is race start.



Race morning with the cheer squad

The Race - First Half

My plan (or ALs plan) was to run my own race... I used the motto 3:42s to 32 (and then hopefully kick home). The plan – head out in 78:00 and hold on. Off we go. Have to force my self to slow down during the first km but was able to establish a nice rhythm early. Dozer starts to pull away from the 1km mark. First glimpse of the support crew in my family and Dozers family around here.

The first 5km I am hitting the splits reasonably well – 3:39, 3:42, 3:46, 3:42, 3:51. The course is a little undulating so makes it hard to run even but put this out of my mind pretty quickly. Am cruising along and Dozer is 20 to 30 meters in front. The half and full start together so there are people running all different speeds but I pretty much stick to my own thing. I figure out my splits are slightly ahead of the official clock at the 5km mark which was no big deal – 5km Garmin split of 18:40 – right on track. Coming up to MJ at 7km for the first drink handover... better hands than Greg Williams... Well done Mick.

Was getting through the first few kms really well – 3:46, 3:39, 3:40, 3:41, 3:41 – a touch quick but a few downhill sections after a few up hill ones. Still very consistent and a 5km Garmin split of 18:37 with the 10km split being 37:17. Had a bit of a drinks stuff up here. Kathryn was meant to hand me, Slips and Rafa and Gel and water at 11km but I got them to stand in the wrong spot... when we did pass them it was too early for the handover but we thought we were crossing back past them... not to be. No big deal we will get MJ at the 14km handover.

The first 10.5 km is quite scenic with a circuit around the old and new parliament house. Plenty of support around this area... particularly a group of 4 girls with a beat box jumping up and down on mini trampolines... they are a bit different in our nations capital. Still going along well but at the same time wish the legs were ticking over a bit quicker. Was going slower than hoped but felt really good and just told myself not to worry as this will ensure I come home with a wet sail.



This is about the 10km mark... thumbs up... feeling good



Splits still very consistent and this positive feedback is great mentally – 3:41, 3:45, 3:46, 3:44. 3:44 – 5km split of 18:40 and through 15km in 55:57 – now about 30 seconds behind target pace. After the first 10.5km circuit you then do two 15.5km circuits. Leading up to the 14km mark we now cross over the bridge which is quite up hill and then hang a left down the hill on to the highway... I think at this point that it won't be too much fun second time around.

A bit happened at 14km... MJ was meant to be there but wasn't... find out after the fact he was driving over Julia Gillards front lawn after being blocked in. I had dropped a drink off at the 15km drink station so knew I would be OK but was worried about the others. It was also around this time I caught and passed Dozer. He clearly was not firing on all cylinders. We exchanged a few words and I felt terrible for him... he was in for a very long day and there was not much I could say.

Almost immediately after passing Dozer a bloke with a thick Irish accent pulled up along side me and started chatting... geez the Irish love a chat! He asked me what time I was going for and I replied sub 2:38. He said that was good enough for him. I reciprocated with the same question and he was aiming for sub 2:40... which was, as he described it, would be a post retirement pb. Now I am generally not in the mood for talking when running a marathon (which is a bit odd as I can generally talk with a mouth full of marbles under water) but I didn't really get a choice. We chatted on and off until I pulled away from him at about 32km. His name was Marty Considine and he was a cracker of a bloke. He has 4 kids, originally from Ireland but now lives in Sydney, has done Canberra marathon a number of times and was clearly a very good runner in his day. At one point we were discussing how much better a beer would taste at one of the drink stations. It was at this point we arranged that we would catch up post race for a beer at the Kingston (it was here I discovered he has a 2:28 marathon to his name)... less talking and more running... maybe that's the answer!

The part along the highway is again quite undulating so not all that easy to get into a rhythm. As there is a hairpin and you run it twice means that you get a good look at the other runners. In all honesty the two laps are a bit of a blur. Remember going through 20km and mentioning to Marty that I was a minute down on what I planned to be at that point but in the next breath said that means I should come home strong... I was feeling good at the time and actually believed it. Saw Dozer, Slips and Rafa after I tuned and we all urged each other on. Slips and Rafa were looking very strong. 3:44, 3:41, 3:44, 3:37, 3:48 – 5km split of 18:34 (still consistent and quickest 5km split to date) through 20km in 1:14:31 and 21.1km in about 1:18:40 (only 40 seconds behind target time). Marty asks me why they call me Bacchus... I was amazed that a bloke from Ireland living in Sydney made the link! The first half was a weird feeling. All in all felt really good but the legs just didn't want to tick over any quicker. Had not really had a bad patch and was still very confident at this point of running a pb given how conservative I had taken the first half.



