

Public Health Warning – Running 100kms may affect your mental and physical health

Firstly a massive thank you to our support crew Andrew Adam, Marty (Mrs Racer) and Gerard. We would not have achieved what we did without you. Knowing that you were set up and waiting for us at each checkpoint was a real morale boost!

Thankyou also to the entire Beta's, we worked well together and ensured we all made the full distance.

Basically by now most of you would have read Racer's report, so I will try adding some additional insights and a different perspective. In the lead up I trained fairly consistently, I had a good period prior to Christmas with a half dozen ferny creek runs and although the distance runs were put on ice for January and February, 800m training, I was able to string together another solid 6 weeks. This resulted in me feeling reasonably confident I could go the journey, although I was well aware that 100kms is a long way, as Smoothy put it after a 45km training run in the lead up "you have to respect the distance".

The race started well, my main concern was that we were running too slow. This was in complete contrast to Racer who thought it was too quick. GG sorted this out by calling the shots and enforcing the run/walk strategy. The early stages weren't particularly eventful, the only thing of note apart from a bit of sh!t talk was Racer's blister! This could be an Oxfam record, I think every other team was amazed going through CP1 that a blister was being treated and probably thought our team was in for a shocker.

It was probably late in stage one that I felt a small niggle in my left hip, I thought it was one of many early pains one get when running and I quickly came to the conclusion that I would soon run it out. It wasn't until we were about 15-20kms in that I thought my hip could be a problem. I mentioned this to Racer and explained that I couldn't understand what could be causing this pain so early in the race, he quickly shot back a response that it was probably the 100kms event we were doing 😊

Olinda deserves a mention for being bloody hard to get to and bloody freezing when you arrive! I sat for a brief time and started to shake uncontrollably. I then urged the rest of the team to get up and get going to warm up. It was at this check point that the photo of the very angry GG was taken; this may have been his low point.

Anyway the pain didn't really go away and was restricting my movement, until CP 5 about 60km in. Gerard suggested that some Voltaren might be helpful. It was then I remembered

that I had some in my bag and quickly went to applying it to my hip, why didn't I think of this earlier!

A theme for the day was to enjoy it as much as possible. For me this was possible up until CP 6 Grahame Collis Reserve, it was here that I started to feel really uncomfortable and mentally drained. It was the start of the Warburton trail and our plan was to make something of a push for the next 30kms. I had some real doubts about my legs and didn't have any confidence in the hip that was giving me grief. I was also feeling very dazed, I remember just putting my head back a bit to take a few clear breathes and felt a little like I was on a slowly rocking boat. It was also at this time that Racers made a comment about climate change and beliefs, still with everything that was going on I thought this was a good idea to take him up on this discussion. It went nowhere fast, and I still don't really understand what he was on about (others may also have this feeling).

In any event we headed off on the trail. Soon after we left Racer decided he wanted to dispose of an extra pair of bike shorts he was wearing. My only aim was to stop talking and just concentrate on keeping up with my team the old saying "don't think, do". Well 21kms down the flat trail in a touch over 3hrs felt like it was never going to end. Racer help lighten the mood by suggesting it probably wasn't practical to run a bus service down the trail as he observed the many bus stops (emergency services markers) at regular intervals.

GG took control on this section and dictated the pace and duration of the Run/Walk. It took us a little while to realise that the 300m run was actually an illusion and we were just running to any particular point GG saw in the distance (typically 700-800m away). Also I noted the pace GG was running these efforts in; he quickly established a lead closely followed by Rafa, stopped when he was ready while Racer and I caught up. I thought to myself that I would have just rather keep running at a much slower pace. The stopping and starting was getting too me, but discussing a change in plan would have involved me having a conversation which may have resulted in me owning up to how I was actually feeling, so I decided to shut up and follow GG! I did start to come good toward the end of this section and started to take up some of the pace with GG. Maybe it was the anticipation of the bus coming along to pick us up that lifted me 😊

Anyway after the long flat Warburton trail the anticipation of a hill was actually welcoming, that was until we got to it! I'm not sure whether it was good or bad that it was dark. Good because you couldn't see how long the hill was or exactly how steep or bad because you didn't know where it was going to end. In any event it was a slap in the face after roughly 85kms! The main talk at this point was how Dozer ran up it in 2012 while his calf was having spasms; needless to say I was impressed!

