

## Tokyo 2014: A tale of 2 idiots

I write this report more from the perspective of a reminder to myself of how not to do things; and as a lesson to other aspiring marathoners.

In the middle of 2013 my wife surprisingly (given she says she doesn't believe in them) visited a psychic who apparently spent the majority of her time talking about me and my running. And this included a vision of me running overseas. Hence when discussion among milers of forming a posse for Tokyo 2014 came around, I just assumed that my wife would be fine with it. So in early August I registered for the Tokyo Marathon, being assured that all foreign entries are successful in the ballot. The fact that more than 300,000 apply for about 35,000 spots should have been a warning. In late September came the result; thanks but no thanks. Oh how disappointing. However House, who had also been shown the finger by the normally polite Japanese, was not so easily deterred. The backup plan was to secure entry through a Travelling Fit package. In the finish a very easy decision to make for me. At this point only 2 weeks out from Melbourne Marathon, I had been injured for the last month or so with a pretty badly rolled ankle, and hence the plan was to survive Melbourne, rest up, and then have a real crack at Tokyo. Plans, I don't really know why I bother.

Melbourne came and went with a surprise PB of 2:54:15. I took the next month very easy, including a couple of weeks overseas. On return I completed the City to Sea with a handy PB and knew that I was in good shape. Gerard was aiming high, and I secretly felt I had a real chance at sub 2:50 or even the Hutz/House sub 4 minute k train. I consulted Dozer about a plan, and he obliged with something I thought was very suitable for me. He added a few notes, one of which included the most important point in attempting back to back marathons for old fellas; don't get injured.

However, me being me, and I quickly found myself raising the kilometres at an insane rate; something Marbles and Woolies were only too quick to point out. From 46k, the following weeks were 71, 94, 138 & 127. It was now mid-December and I was in the best shape of my life. A little bit of plantar fasciitis slowed me down briefly. And what better way to resume than by attending the miler 100x100m. I had assured people I was merely there to make fun of them; but in true Rog fashion I then did 58 of the reps, and fairly swiftly for me too. I certainly recall readily dishing out advice to people to restrain themselves and that this was how hamstrings got torn.

Big shame I don't listen to my own advice. 2 days later I did 8x400 (more likely 380) at about 70 seconds a rep. And in what should come as no shock, 2 nights later on an easy 10k run I noticed towards the end a tightening of my hamstring. I actually didn't think much of it and headed out to do a session the next day. The warm up saw me certainly noting the hamstring being a little tight, and then part way through the first 2k rep I decided that perhaps this wasn't such a great idea. 3 days off, including a visit to get it checked out. The verdict, back related tightness. A test run and still tight.

On January 3<sup>rd</sup> a run with Dizzy around Karkarook Park which saw the hammy seemingly getting tighter and tighter. And about 5k in I heard a scream. Unfortunately it was me. Dizzy wondered what in hell had just happened. I assured him it was likely just a hamstring spasm and walked home. Hm, this is certainly not what I hoped for. Another visit to get it checked out, and again the verdict was no tear, just back related issues. I had a couple of short attempts that I quickly aborted, although in retrospect not quickly enough. This dragged on, until on January 20<sup>th</sup> I decided it was time for a 2nd opinion. I had gotten a contact from LG and luckily I got in that afternoon. His appraisal was that he was almost positive of a tear. Off for an MRI and thankfully a late cancellation saw me in that day.

So 2 days later in I go for the results, and the look on his face is not cause for optimism. And he gives it to me straight, a grade 3 tear, and a likely rehabilitation of possibly 6 months. He said he knew it wasn't good when he got a call to discuss my MRI, and that they only do that in extreme cases. Oh joy. I was actually surprised by how I took the news. In fact I laughed about it with my wife, and said she'd better prepare for me being around a bit more. In some ways I was not unhappy about it, and looking forward to doing different stuff. But I was desperately disappointed to be missing out on running at Tokyo. Anyway he referred me to somebody else to deal more specifically with the injury. In the meantime the advice remained to do absolutely nothing; no stretching, no icing, and as little walking as possible.

The referral was to Dr Dan Bates, a man implicated in the AOD crap with Melbourne FC. I saw him on January 29<sup>th</sup>, by which time I'd now done nothing for 11 days. He compared my injury to that of Nick Reiwoldt in 2010. He actually had

surgery on his, but given my fibres were intact there seemed no reason to have to go down that path as it should heal naturally. The MRI wasn't pretty it must be said, with a more than 3cm midpoint tear. It also showed considerable wasting of quads and glutes. 12-16 weeks was the best case for a return to full training. The mention of Tokyo 3 and a half weeks away was met with some derision. I actually mentioned the 4-5k friendship run the day prior, and a flat no was the response. The good news was that rehab could start immediately, beginning with walking each day starting at 15 minutes, and rising every 2<sup>nd</sup> day by 3 minutes up to a maximum of 30 minutes. From there a walk/run program consisting of 30 seconds of each for a maximum initially of 15 minutes up to again 30 minutes. That program was 24 days' worth.

