

## **Melbourne Marathon 2012**

“No-one told me about the escalator”

I dedicate this marathon to my daughter Emma, for whom I would not have been running this marathon. She was born prematurely into this world at 26 weeks gestation, weighing only 510 grams, or a tub of butter. She was not expected to survive. But survive she did as she is a little fighter, and to this day she continues to fight. She endured a lot during her first few years in this world but we are thankful that she had no major complications. She has been left with chronic lung disease which manifests itself as asthma, but we can control this by using inhalers and only becomes an issue during the winter months with respiratory type infections. Her other condition was developed during her first few years, which was the inability to take solid foods due to a very strong gag reflex. We tried everything we could to help and saw many doctors, professors and specialists without any resolution to the problem. We were lucky that we could get government assistance to help pay for feeding clinics to help desensitize herself to food. Now that she had reached school age we receive no help from the government and are left alone to try and resolve this problem. Through contacts in the premature community we were advised of programs overseas that help children with eating disorders. After talking with parents who had been and had children with similar issues to Emma that had improved after going on these programs, we decided that we had to try and do everything we could to help Emma. This wasn't something that we could afford so we raised money to help cover the cost of the program. The Midday Milers were amazing in their generosity and support. During this time of fund raising I was asked by a Midday Miler that if I put my name down to run my first marathon that they would double their donation, I thought about this for a few minutes but I had no reasoned logic as to why I wouldn't run a marathon as it was to help Emma. So Melbourne marathon 2012 was going to be my debut marathon. The following report details the journey I went on. We managed to raise the funds to get to Denver and early this year we flew over for a 6 week visit to the STAR centre. Emma was diagnosed with a sensory disorder that results in her getting over stimulated from her senses and as a coping mechanism she shuts down and tries to cut out the sensory input. This was possibly a result of her being exposed to senses from an earlier age than most babies would and her brain was unable to cope with all the sensory input. They tailored a program to help her cope and desensitize her to her senses and this helped her with touch and feel that she wasn't able to do before. But time and money had run out and we were given classes to help us continue the work at home. Our hope would be for a similar center to open in Australia and we are still waiting ...

Andrew Coles (aka Woolies)

## The beginning

As this is my first report for the midday milers I thought I would give some background behind my running.

I have ran for as long as I can remember. My Dad was an enduro bike racer that entailed riding around the Welsh mountainside for 8 hours and man handling the bike through the toughest of terrains. In his off season he would keep fit by running. It was back in 1983(5 years old) my Dad entered my first training run into his training diary. I managed to run 1 mile in 18 minutes. Not sure how much of that was running but it was a whole year before I went for another 1 mile run with him and this time managed 16 minutes. So the training tip here is to take plenty of recovery.

Time went by and I was always active and doing something. Swimming was my competitive release and I became club champion even though I was starting to physically lag behind the other swimmers but I made up for this with technique.

It was my last year in primary school and it was the evening after practice for the school sports day. I spoke to my parents and told them that I would be second in the mini marathon (probably 400m) and first in the sprint (about 50m). I don't think my Mum believed me until she saw me come second in the mini marathon and win the sprint. It was at this point they knew that they had to get me into running.

*"He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life."*

Muhammad Ali

They got me into a club and my running took off. I started to take interest in athletics and watching the London marathon on TV. However I always thought you did marathons when you were old and had no speed. I thought that the real runners would compete on the track over 800 and 1500. For me 3k was too far to race and I didn't enjoy it. I was always happier joining in the 4x100m and 4x400m relays and managed to get the club records for these events. My coaches had always emphasized speed and technique as the most important factors. I did manage to do a 10 mile steady run in under 60 minutes and thought that would be a good achievement to hold that pace over the marathon. But I wasn't old and I had plenty of speed so I wasn't thinking about doing a marathon.