Next came the aqua duct trail and the realisation that I had blisters on all my toes with particular note to my right little toe. This was the catalyst in me pulling the pin on running at one point.

Check point 7 was like an oasis! And to see Dozer and Mitho was particularly inspiring! It was at this point I finally allowed myself to think of the finish. I was ready to give it one final push and I think to a certain point the team was as well. I mean how long could 6.7kms take? There was even talk of a 14:30 finishing time! When I heard the Alpha's took 75mins, I had a reality check and knuckled down to hit two major climbs, with the down hills very painful also. I did feel I could push a little harder, and I was able to let myself go a little. This was in part due to my quads being so smashed I could hardly prevent a gentle shuffle down the hills. But it was clear that the down hills were a particular problem for GG and Racer, so I was happy to take regular stops. This was typically to urinate, which was becoming increasingly annoying to me. It is safe to say that for the whole duration of the event I was stopping every 15mins to take a leak, that's 59 times. Depending on how long each stop took I estimate it was probably 30-45 mins in total!

The team focus now was just getting up and down these dam hills, with the second downhill particularly challenging, this would have been very interesting if it had been wet! With the finish line in sight and some flat ground under our feet Rafa ask for one last running effort to the line, I can't say we all jumped at the opportunity, but we did work up a jog to cross the line in 14:44hrs! I particularly remember the cheer from our sensational support crew and a few random supporters, which was very much appreciated!

Learning and observations

GG

A perfect fit for the team. He is tough and knew how to get the job done. Knew when and where to take control and remind us of the plan.

I took particular liking to the regular updates on pace and progress, and his leadership on the Warburton trail.

He can't run downhill.

On limited training held himself together for a strong performance

Racer

Packed four times and still managed to forget his head lamp (enough said)

Do not run behind him.

Potentially now holds the record for the earliest blister formation in Oxfam history!

Talks a lot! (this was a helpful distraction for me)

Performed much better than what he would have had you believe coming into the event

Rafa

Great captain's performance, seem to me to be the strongest runner all day. I don't remember hearing any complaints or stuff ups, unlike the rest of us.

Pea and ham soup needs some working on, for me this was your low point of the day ☺

Your "achilles heel" snakes are good (I was eventually able to eat them!)

Big thank you for all your management of the team and bring it together prior to the race and during the race.

Myself - RunGMC/Xmas

A little annoyed with some of my leg complaints, really caught me off guard so early on in the race.

I drank too much fluid!

I wouldn't rule out another attempt in the future.

It was a big mistake to tape my toes, even with the expert advice of Smurf and Dozer on its benefits, I hadn't done this before, had never had any issues with blisters, so I should not have tried it for the first time in the race.

I am happy that we achieved our target time, and that the four of us finished. This event will be remembered and I look forward to having a few laughs in the future as we look back on what we achieved. The team factor was 90 percent of the reason why I did this in the first place.

Sub-plot

My wife, Jodie, also competed in this event, planned 24hr finish time. As such I woke early on Saturday morning to ensure I see her at CP 7 and then the finish line. As it turned out

walking through the night had taken its toll and they were all in a bad space at 7am Saturday morning, just coming into Millgrove. After a brief stop with them I went to CP 7 to meet them there. When waiting at CP7, Jodie's brother thought it would be a good idea to walk to meet them. With sore legs I thought why not. So up the hill from CP7 (towards the aqua duct) we went, it was here that I saw the event for what it really is. A steady stream of walkers coming down the trail having all walked through the night and looking totally wasted! It looked like the scenes you see on t.v when you see refugees fleeing any particular trouble spot, seeking shelter. This is what Oxfam Trailwalker is all about and highlighted to me the people we are actually helping with the money raised for this event. These teams who walked through the night are particularly courageous and I was very humbled by what I saw!

My wife finished in 30hrs, for someone who has never run more than 15 kms (more than 5 years ago) this is a massive achievement, well done Jodes!