So needless to say I did the first 15 minutes' walk that afternoon, and the same the next day. That was followed by 22 minutes incorporating some 30 second runs. And the hammy felt good. Doing certain things and I could certainly feel it, but it was already better than it had been in over a month. Same the next day. Then I bumped it up to 30 minutes. The next day, Feb 4<sup>th</sup> and I attended the mile handicap of the midday milers. The pain of having to stand on the sidelines and watch, feeling like I could actually run. So having already done 22 minutes of walk/run, I couldn't help but do a slow lap of the tan with Grunter. And I felt fine. His remark that I appeared to be moving fine got me thinking. And that night I decided I was going to run Tokyo.

10k the next day was plainly a moronic move, but I had made the decision that when (not if) I broke down I'd accept the consequences. I just knew I had to give it a try; that I couldn't live with myself otherwise. And I went around that 10k in 43 minutes taking out quite a bit of frustration. Marbles on seeing what I'd done gave me a monster serve, using some words I didn't think he was actually familiar with. I could understand where he was coming from; but he didn't understand where I was coming from. I pulled up fine, and a gentle run the following day was a positive.

House posted on the forum his intention to do 28k 2 days later around the Albert Park area. I was in. This would be the big test. And to my, huge surprise I survived it. It was a struggle, and I was certainly a little sore for a few days afterwards, but nothing horrible. Tokyo was 2 weeks away now, and the plan was to not get too ambitious, but rather just make it to the start line, and then hopefully finish. With Coalminer also battling discussions centered on hobbling around together with the camera and just enjoying the day, eating tomatoes along the way. Given where I was at a week prior and I felt that would be a great result. Frankly I was just thrilled that I knew I'd be on the start line.

I visited the quack shortly thereafter, and simply couldn't find the courage to mention what I'd done since seeing him last. I ran just twice in the week 2 weeks out, being a gentle 11, and then a 12 incorporating 8k tempo. From that I actually got some real confidence that I was perhaps in better shape than I thought, despite averaging little more than 20k a week for 2 months.

A week out to the day and a 21k progressive tempo; starting at 5 min k's building to 4. All good. In fact I felt great. I knew I didn't have the miles in my legs, but I actually had real confidence that the hamstring would be fine. It was probably just blind optimism, but I like to think a positive attitude wasn't a bad thing. Maybe sub 3 hours was a possibility. Maybe I needed my head read. I even indulged (in a restrained manner) in the miler session on the Tuesday of 10x400. What hamstring injury?

On Friday came the flights to Tokyo. As it turned out House was going via Gold Coast, and me via Cairns; but we were departing and arriving at essentially the same time. Anyway up at 3 in the morning. My ace in the hole was business class. And on the flight from Cairns to Tokyo I chose a seat that actually had no seat in front so I was able to stretch out as far as I wanted. Normally in the period before a marathon I'd not drink; but given the circumstances I happily indulged from before takeoff. Plenty of good food as well which would strand me in good stead given House and I couldn't get a meal by the time we got to the hotel; and thus settled on chocolate milk and chips. I think House also went with some chocolate covered almonds. Good decision.

Thankfully Hutz, who had arrived the day prior was in the room next door and had pretty much scoped everything out, including getting himself photographed with a couple of very handy lookers at the expo.

I had been concerned that my body might not enjoy the flight and that it would impact my running; but when House mentioned that he'd have been happy for the marathon to be the morning after we arrived I couldn't disagree. I felt fabulous, and was in a great place mentally; very relaxed. Questions about what my intentions were still had me a little bamboozled. I just had no idea what to do on the big day. The best answer I could come up with was that I'd run to feel.

The Saturday was pretty much taken up with breakfast, the international friendship run, the expo and dinner. The big question of which top to wear; I'd settled on the travelling fit top with my name on it. I'd even pinned the number on. Then came word from Hutz that he was wearing the miler top and I came to my senses and made the switch. Thank god. Actually it was interesting to get a feel for the different preparations; Hutz intense and nervous, very meticulous. House, so relaxed he looked like he might pass out at any minute. Rooming with him and his easy nature had me in a good place.

A reasonable night's sleep and 2 alarms went off at 5:45. House clearly had no faith in me given I had originally set it for Friday, and then later discovered it was also still on Australian time. A 6:15 bus, and a breakfast box with that to boot. The sandwiches were a winner with me; containing the awesome power of tomatoes. Definitely a hint of wasabi in there too.

Weather for running was clearly going to be great; cold and relatively still. Not great weather for hanging around for hours in though. However despite being freezing, I was both relaxed and excited all at once. Sub 3; that would be the goal. Try to make good use of the downhill start, and just settle in at a hopefully comfortable pace after that.

After being ejected from the 'A' section of the start, reserved for elites and all members of a Japanese running club we just snuck under the rope at the start of 'B' anyway. Hard to complain really, aside from the thousands in front of us including many dressed in an assortment of gear.