*"Whether you believe you can or believe you can't, you're probably right."*

Henry Ford

I believed that I had potential to run well and I gave myself every opportunity by getting into Loughborough University. There were international athletes everywhere you looked and at every session there was someone who had done something in athletics in the UK. Someone may have mentioned before that Paula Radcliffe was living in Loughborough and regularly came along to the track sessions. I wasn't good enough for the front group but was about the same standard as Paula. We would be doing 1k reps in 2:53 or mile repeats in 4:55. But what most people don't know is that her style may not have been conventional but she is a grunter. Nothing more annoying than having someone grunting down your neck. Lucky I could finish off the reps with a sub 30 second 200m and get away. I made good progress for a couple of years but I was training harder and harder and the

times weren't coming down. I was also having problems in some races holding a pace that I was easily doing in training. There were now guys who I could easily handle in training who were killing me in races. I had a couple of good races in my last year at university but I had resigned to the fact that I wouldn't be the runner I thought I could be. I was lucky to be asked by George Gandy to pace the 1500m B race at the Loughborough International meet. There was a young British runner called Nick McCormick who was aiming for 3:45 and my duty was to run an even paced 2 minutes for 800m. It sounded like it should have been easy but it was much harder to run even pace than I thought and to try and stay in control. I gained a lot of respect for those pacemakers out there who do a good job and make it look easy. I finish my pacing duties and look up George who was stood next to Steve Cram and he gives me the nod to say "Good job". I didn't know it at the time but this was probably the end of me as a track runner. It is sad but true that I would never come close to this again. I was now planning what to do after finishing university and I was set on travelling to Australia on a working visa and spend a year travelling and working around Australia. This is when I met up with my now wife Roz.

It would be several months and several barrels of beer before I would run again. We had travelled up the east coast to Cairns and were now sitting out the wet season before continuing into the red center. We met up with many other travellers and it was when we met with some Danish backpackers (I say that loosely as technically he was still working for his company back in Denmark doing software programming). He was a marathon runner and had done under 3 hours 30 minutes. My wife suggested that we go for a run as I was a runner. I accepted with no real idea of what to expect. But after we ran 4 miles at about 7 minute miling he told me that I had to go on as he couldn't keep up. So maybe I could run. I was better than the average runner and a lot fitter than the average person even without training. Obviously looking back now, yes I could always run and I was over trained which resulted in the poor performances. But I had never experienced that before and my coaches hadn't picked up on it. I trained for a bit and entered a 5k race and ran around 17:30 which I was fairly happy with considering how hot and humid it was.

Back in the UK and for the next few years I tried training again but was never fully committed and there was always other distractions. Decided to do triathlons as it was a waste not swimming as I was still good even though I didn't train. I did some races but I didn't fully know what was needed and the commitment needed to become really good. I was training based on a middle distance runner and was very naïve about the workload needed.

We moved to Australia permanently and I continued to train for Triathlons and managed to do some of the shorter races in the Gatorade series in Melbourne. But I was always lacking on the cycling leg as I never did enough training on the bike. But I found that my running was coming on and I managed to win a 5k race and do Ok in a road mile race. (I now know that I was beaten by Tony Wilson (Harry) and Stephen Paine (House)). I started to notice more people who were running for Melbourne Midday Milers and so I started to train with them in January of 2009. I made good progress and my times were improving but I couldn't run as well on the track and my basic speed had dropped. Well I guess this is growing up.

## The Journey

10 months before the start of the marathon and I had already had a 14 week program worked out that started at the beginning of July. The plan was to get fit for the winter cross country series and build a good a base. I would then have a week of easy running before starting the program. My target for the marathon was to run sub 2:40. This however changed shortly afterwards as I realized I should make it more challenging and so 2:37:16 (6 minute miling) was the target.

I decided fairly soon that I was going to go with Adidas Feather 2 for my race shoes. I had tried them on one of our sessions and got on really well without any calf issues. This was my main consideration for the shoes as my calfs always give me trouble from racing and fast speed sessions. To help with the fast sessions I was trying compression socks for the first time. I didn't consider them as something to improve my performance but was hoping that they would limit the damage done to the calfs and help me recover. Since wearing them I have had no issues so they did work for me. The only down side is the amount of abuse you are given from fellow runners. But I can live with that.

I also looked at my training in general and tried to work out how I could improve. I looked at other runners in the milers who had been running well over the last few years and whose training I found interesting. Firstly Colin Thornton (Thorny) who was famous for blowing hot and cold, both in training and in racing. Secondly Simon Bevege, I couldn't work out at the time why he seemed to miss sessions or miss some of the Midday milers races but still beat me when I was doing every session I could. I worked out that they were both missing or running sessions easy if they weren't fully recovered. So they would only run hard when recovered. Whether I was right or wrong I decided to change my training so that it wasn't so regimental on Tuesday and Thursday sessions. I would give myself extra time to recover so that every session I did I could do it at my best and hopefully improve from one session to the next without running when tired. This meant that I would do something like Tuesday and Friday sessions with a long run on the Sunday.

