

From the beginning of the year running the MM was always in the back of my mind, however it wasn't until I was able to get past running Oxfam injury free and in some reasonable form that I was able to really commit. With many extra curricula or competing event on such as studying an MBA and all that comes with having a young family, I was keen not to place too much pressure on myself as far as times went and as such initially I thought breaking 3 hrs would be a good show.

As training progressed some of my shorter races indicated I might be in better shape than 3 hrs with the Albert Park 10k in 36.16 probably really starting me to think that sub 2.55 might be possible. Although I ran all the AV events I never really raced them even though they were run to max effort I never really backed off training. The Burnley half lead up week included 70km with the race making the week 90 kms, however I was still able to run 82.30, so felt confident that I was still on track for a 2.52 – 2.55. So as my 2.5 week taper started my lead up kms per week were as follows: 89, 90, 89, 67, 84, 123, 93, 47, 71, 79, 72, 68.

Going into the taper I was pretty confident that I was close to 4min/km pace so I decided to do a 15km tempo at 4min pace, this I managed to do however the last 3kms were a bit too tough for my liking and I decided I wasn't going to handle that for a full marathon. I therefore readjusted my race pace expectations to 4.05 – 4.10 pace, thinking that with a little more taper and a slightly slower pace I should see through the whole marathon. The week leading in to the race I was very nervous both for the actual race and for trying not to get a cold. With impeccable timing both of my sons had croup and my wife had a head cold, as a result I really felt I was on the verge of catching what 'they had', so it was off to the vitamin store I went to get whatever might see me through the week and to the start line. By Saturday my head had started to clear and I felt that I was out of danger ready to run.

My lack of marathon experience led me to asking many of the more seasoned miler marathoners what I should eat and drink leading up to and during the race. The eating was typical to what I had done in previous distance races, but the reduce fluid intake prior to the run was something new, and being very conscious of the excessive toilet stops I took in the Oxfam event I took particular note of the advice and reduced fluid intake on the morning of the race, ideally I wouldn't need to stop and pee at all during this race and I could rely only on the drinks provided by the support crew every 7kms and not even worry about having to rely on getting a drink at the official race drink stops (this is likely my assumption).

As luck would have it, thanks to Rafa I got my first preferred start so I was able to make my way to the start line without any worry about the crowd. So in ideal racing conditions I made my way to the start line and met about 10 other very excited and nervous milers. With the completion of the

national anthem and the crack of the gun the race started, and I was very determined not to run with the 2.48 – 2.50 group (you know who you are) knowing that I should be just of the back of them. As a result I had to stop short a few of the guys keen to start up a conversation, especially Tait Ovens who seemed especially keen to have a chat, he popped up out of nowhere at about the 500m mark looking in very good spirits and likely to run fast, unfortunately I didn't share his exuberance or his inclination to chat so let him know that, and he quickly sped off.

I settled into a pace that seemed to hover around 4.05 pace, consistently finding myself slowing from a pace of 4.00 or even slightly quicker on the downhills, all seemed to be going to plan. I got to the 7km point and was delighted to see the crew and I was feeling good. The great part of running around the Albert Park section was being able to see and give encouragement to all the other milers going the other way. I passed the 10km mark in about 41 mins feeling strong again reminding myself that I need to stick to the plan, again slowing from a slightly quicker pace.

The 14km mark came and went and was probably the first time I thought that I should have taken advantage of one of the earlier official drink stops. Getting onto Beaconsfield Parade I found myself feeling comfortable and running in a good group of four. At the turn at Bay Street I felt a little twinge in my groin that was sharp and concerning but went away after about 100m. It was also at this time that the realities of being in a marathon started to hit. I ran through the half in about 86.40, with my quads starting to feel it a bit but still thinking I was strong enough to maintain the pace. I had done two good half marathons at this pace or quicker in the lead up and nothing in my legs concerned me, I mean I'm running a marathon!

The heat of the day also became evident at this stage, with almost no shade until after the turn at Elwood. Also at this stage I saw the lead runners ready to turn right and head back up Fitzroy Street, I was in awe, but I still prevented myself from shouting encouragement. Not sure why, maybe they were moving too fast or perhaps I was annoyed that they were heading home and I still had to run to Elwood, thinking back it was inconsiderate of them.

