

Melbourne Marathon 2013 – James Simonetta

Result:

02:57:57 (*Net Time*)

The Day:

Actually got a good night sleep this time around. Normal routine similar to my early Sunday long runs, nothing special.

I was worried about the conditions especially the wind, not so much the rain, as it turned out was perfect for running. Luckily the weather held off until after my race. Meet my old running mate (Simon Walker) inside the MCG at 6am, first thing I said “*Hear I am again 5th time in a row, why am I doing this*”. Then did the usual preparation and we went off to pick up a marathon show bag, as you always want a free t-shirt. Checked our bags in and headed off to the start line weaving our way right up to the front (*I didn't know about booking a priority start*). Bumped into Matt and Shirley (IF runners) had a chit chat and trying to scout out ‘House’ the 3 hr pacer, didn't see him until just before the gun went off.

The Race:

A real gun was fired this year really exciting, nice and loud. Set off running up the hill looking back for the 3hr balloon, couldn't see it, so stuck to 4:10ish pace then somehow sped up a little as the GPS watch was out of sync with the km markers, a lot of people were saying the same thing. My pace was fluctuating a little, slowing down at times to let the pacer catch up, as I wanted to get into cruise mode for most of the race. I did join the group towards the end of St Kilda road. We went into Albert Park, where the Milers were waiting at the 7km mark handing out our drinks. There I pulled away only slightly roughly 200m or so in front of the pacer group. Another miler on the sidelines (Woolley) kept telling to hold back, save some for the last 10km you're going to need it. I kept a nice rhythm felt strong then about to take my first gel and dropped it, luckily I had five, a few back-ups just in case. Went through 10km in just over 41min averaging 4:07 pace (*watch time*). Then cruised along out onto Fitzroy Street where I picked up another drink from ‘Racer’ at the 14km mark ready for the flat and boring run up to Port Melbourne and back, where I had a conversation with a 30 time Spartan runner, which was inspiring. I kept it fairly constant going through half way in over 1:27ish time (*watch time*), picking up another drink from Racer (*thanks*). I think I pulled a little more away from the pacing group and cruised down towards Elwood where ‘Dozer’ called out saying you're running away from the group. Along the Elwood return I wanted to switch off and cruise as I knew the mental fight is coming when you get back onto St Kilda Road. I went into auto pilot back up Beach Rd and up Fitzroy St where I was averaging 4:10ish pace, I got to 30km and felt good (as the Skipper says “*you got to get to 30km and feel good*”). I started to speed up (*probably a mistake*) run a 4:05, 4:06 dropped back to 4:15 at 34km mark where I saw ‘Smurf’ struggling back (injured) told me you're going to do it, keep going. Then sped up again run a 4:05, then 3:55 at the 35-36km mark.

The challenge:

Got around to Lithgow avenue to the dreaded back of the TAN and bang the hill, a slow climb 1500m or so, stuffed with my head where I slowed down to 4:23ish pace. The Milers were there for my last drink taking a photo of my ‘ugly face’ just before Government House Drive. Racer handed me my last 6th drink and said dig deep mate you can do it. The urge to stop at the official drink station just past the roundabout and take a little walk was intense. Not many runners around at this point just a couple here and there and said to myself stay with this guy and fight, pretend it's an interval session and it will be over at the top of the hill. I did and pushed past him and kept the fight up. Managed to hold averaging

4:20ish pace looking back for the balloon just in case and couldn't see him. Relief start the decent down Domain Rd (*which doesn't feel like you're going down hill*). Then I slowed a little along St Kilda Road and run the last 3km the slowest, I had nothing left but mental guts averaged 4:30. I saw 'Woolies' just before the 'G' calling out keep pushing but just could not speed up anymore. That was it kept it steady and run into the G waving to crowd trying to get the attention of my family where I crossed the line and bent over with complete accomplishment.

After the race:

Saw Roger, Rafa and Gerard and waved out to my family in the crowd had a few conversations, House said you ran off and we never saw you again (*that felt good*). Walked back down asking where I can get a damn drink, picked up my bag started to walk up the ramp felt the chill and got my towel out to keep myself warm. Bumped into "Obama" downstairs he was shaking and I kept talking to him and telling him to keep drinking. Saw "Lurch" he took over helping "Obama". Then made my way up to meet my family hobbled up the stairs had to walk far around to Gate 2, got there and collapsed with massive calf cramps. Two old people tried to help and started massaging which made it worse, my wife and two daughters turned up trying to help, then another guy came and gave me immediate relief by pushing on the top of my feet and telling me to drink and get sodium intake. Lucky I had my trusty salt tablets on hand to munch on and a couple of sports drinks. All came good and made our way to the car, my wife forgot where she parked and had to wait under a tree in the rain with my kids while she found it (30mins later), hungry and cold.

Training:

This year I wasn't going to run the Marathon, I decided late May to have another crack. I joined the Midday Milers and pieced together a plan with the help of Racer and some consultation with Dozer and started my first long run in early June. Not a lot of time but I knew I had a base from years gone by. I quickly ramped up and added more weekly miles, felt good so started doing double runs 3-4 times per week in the morning (8km) and resting every second week in August and some of September. Then surprised myself in the Burnley Half Marathon with a just over 82min time.

The hard sessions with the Midday Milers are what really paid off, lifting my overall fitness and putting yourself in the hurt locker consistently to improve. As my uncle Chris Wardlaw keeps saying your training needs to focus on improving your overall fitness as you need to be very fit to run a sub 3hr.

What to do differently:

Not a whole lot probably better pace control during the race not fluctuating too much in the last stages of the race. And doing a few more racers during the year would help.