Support Crew

The Race - Second Half

The splits from 21km to 25km were – 3:42, 3:47, 3:42, 3:50, 3:40 – 5km in 18:41 and 25km in 1:33:12. Still consistent. In my mind I was telling myself that I still feel good and that I just need to work through it so I can come home strong. At around the 24km mark Marty and I catch a bloke who decides to latch on and have a chat. By this stage I am not really interested in remembering his name. He was keen to run sub 2:35 but advised us that the way he was feeling he was going to have to reevaluate that target. We proceeded to tell him our respective target times. He obviously thought we were hacks or soft as he decided to take off again... we passed him half a km later never to be sighted again.



Marty and I at the start of the final lap... about 26km

The splits from 26km to 30km were – 3:47, 3:43, 3:50, 3:50, 3:45 – 5km in 18:55 and 30km in 1:52:07 – pace has dropped but not disastrous. Around here we get a huge amount of support from the Marsh and Does crew. Marty's two older kids were here too. This is the best part of the course as you are back in the main area with a lot more support. Marty and I were talking less but were helping each other out sharing drinks etc. It was great to be running along with someone for so long in what otherwise could have been a very long and lonely course. Although the pace had dropped I just thought that this was my bad patch and would be able to dig deep and bring it home over the last 10km. Going over the bridge for the second time at about 28km was not one of my most enjoyable running experiences. At this point see the guy who was in third position walking back the other way... safe to say he was not a happy chappy. Get to the hairpin on the second lap which is about 32km and I try to make my "move".

Marty was clearly starting to struggle as my excuse for a "kick" would have made Mr Miagi spew up and Marty could not come with me. See Slips who again is travelling like a well oiled machine, Dozer who was battling his cramp nemesis and Rafa who was at that point still in front of the 3 hour pace group and looking good. Still thought I had Slips covered at this stage although he did look strong. Splits from 31km to 35km were 3:53, 3:51, 4:01, 3:59, 4:08 with a 5km split of 19:52 and 35km in 2:11:59. Faaaarrrrrkkkkk not again. I was determined not be gone. Tried to dig deep but the legs told me to go forth and multiply. Tried again... same response. Tried again... at this point my legs were like "hey Bacchus how does get fucked sound?". Seriously, in my first two marathons I had only one 4km split which was on debut and was up the hill at the back of the Tan. I use 32km as a good indicator... wanted to

be through here in 1:58 and feeling good. Went through in 1:59:51... couldn't even hold the 4min km pace to jag a sub 2:40.

Time to find some positives... as much as I am gone I am not as gone as GC. Get to 36km expecting to see MJ with my final drink... not to be... Tony Abbott must have let his tyres down. All of a sudden I hear a bloke running up behind me. I am thinking this bloke is coming home with a wet sail or I am doing a NFM. All of a sudden the chrome dome that is MJ pulls up next to me, hands me my drink and sprints back towards Slips. I have a bit of a giggle at this point... MJ has clearly had a very stressful day. I thought the last part of the course would drag on given I was blowing up but for some reason it passed quite quickly. One positive is that the very slow half runners and the marathons still on their second lap were out on course so it gave me plenty of people to pass and they were keen to cheer me on. They probably need to do something about it though as even from early on we had to dodge plenty of slower runners... but when you are running slowly they are worth their weight in gold. 36km to 40km was 4:03, 4:01, 4:23, 4:14, 4:20 with 5km in 21:01 and 40km in 2:33. Not happy Jan! In all honesty it was around this point I said to myself that I am never doing this f#@cking, shi#@y marathon crap again.



Cleary hurting here – about 40km mark.

The Finish

Surely Slips has to be getting close. I was hoping he would have passed me by now and smashed 2:40 with a big negative split. However, by this stage I knew his sub 2:40 was gone so I still had one thing to race for... need to level the ledger at 2 all with the old coot. With about 1 km to go you hang a right, run for about 700m and then hang another right for a 300m finishing chute. Make the first right hand turn and decide to have a look. A bloke passes me at this point and as I look behind that little white Kenyan is fast approaching.... Not again! Now there is no way in high hell am I going to let this bloke get to me and out sprint me... again. I find something... not

much... just a little bit and no more. I pass the bloke back again. The pain in my eyes is hidden by my sunnies. I see my sister and she calls out that I have Slips covered... keep digging... never give a sucker an even break.