Before starting the 14 weeks I did a time trial around the Tan to see how I was going and was happy with my first sub 12 (11:59) run in the last few years. I then had a very easy week before starting the plan. I built the total ks each week up to between 120 and 130 ks and the long run built up by a km or 2 each week starting at 25 and reaching a maximum of just over 35 k about 4 weeks before the marathon. The long run was a big change in my training as previously I would try to fit in 20-25 k during the week but I was now doing it on a Sunday at Churchill Park. This is a great running area and perfect if you want lots of hills and fairly wide tracks to run in groups.

My hard sessions during the week were not anything special and were mainly the same as what the Midday Milers were doing.

I had planned to do the Winter AV (Athletics Victoria) season which I felt would give me some good races and build up some strength ready for the marathon. The season started off a bit slack with a 33:36 10k and a little down on what I had hoped. But I slowly progressed from one race to another and I ran 15k in 50:59 with the first 10k in 33:20 (faster than my 10k earlier in the season). I gave myself a week taper for the half marathon and had a really good go at it. Went through 10k in 33:16 and 15k in 50:20 (both faster times than my previous races) and finished with 72:05 which was a minute PB and things seemed to be heading in the right direction.

My number had now come through in the post and things were starting to feel very real. I pinned my number on my singlet as soon as I got it so I wouldn't lose it.



Photo 1: Race shoes (Adidas Feather 2) and race number. Things are starting to get very real.

The toughest session I did was 4 laps of the Tan at race pace (15k). In hindsight this was a very good session to do as it gave me some idea of the pain felt at the end of the marathon and probably showed that I may struggle at the end of the marathon as the pace did drop in the last k or 2. This long running is very different to what I have been brought up on. I am happiest when running short intervals on the track or up hills. I am naturally better at the shorter stuff and training for the marathon was complete opposite to that. It wasn't a choice I consciously made I was just born this way.

I planned a quick lap of the Tan 2 weeks before the marathon which was a low light of the campaign as I felt so fit but couldn't do anything more than 12:13 (PB is currently 11:46), which was disappointing. Was I still tired from the 4 lap race pace session?

After running reasonably well at the half marathon there was talk about targets. These ranged from 2:31 to 2:35 depending on who you spoke to. 2:35 was a good target with a push target of 2:33. I would head out at low 76 for the first half and give myself every chance to run 2:33 but hopefully hold onto 2:35 at worse. I was looking at running between 3:34 and 3:38 for each k.

Started carbo loading 3 days before which was an interesting experience as you are forcing yourself to eat more than normal. I managed to gain 2 kilos in weight. The hardest thing was sleeping at night due to the amount of sugars in the system.

Race day comes and the plan was to get up at 4 to have cereal and a Gatorade. Woke up on the right side of the bed like I'd won. I've got a good feeling that I've never had before. Leave the hotel just after 6 and walk to the start line. Drop off my bag of clothes at 6:30 and go for a very light 5 minute jog. Get to the preferred start area and surprised by how empty it seems. Where were the other milers? Finally see Richard Does (Dozer) and direct him into the preferred start area. Get on with warming up and some strides. Speak to Brett Coleman (FatAss) and we exchange target times. I think he was looking for fellow runners to run at sub 3:30 pace but I wasn't going to be one of those. Start to line up and finally see some other Midday Milers. Recognize Ewen Vowels (Smurf) and we wish each other good luck.

### **The race**

So here I stand, an old runner with no speed about to take on the marathon. I've got one shot, one opportunity. You only get one chance at a debut and this was it. The gun goes and we are off. At this point nothing else matters. I allow the front runners to pull away and I try to hold back in the first k. I would prefer to be 10 seconds too slow in the first k as that time can easily be made up. I have a word with Kaz and Ask Cameron Hall (Ipod man) what time he's aiming for. Surprising that he could hear me with the headphones on but thought I would annoy him anyway by talking to him. I have a look at the watch and see 3:40 pace. He tells me that he's easing off and he drops back. I miss the first k but feel it must have been slightly under 3:40 pace.

