

Nick Turner

## Melbourne Marathon – 12 October 2014

The idea of a sub 3 hour marathon first seemed possible after completing the Melbourne Marathon in 2012 in 3:11. This result came from a mixture of ad-hoc training and minor injuries. To knock 11 minutes off with more structured training seemed like a reasonable goal. Couldn't wait the 12 months for Melbourne to come around again so I ran the Princes Park Marathon in July 2013, but crashed in the last half and finished 6 minutes short. Post mortem revealed my training wasn't varied enough and the taper wasn't long enough. I decided to ease up on the running for a few months, bought a bike and started riding 25kms to and from work. That didn't turn out too well and resulted in knee injuries. I think I had a strong fitness base to do long periods of exercise but had leg muscles that weren't developed for cycling. By about November I was ready to get back to running.

### The Lead-up

I decided to do a few ultra-marathons early in 2014, without a goal time in mind, but just to go out and enjoy the run and hopefully experience some benefits to my endurance to one day accomplish a sub 3 marathon

January - Two Bays 56km – Reached half way in 2:31, but seriously struggled in the last 15km and ended up with a time of 5:36. Still, I enjoyed the well organised event and fantastic scenery. Will definitely do it again and hopefully knock a big chunk off my time. I learnt a lot about nutrition for events such as these.

February - While filling in for a friend playing netball, I reached too high for an errant pass and heard something go "crack". Didn't think too much of it at the time, but the next day I couldn't walk. After a week or so, refusing to let this interfere with running, I took a couple of anti-inflammatory tablets and the pain disappeared. Not realising that I had done something more serious, I continued to run. It remained sore for several months so I iced every night and occasionally took anti-inflammatories before scheduled events.

March - Maroondah Dam 50km – Adrian and I decided to run the event together without a specific time in mind. Didn't realise how steep the course would actually be (see below), especially the downhill at around 38kms. But it was still an enjoyable run and it generally felt pretty comfortable with a top 20 finish in 5:22. It was a pretty good training run with some solid pace towards the end, picking up the pace in last 10 kms.



Maroondah Dam 50km Elevation Profile

Recovery was going slow, but I decide to compete in the puffing billy race for the sixth consecutive year. Unlike previous years, I fail to take 4-5 minutes off my pb and finish with a time about 1.5 minutes slower. Although my pace was the same as my pb, the course was slightly longer this year. After this run I decide to wind back the training and give myself a proper chance to recover.

### **The training leading up**

April	165 kms	Not realising I was injured
May	37 kms	Accepting that I was injured
June	66 kms	Testing if I was still injured
July	113 kms	Starting to believe that I was uninjured
August	245 kms	Uninjured and starting to train
September	247 kms	Including the Burnley Half Marathon at 1:25:14, followed by biggest week of training at 95kms

I had some great training sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays with the Milers. By mid to late August, I think I was back up to the fitness base that I had pre-injury. Still wasn't confident of getting a sub3 in a marathon, but thought I would go close. My main concern was with the lack of long runs that I did. In the last couple of months, I only did 3 runs longer than 20km and two runs about 18kms. Still I was excited to enter the event and don the Milers t-shirt for the first time.

### **Race Day**

After a couple of sleepless nights thinking about the run, I had pretty much run every possible scenario through my head. By the time Saturday night came around, I realised that me thinking about it all night wasn't going to change anything and ended up having a great night's sleep. Made it to the start line after the multiple obligatory trips to the toilet and I was feeling pretty fresh and relaxed. Chatted to other Milers that were also going for sub 3 and gave each other plenty of encouragement

Got off to a pretty easy start. Was hitting the target km times of 4:10-15 pretty comfortably for the first 15kms or so. Although I soon realised that I couldn't trust my garmin splits with each 1km autolap falling steadily behind the km markers on the course. I went through 10km at 42:15. Slightly slower than what I had planned, but still felt very fresh.