Going past the 28kms mark I was happy with how things had gone, but I was a little concerned about the next 5 kms so I was conscious of conserving energy and consolidating what I had done so far, so knew that pushing harder was not an option and looked about to see if I could get any cover from other runners. Cover was not forthcoming from other runners, but Roscoe ended up coming past on his bike at the right time for me to suggest he ride next to me for a while. He was concerned about riding on the course but I was able to convince him it would be alright without needing to beg. At 30kms I thought I was starting to push a little too hard and decided to slow to 4.20 pace, the aim was to run at this pace for 4kms then re-evaluate. The screws really started to turn going up Fitzroy

Street, but again this was not totally unusual and I was confident that once I got back on to St. Kilda Road I could get back into a rhythm again.

At the top of Fitzroy Street the half marathon runners started to converge, I stuck to the outside and ran around them. Once on St. Kilda road I felt relieved that I was now on a slight down-hill and cautiously lengthened my stride to 'roll the legs over' and recover what I could that had been taken out of me going up Fitzroy Street, and ready myself for my attack up to the Arts Centre. Then my left hammy cramped! Within a half a dozen steps from the first twinge my leg went to a full leg freezing cramp, I was in shock!

I think Roscoe was in as much shock as me, with repeated questions of "has this happened before?" To which I really didn't have much else to say other than "No", or "No, but I don't run many marathons either". So there I was on the side of the road trying to stretch and walk to relieve my cramp in the vain hope that this was a brief couple of minutes that I would soon recover from. Trying not to focus on everyone passing me, and likely thinking "yep another fool that doesn't know his marathon pace", I started a very slow jog. This turned into a 4.40 pace and for a brief moment I thought that I could manage this until bang the hammy cramps again! At this point I think Roscoe, who has been a great help refilling my water bottles and handing out my remaining gels, know I'm in trouble. To which his first reaction was some motivational talk, by providing me with a running commentary of which MMM is passing me. I did my best to let him know that this wasn't helping and so in between dodging trams and runners we continued to stretch, drink, walk, run then cramp routine all the way up St. Kilda Road. At one point along here a spectator asks me if I needed anything to which my response was "yeah, a new pair of legs". At the Domain interchange, my final hope of a decent time was all but dashed by a very direct and mathematical Roscoe. I suggest that I still had a shot a sub 3 hours, to which he promptly replies "No you don't. You would have to run 4min pace from here". Since I couldn't question his logic I continued the same run, walk, cramp routine that was becoming the norm.

I was around this point that I seriously considered stepping off, questioning if it was really worthwhile continuing, but I thought 'I'm here now let's see it through'. So again I continues to run, cramp, stretch, drink, walk, essentially until the 40km mark, where I was able to run to the end, some consolidation I suppose. Of note during this "extended warm down" was Roscoe telling me that I was a chance to catch Rafa as he passed me up the back of the Tan. Slips letting me know that the 800m mark (to finish) was approaching and I could bring it home then. Then having another cramp in my hammy and Mitho coming over to help, only to start stretching my calf.

Although the final stages of the race were distressing I was able to adjust and come to terms with not achieving anywhere near my goal time. At one point coming around onto the Tan from the Arts Centre, I did feel like the emotion was going to get the better of me, but I had one overriding thought that came to mind, 'there are worse thing that could happen'. I mean I was going to complete a marathon, this compared to almost 12 years ago to the very hour when I was in Kuta Bali dealing with a couple of car bombs.

So I crossed the line in a time that turned out to still be a 26min pb and it was really awesome to see all the guys so elated with their performance after the race. Another positive was that Racer didn't beat me (sorry mate 😊) along with the 3.20 pacers of Bacchus and Smoothy. I must say that looking back I have nothing but positive feelings of the day. The crowd and fellow runners were fantastic and the Miler support was exceptional, a massive thanks to you all especially Roscoe (you still have the wood on me over the marathon).

So where to next? Well the one great thing about putting in a shocker is the desire to run another is strong enough to ensure that the next marathon won't be far away from my thoughts. But first I will enjoy some time off from what was been a big year!

Splits

Distance	time		speed/pace
10k	00:40:56	10.0km	14.66 / 4:06
20k	00:31:58	7.8km	14.64 / 4:06
30k	00:51:34	12.2km	14.20 / 4:14
40k	01:00:58	10.0km	9.84 / 6:06
42k	00:09:53	2.2km	13.36 / 4:30