The group ahead contained FatAss who I knew is capable of something closer to 2:25 based on his 68 minute half marathon PB. So I presumed that the group must be aiming for sub 2:30. A little quick for me, so I would sit back and keep at this pace. The only problem was that I was now alone after only 1500m of running. I tried to take in the surroundings and enjoy the cheering of the limited crowds on the street.

The ks ticked by and I only had the beeping of my watch as company. It was set for every k and I was taking note of the difference between when it beeped and the k markers on the course. I ignored the watch at 5k and waited for the 5k marker to pass and the watch showed just over 18 minutes. Perfect pace and felt so easily. On running down to Albert Park I noticed the group in front had splintered. Looked like FatAss and a smaller number of the group had headed off and left remnants of the group behind who were now running in 2s. I was now catching the first of these pretty quick and soon went past just as I got to the 7k marker and the Midday Milers first drinks station. Had a little banter with Grunter about targeting his PB. Fun at the time but not fun now as I'm still aiming for his PB. I slowly had my drink and had no issues. Checked my watch and it took me about 800m to finish the drink. This was what I wanted. The mistake I have been making before was to drink it too quick which would affect breathing and also give me stomach issues. But I was feeling good and concentrating on the next group ahead.

I was again running by myself taking in the amazing scenery around the lake and trying to stay comfortable. Amazing to see the big group of milers cheering us on. Had a chance to see some of the field back to about the 2:50 pace group. I apologize to Hally who I believe gave me support several

times but I failed to return the favor. The ks were ticking by in the 3:34 to 3:38 range and everything seemed to be going to plan. On leaving Albert Park at about 13k the road heads up and I actually enjoyed the change and kept pace without a problem. By the time I got to the 14k mark and the second drinks station I had caught up with the next 2 runners in front. One of the runners in a yellow singlet, lets call him mellow yellow was not willing to say anything. The other runner who was in a South Australia singlet was willing to give away only the smallest amount of information. Lets call him The fox.

The 14k drink station went by without a hitch. Found out that The Fox was a 71 minute half marathon runner and was on debut at the marathon. Hopefully I could use him to get around and should be on for a similar time. By 15k suddenly Mellow Yellow was picking up the pace and I was quickly dropped out the back. Wasn't too worried at first but decided to check the watch to see how quick we were going. To my surprise the pace had dropped and it was creeping over 3:40 pace. Had they picked the pace up or was I feeling the first effect of the distance? So I picked the pace up and then noticed that Mellow Yellow had pulled away from The Fox and The Fox was slowly coming back. Joined The Fox just before the turnaround at 18k. I stayed with him for the next 10k which I was very grateful for, as this was the only time I was running with anyone for the whole marathon.

The ks ticked by and I managed to get something from The Fox. He seemed fairly nervous about his first attempt at the marathon and was focusing on the race starting in the last 10k. Through halfway in 1:16:40, so 2:33 pace and feeling ok at this point.

*"I just run as hard as I can for 20 miles, and then race."*

*Steve Jones*

*"Anyone can run 20 miles. It's the next six that count."*

*Barry Magee*

He had good support with a coach or mentor on a bike who would cycle ahead and then appear every few k giving support and the occasional drink. The first of anything interesting happened at 25k when we went around the car park at Elwood Park. This really played havoc with the hips and they started hurting from here. But The Fox had more fun at the drinks station where he had a drink to pick up. He shouted out 72 and the volunteer on the drinks station frantically looked for the bottle. I had moved aside and missed the sight of the volunteer running with the bottle to catch up with The fox and hand the drink over. Fair play to him as we were moving fairly quickly so it was good that the volunteer could run a bit.

Get to the turnaround at roughly 26k and feel a bit of relief as we are at the furthest point from the finish. Mention this to The Fox but got nothing apart from saying that the work was to be done in the last 10k. Soon after this I check the watch and the pace had dropped below 3:40. So I step it up and this time it hurt a bit more. I think about what The Fox had said, but thought that I didn't want to start losing time now and before I knew it I was running solo again. This was the last I would see of The Fox (Stephen Cavanagh) who finished in 2:37:32.