I must admit for a relatively small marathon the atmosphere at this point is awesome. I am going to run a crap time but still at the pointy end of the field (12th) so the support is massive. Make the final right hand turn for the finishing straight. Pat Carroll is the race commentator (what a legend). He has called me out from a long way and let Kathryn and the kids sneak on to the course and he brings me home. Run past and give them a massive high 5. As much as I am in a world of pain, that moment made it all worth it.... Mastercard. Kathryn and the three kids look at me like I am a superstar even though I know I am going to be devastated... it was sort of like panadeine forte kicking in. Finish... put a fork in me... I'm done! No more of this shit for me. Put on a brave face for the family. Out in around 78:40 and back in around 84:33 for a 2:43:13 and 12th place. It was my second quickest marathon but my debut was still a much better run.

For the first time in history I see Slips get outsprinted by some Spanish bloke... 5 seconds after that his paella comes up... great video footage. We share the regulation man hug and wait for Dozer. All of a sudden my world is turning white. Sit on the gutter and the St Johns get me a water. Stand up (or more to the point get helped up by Slips), get some snakes off Kathryn to try and bring the sugar levels back up. Lean on the barrier and have the kids running around my legs... they better move or the snakes are going to end up on their heads. Sort of come good. Dozer finishes... gutsy. Another man hug. We all comment that we need Rafa to come home in sub 3 to make the trip worth it... not to be and more collateral damage. Seriously great quote... he crosses the line and states "now wasn't that a life changing experience". Could a marathon be summed up any better.



Seriously look fat compared to the two blokes on my left



Safe to say we are all happy it is over



Three unhappy campers... Dozers face is priceless... Jane has a better Mullet than Tex Walker

Post Race

We get our medals and all that. I managed to get three so the kids could have one each... Jane especially deserved one for peeing on the Hume. Dozer the poor bastard is cramping like Pat Rafter in a Wimbledon final. Try to go out for a late brekky but everything was packed with the marathon and footy in town. Decided to get sorted and go to the pub. The old man drives Slips and Rafa back to their joint to get ready and bring them back as our place is one block from the Kingston... first Schooner – 12:30pm. Slips, Rafa, Dad, myself and Lucy and Will are first to arrive. All of a sudden we need a table of 20 as everyone else starts to arrive. There are marathoners everywhere. Rafa is hobbling, I am not far off him, while Slips looks like he could go around again. Great arvo with the family and friends. Kathryn proceeds to ask me where my next one will be... maybe I haven't had enough. It was here that Lucy and Will proceeded to hammer their new best friends Slip (not Slips) and Rafa with knock knock jokes...

"SLIP RAFA" in a high pitched child voice. "Knock knock". "Who's there". "Boo". "Boo who". "Don't cry its only a joke".

The other one was:

"SLIP, RAFA". "What kind of bees make milk?" "I don't know Lucy and Will, what kind of bees make milk?" "Boobeas" heheheheheh.

Tickets at ticketek for next years comedy festival.

What was sad in retrospect was that Kathryn and Stacey were talking about Boston and how good it was to go with the family and all the happy memories they created. What happened the next day was an absolute tragedy... puts everything into perspective.

The Parma and 6 schooners did not touch the sides... as Ray Warren would say it went down easier than a two dollar hooker. Headed back to the hotel and then out to dinner with the family for a large pizza and another 3 schooners. See Slips and Rafa again getting some takeaway Dominos... have clearly had a large afternoon. Up early the next morning. See Adam Scott is down by 3 shots... no hope. Hit the road. Get to Hollbrook to find out he won the Masters... gold. Have a pie and lemon slice for brekky. Also, can someone tell me why a place so far inland has a submarine as their main tourist attraction? Two Cheeseburgers, large chips, coke and 10 nuggets at Glenrowan for lunch. Reckon I am almost back to 80kgs by now! One more pee for Jane on the side of the Hume and we are home.



Dinner time

Post Race Thoughts

Not much different to GC. I am sh!tty and p!ssed off. I reckon I had the best preparation out of the four marathons I have completed. Plus I had another year of running under my belt. I am not one to over analyze things however, there is no point going through what I went through if you cannot learn from it.