Settled into a steady pace along Beaconsfield parade, the only concern was a slightly tight right hamstring. The Milers crew giving drinks support and plenty of encouragement was fantastic. As opposed to previous years, I didn't have to slow down only to spill half a plastic cup of water over me. Big Thankyou to CC and all the Milers that game out for drinks support, photos and general encouragement



Adrian and I starting to work a little harder

Turning around in Elwood and it was starting to get a bit tough. Racer was starting to come back to our pace after a great start, while Adrian and I continued to swap being 10 metres in front. Got my second last drink



from CC at 28kms and thought there needs to be less than 1 hour to go if I am to reach the sub 3 goal. Decide I may as well try as hard as I can to hit the splits at around 4:10 to 4:15. Manage to get through the Fitzroy St hill and the chaotic merge with the half-marathoners. I tried to stay alert and not let myself get sucked in to just going at the prevailing pace of the group. I needed to keep hitting my splits. I move into the 'marathon' side going back up St Kilda Rd and the runners thin out. I start choosing random targets 10 metres in front of me and reel them in. It was in this 10km stretch that I move from 322<sup>nd</sup> position to 242<sup>nd</sup>. I see Gally and Shirls, looking totally relaxed, soaking up the atmosphere and yelling out support. I start thinking maybe I should have done that.

I go under St Kilda road, CC hands me my last drink and I start to wonder how much time I will lose over the next two kms ascending Birdwood Avenue. I feel absolutely stuffed, but I know that if I can keep it together over the next couple of kms, I might be a chance of still going sub 3. I see Kirsty and Kirsty ahead ready with a

drinks hand-over. I feel well-hydrated and decide to give them my half finished pop-top rather than get a drink from them. I managed to keep this section below 4:30 pace and turn the corner ready for a (hopefully) faster downhill along Domain Rd. It was at this point that I my left hamstring starts to cramp. Earlier I was having a bit of soreness in my right hamstring, but now that that has eased and my left hamstring is serious preventing me



straightening my leg. I think about stopping and stretching it out, but i know if I do that that I would kiss sub 3 goodbye. I decide to keep running and instead of bending my leg, I keep it straight and just swing it out wide with every step. I do this for a few hundred metres and then my right calf starts cramping. Not sure how I could keep moving in this unorthodox style without falling over so I just decide to run normally and just put up with the cramping. Luckily the cramping abated slightly and I was able to find some sort of rhythm.

It was at this point that I was trying to do the sums of how quickly i need to run the last few kms. It felt like I was running at about 5min pace but repeated glances at my watch indicated I was moving at about 4:20 pace. I knew it would be close. I also know that the margin of error in my calculations was quite large as the seconds had disappeared from my watch so when I saw that 2:50 had elapsed, I knew it could be anywhere between 2:50:00 and 2:50:59. I pressed on, knowing that all I have to do is run as fast as I can and then I can collapse and know that I have given it my all.

I see Slips with 2.something kms to go. I'm sure I didn't look good at this point. I surge on maintaining a descent pace, but unsure if it would be enough. I turn right into Flinders St, trying to not look totally pathetic as the cameras snap me in front of the iconic Flinders St Station (mission failed as I discover the next day). Entering the final km, I glance at my heart rate on the garmin and realise that I must have gone into cardiac arrest and died several kms ago. I press on anyway.

I turn right into the slight downhill into Wellington Parade and I can hear the finish line approaching. Dozer enters my field of vision and runs with me for an unremembered distance. Final Corner and I can see the finish line but cannot see a clock. The crowd is making a huge noise and I hear the Kirstys cheer me on. I make it to the finish line and then huddle over still unsure what my finishing time was. I catch my breath, reset my garmin and find that I was 23 seconds the wrong side of 3 hours. "@%\*#", I think, but I know that I couldn't have run any faster and that despite how hard it was, I actually really enjoyed it.

I stumble on and find the group of Milers that finished in the low 2:50's or better and share in their post run euphoria. I find Adrian and a couple of others who just missed out on the sub 3 goal. Despite not accomplishing that goal today, we all ran well and know that it is well within us.

Also, well done to my wife Kirsty and bother-in-law Tim who completed their first running event and got pbs in the 5km. Next year will see you breaking the pbs in the 10km.

Big Thankyou to all those who came out to support on the day. The Miler drinks crew was fantastic, always there with a great hand over. Also woke me up at 21km when I was in some sort of hypnotic trance and forgot that I should be looking for them. Big thanks to Simo for organising it all. CC ensured that I lost no time and stayed very hydrated every 7 kms. Kirsty and Kirsty provided heaps of support and sympathetic looks acknowledging my obvious discomfort when going up Birdwood Avenue. Slips and Dozer popped up from nowhere in the final couple of kms giving great encouragement and urging me on.