Fitzroy street came around and I was surprised that it wasn't as bad as I thought. But then I tried to pick the pace up and quads said no. I asked kindly several times and each time I got the same answer. The lights were on but no-one was home. Panic did come across my mind. It had crept up but now had well and truly jumped on my back. I was still running 3:45 pace so all was not lost. I

think I still believed that I could get under 2 hours 40 and possibly under 2:37 if I could hold on. Steve Williams (Stevie) joined me on his bike which was good to have someone nearby. Not sure how it helped and little was said between us but I was thankful for it anyway. He rode for a k or 2 and then pulled over. By now I was not looking at the watch. There was nothing it could tell me that I didn't already know. It was just reminding me every km that it was still there.

*"Marathoning is like cutting yourself unexpectedly. You dip into the pain so gradually that the damage is done before you are aware of it. Unfortunately, when awareness comes, it is excruciating."*  
John Farrington

Soon I was overtaken by Antony Rickards (who appeared to be pacing ) and Drew Arthurson. Over the next 10k I was able to just hold onto them and keep them insight which helped to keep my mind off the pain. We left St Kilda road and ran through the tunnel. I didn't pick the pace up at all down the slope and with the toughest part of the course coming up I was wishing that I had something left. I was worried about the report from Smoothy where he had to walk up the hill (now known as Smoothys hill) but the hill didn't slow me down too much more. I just couldn't pick the pace up on the downhill. My last drink stop came and AL was there (although another story about how he got there) and I had the choice of Gatorade or red bull. Gatorade was a safe bet and red bull could play havoc with the stomach. I was willing to take the risk as it couldn't get much worse. The red bull tasted strange without vodka but I was hoping I would get some kind of pick-me-up. The quads were really suffering and the pain was crazy. It was like I had done the hardest hill session ever, followed by a weight session and was now trying to run but the quads weren't having anything to do with it. I was surprised that the calfs weren't hurting.

*"Ask yourself: "Can I give more?". The answer is usually: "Yes"."*  
Paul Tergat

Stevie joined me for a short bit until an official got him to pull over as it was seen as pacing. I found this funny as my running and pace were currently not related. My pace really shocked me when I joined onto St Kilda road again and could see House up ahead on the other side of the road pacing the 3 hour group about 4k behind me. I wasn't sure if I was catching him at all. That really put a downer on me and it felt so depressing being so close and not being able to do anything about it. I had mentally prepared several scenarios and this wasn't what I had hoped for. But I had thought about this and new I had to just hang in and try to keep those bad thoughts out of the head. I knew I could keep going even though every kilometer felt like it lasted 10 minutes and for every second, part of my brain was telling me to stop.

*"Get going. Get up and walk if you have to, but finish the damned race."*  
Ron Hill to Jerome Drayton during the 1970 Boston Marathon

I was now into the last 2k and finishing was inevitable. The time had slipped my mind. I think I must have worked it out but can't remember what I had worked out. It all became a blur. I was relieved to have some company as the leading female came past and looked strong. There was no chance of going with her as every step was like running on broken glass and the pain was brutal.



The MCG finally came into sight and before I knew it I was in the tunnel being told to take the middle chute. Middle chute? What middle chute, I can't see a damn thing in here, how about giving me some useful information. On turning onto the hallowed turf I was directed and followed what looked like the right way. I looked around at the finish and it still seemed a long way. I picked it up and felt like I was sprinting. Turns out I was only running at 3:30 pace but that felt like a sprint compared to the 4 minute pace I was doing. I saw the clock at about 2:36:15 and thought that I had to get a move on to get under 2:37 but time seemed to slow down and I easily got to the finish under 2:37. I was giving a two handed fist pump and slowing down when my legs started to wobble like crazy and I felt it difficult to stand up.