The marathon takes you to a place that many other things cannot. I have learnt plenty but it is very hard to actually put words to it. I was on record before the race that anything 2:38 and above would be defined as failure. Upon reflection, failure would actually be not learning from what I / we went through... the issue I have is I said that after GC and the same thing happened.

Did I not respect the distance the way I should have? I reckon I did this time but not GC. Did I go out too hard? No. Out in 78:40 which was 40 seconds slower than the plan and 60 seconds slower than GC. I now have more respect for my 2:38 run... maybe that is as fast as I can go... I actually don't think that at all and still believe I can go quicker otherwise I would not bother contemplating another one. Others may disagree but I still think I can at least run a 2:36ish. The training. Did I do everything I could? Yes, in my opinion. Not as many kms to try and keep fresh and 5 X 30km+ runs. I did to get to the Tan more often this time around but still reckon I need to get there twice a week and absolutely brain myself during the speed sessions even if it means I do a rep or two less. Do I race enough? This is something I changed up from last campaign. It might not have helped but it made it more enjoyable.

The little things. If you look yourself in the mirror and ask yourself have you done everything you could possibly do to get the best result then I would have to say yes. Could I have eaten a bit better, drunk a bit less (maybe avoid the golf weekend), stretch a bit more, do a bit core strength work? Maybe to all of those but I did much better with the one percenters this time around. Is that going to change? I actually think next time I will be prepared to give up an easy run or two and do more core, glut, hammy and hip flexor strength work.

The course. To be honest... overrated. More undulating than I expected. Temperature and conditions were perfect. As mentioned on a previous post I firmly believe that Melbourne provides the best combination of course and conditions.

Got some great messages from mates after the event ranging from great effort to don't worry you will bounce back... that is life.

How good are the Milers. Great bunch to travel, run and drink with. Advice from experienced runners that have been there done that. The sledging, the banter and the genuine want for you to succeed. Running is such an individual sport but being a Melbourne Midday Miler makes you feel part of a team. Each and every Miler has played some part in my marathon experiences and I thank you all... well if you contributed to my last two marathons then you can get stuffed ☺.

Slips what a legend. Seriously great run off a very interrupted preparation. In all seriousness I think we need to look at Slips as an example. He is quick... very quick for a bloke pushing 50 and he trained to be quick. Ran a very solid marathon and didn't blow up while training for 800m and 1500m races. I for one think this makes him more efficient over a longer race and if he stayed away from 100m races then he would avoid injuries. Maybe we should be doing more 500m reps and fewer 3 X 3km... this could be a nice debate on the forum. I will back him to go sub 2:40 next campaign as long as he keeps away from hurdles and 100m sprints.

Dozer, you have been there done that and I respect the fact that you were so pragmatic about what was clearly a very difficult day. Rafa, 3 hours will be yours... just keep doing what you were doing... and maybe add some glut strength work. MJ seriously great work on the drinks and Lurch great having you on course for support. Great weekend away with the Milers yet again. It was a real shame that Mitho and Smoothy couldn't be there... the marathon road claims plenty of casualties even before the race starts.

Coach Tilt. You are sacked. Have f@#ked up my last two campaigns ☺. Thank you once again... even better to have a skinny running dork in the office. Best thing is we have plenty of opportunity to plan the next one... seriously though, golf has to be easier than this!

Where to from here? Have pulled up well... sort of. Muscles are soooo much better than previous campaigns. However, for some reason I have a very swollen right foot. Have been for 4 runs but the last one I had to stop after 500m due to the pain. Very annoying because I actually thought I would be a chance to back up for Melbourne... not to be and throw in the popliteal burisits and I just need to get my body right (except for the getting fat part).

The plan. Get the body right. Start running again and loose the 5kgs that I will inevitably put on. Get fit and fast for the summer track season. I seriously enjoyed the track racing and want to do more of it. Thinking of then maybe launching into the King Island Imperial in March 2014 and then doing Melbourne... Thorny did mention Tokyo with House... food for thought.

Thanks

My wife Kathryn and kids Lucy, Will and Jane. Could not have been more supportive. We have 3 kids under 7 and it was pure selflessness on Kathryn's behalf that allowed me to embark on not only this marathon but also the three previous. It makes the pain of ballsing up a marathon a lot easier to deal with. It was also great to have Dad, Mum and one of my sisters up for the journey.

To the Milers that have offered support and emails over the last few years and marathon running advice it has not gone unnoticed... It is a hell of a lot easier to get a marathon right when you have experience like this around you.