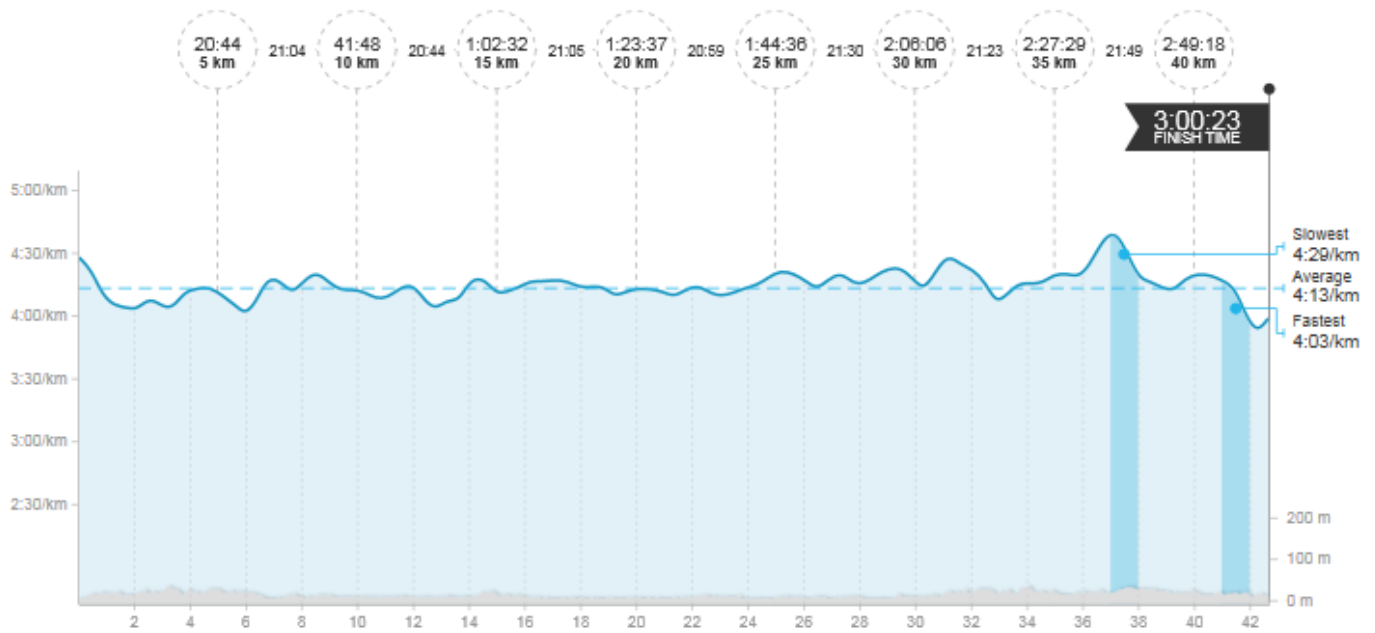
All in all, I was pretty happy with the run. While disappointed not to go Sub 3, I thought I ran as well as I could given my ability and fitness on the day. I stuck with my plan and it was rewarding to finishing the event with my fastest kms at the end. I think I am on track for a descent sub 3 next year and if I stay injury free. I look forward to the continued expert advice from the Milers. Thanks to Rog, Slips and Dozer for the advice and training runs in the few months before, I learnt alot and I know I will continue to over the coming years.

Sorry for the essay and if you have made it this far, thanks for sticking with me.

Data on next page.

## Strava Data

### Race Analysis



### Official splits

SPLIT				ACCUMMULATIVE			
LOCATION	TIME	DISTANCE	SPEED/PACE	RACE TIME	OVERALL	DIVISION	GENDER
10k	00:42:15	10.0km	14.20 / 4:14	00:42:26	400	235	372
20k	00:32:52	7.8km	14.24 / 4:13	01:15:18	364	217	339
30k	00:52:15	12.2km	14.01 / 4:17	02:07:33	322	189	303
40k	00:43:51	10.0km	13.68 / 4:23	02:51:25	242	143	224
42k	00:09:09	2.2km	14.43 / 4:10	03:00:34	227	134	209

### Garmin Splits

KM	Pace	KM	Pace	KM	Pace
1	4:15	15	4:16	29	4:18
2	4:06	16	4:10	30	4:22
3	4:08	17	4:17	31	4:15
4	4:06	18	4:16	32	4:24
5	4:08	19	4:14	33	4:15
6	4:08	20	4:09	34	4:15
7	4:09	21	4:12	35	4:11
8	4:13	22	4:09	36	4:22
9	4:18	23	4:10	37	4:28
10	4:10	24	4:10	38	4:29
11	4:11	25	4:15	39	4:15
12	4:10	26	4:20	40	4:13
13	4:07	27	4:14	41	4:19
14	4:08	28	4:17	42	4:03
				0.7	4:00