I had finished. I looked up at the crowd and could see people but I couldn't see faces. It all started to become a blur and a helper asked if I wanted a seat. Finally someone gives me some good advice. I sat down and had a cup of water. All I could think of was the family and I really wanted to see them. After a minute I stumbled up and looked around at the crowd. All kind of thoughts entered my head. I tried so hard and got so far, in the end does it even matter? Still very blurry and couldn't make out anyone. I think I see Joji Mori. Or did i? I watch the clock tick over to 2:40 and didn't see anyone I was expecting. What happened to Ipod man, or Dozer or Smurf. I stumble along and see John Hand (The Job) and Garth Calder (Licka). They look very relaxed like they are propping up the bar. I tell them my time and say that I was looking for Smurf or Dozer and they point out Smurf at the first aid tent. I stumble over and have a man hug with Smurf. He had just ran a 20 minute PB and later I find out that he ran the last 12k faster than me.

I decide that I need to get my clothes and head into the stand to find the wife and kids. This was easier said than done as the first thing you have to do is head down a tunnel underneath the stand. The quads don't want to move and I have to walk very slowly down the slope. I could see the volunteers holding medals at the bottom and they all appear to be smiling. I was sure that they were all laughing inside at me as it seemed to take a long time to reach them. Finally as I get close one of them steps forward and offers me a medal around my neck. Couldn't stop thinking that I would have preferred a hand down the slope but I guess I will accept the medal instead. Get directed to my bag of clothes and then ask for the way out. Get pointed in a direction and I start to hobble out and around the stadium. Finally in the stadium and notice a glass wall what appears to be surrounding an escalator? I peer down and see where I've just picked up my bag. What no-one told me about an escalator? I just hobbled for 10 minutes to try and get here. It took me so long that I had time to eat a banana, have 2 cups of PowerAde and get the paper. So relieved to finally find the family. My lips and hands have turned blue so decided to grab a taxi back to the hotel.

*"I was unable to walk for a whole week after that, so much did the race take out of me. But it was the most pleasant exhaustion I have ever known."*

*Emil Zatopek's description of the Olympic Marathon win in Helsinki*

Couldn't believe the pain I have been in since the marathon. Mainly in my quads. Every day I'm shuffling. Its day 3 and I can finally walk without too much pain but steps are still painful. However it was all worth it.

I am a Marathoner!

*"We are different, in essence, from other men. If you want to win something, run 100 meters. If you want to experience something, run a marathon."*

*Emil Zatopek*

I think I'll have a beer.

## **The future**

For now I am content with what I have achieved. Who am I kidding? I can't bloody run at the moment so I don't have much choice. Once the pain subsides I will be able to think with a clear head of what I want to do. But marathons are now part of my life and I won't finish with 2:36. I now think to run under 2:30 would be a good aim and a very good achievement as very few runners have ever achieved it. But its summer and its track time. That's something I can always get excited about. But how can I run track if I am old with no speed?

*"You have to forget your last marathon before you try another. Your mind can't know what's coming."*

Frank Shorter

## **The thanks**

Thanks to AL and PM for helping with the training structure, training sessions and general advice on preparing for the marathon. Thanks to anyone who ran with me in the hard training sessions. This is vitally important when pushing sessions to the limit. Even if you are in front or behind it all helps to motivate you to keep going. Thanks to Bevo and Thorny who didn't realize it but made me change my training strategy. Thanks to Slips who was my drinks man for the day. It's such a great thing having your own drinks station and not having to worry about finding your own drink. I last left Slips at 28k and I presume he still thought I was on for around 2:33. Thanks to all the support on the road. I recognized most people but there were a few that I wasn't sure who they were. There were also a few times I heard a cheer and looked around and couldn't see anyone. Hopefully you know who you are, Mr. Cellophane. But the milers families and friends were easy to spot with the red milers singlet's on. It was good to see TW a few times out on course. Thanks to Stevie who rode with me in dark times when no-one else was around. This was invaluable in keeping me going. And finally a thanks to my wife Roz who supported me the whole way

Hopefully I inspire some others to have a go at the Marathon. I know there are a few waiting for the right moment.

## **The stats**

Official data:

Split Name	Race Time	Leg Time	Pos	Cat Pos	Gen Pos
10k	00:36:05	00:36:05	23	23	23
20k	01:12:19	00:36:14	22	22	22

30k	01:48:47	00:36:28	22	22	22
40k	02:27:52	00:39:04	22	21	22
42k	02:36:40	00:08:48	23	20	22

Garmin data:

<http://connect.garmin.com/activity/233636708>



Photo 2: At the Cranbourne races wearing my medal. Didn't care what people thought, as I had just run a marathon.