So, wearing House's white Boston gloves, off I set. With Bacchus dodging and weaving madly at the start through those in front I quickly decided to follow suit. I can only imagine what House and Hutz thought as they watched behind. The 1st kilometer was something of a nightmare to get any semblance of clear space, and I managed to get it done in about 4:50. From there, while still crowded, it was far more manageable, and I settled into about 4 minute k's. The hamstring gave me very little concern. I had a sense of it tightening at one point, but if it did I quickly forgot about it. If anything the quads were the issue; painful from the get go. The House/Hutz train went past and I sensibly let them go. I got through 15k in 61:35, and felt I was in a great position to go sub 3, but I also knew it was time to dial it back a bit. I thought about 4:15-4:18 pace would be about right, and happily settled into that. Through 20k in 82:58 meaning 42:01 for the previous 10k.

At half way and 87:44 was on the watch, but I wasn't going anywhere near as easily as I'd like. Somebody gave me advice before my first marathon that you have to get to halfway feeling pretty comfortable; and in my 3 previous marathons I'd adhered to the plan. Anyway I just stuck to the 4:18 pace, and got through to 30k in 2:06:10, a last 10k split of 43:12, or 4:19 pace. At 30k I actually quickened the pace a little, but by 33k I knew I was in some trouble. I'm not sure I'd hit a wall, but the lack of mileage was beginning to tell. I tried to tell myself to stay as relaxed as possible and to keep moving at all costs. I wanted to curl up and go to sleep, the quads were hurting.



Nevertheless the 5k split to 35k was 21:21, the quickest since 10-15k. But the tank was certainly running dry. I knew had had a fair bit of time up my sleeve to get under 3 hours, so decided to drop back the pace again to about 4:25. And while far from easy, I was able to just hang in there. The couple of bridges towards the end, despite being minor, were agony, but the end was in sight and I knew I was going to make it with plenty to spare. I really didn't want to have to sprint and tear the hamstring in the process. As I made the final turn with the finish in sight a huge sense of relief and achievement hit me. Only 3 weeks prior and I was shot, and here I was completing an international marathon in under 3 hours with very little training in the 2 months prior.

I had previously given thought to a Licka style leap of celebration at the finish if I could get that sub 3, but the best I could manage was the slight raise of one arm. Never have I been so relieved to stop. It wasn't long before I was asked if I wanted a wheelchair. Ok I know I was moving a little slowly and gingerly, but surely I didn't look that bad!



A long walk back to the sheds, pick up the bags, and then I spotted some baths at the back. Filled with gloriously hot water, which was great as I was still freezing. All you could do was put your legs in, but oh what joy, aside from the cramp in the right calf as I attempted to get that leg in. Thankfully I was surrounded by other Aussies basking in the glow of some great results. None of us had noticed the signs limiting us to 10 minutes, so after about 30 minutes we were unceremoniously kicked out. Fair call.

One of the benefits of our hotel was its close proximity to the finish. Little did we know they'd make us walk about 2 km's through the buildings just to get out. It just went on forever. I eventually made it back and saw Hutz's door open. He congratulated me immediately, already knowing the result. I thought his result, while I know he hoped for better, was outstanding; especially given his hamstring issues.

With plans to meet Bacchus shortly for a few beers, I felt the need to bail and rest for a while. I then proceeded to eat everything in the room, and to wander down to the convenience store in the hotel for more chips, chocolate milk, chocolate covered almonds, and a nice coffee sundae.

Later that evening a very nice dinner with the whole crew, followed by some rollicking performances in the karaoke. I stuck true to my word and refrained from making anyone have to listen to my horrid voice. That's only for the shower. Coalminer can really belt out the heavy stuff, Bacchus with his rap is mesmerizing, while House is clearly a regular at the trade. Same for Hutz. Their duo was a highlight.

Next day was a long one, and the acts of trying to stand up and sit down were not overly enjoyable. But I seemed basically in one piece; and the right hamstring (good one) was sorer than the left. Quads still pretty ordinary. Disneyland and Disney Sea were most enjoyable, although it was damn cold to be standing in queues for so long. Most rides meant at least a 90 minute wait. House just managed to shade me in the shooting ride by about 47,000,000,000 to 50,000. He got lucky. Storm Raiders and Indiana Jones rides were real highlights.

Overall just a fantastic experience, and one I'm so thankful to have been able to do. I felt capable of something pretty special late last year, but in the finish just running was a huge highlight. I'd recommend Tokyo to one and all for a great running experience. Hopefully you'll get a hint of snow as we did too.



Oh, and if you're wondering about the title and who the 2 idiots are; they're both me.



| 地点名<br>Point | スプリット (ネットタイム)<br>Split (Net Time) | ラップ<br>Lap | 通過時刻<br>Time |
|--------------|------------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| 5km          | 00:21:54 (0:20:32)                 | 0:20:32    | 09:31:54     |
| 10km         | 00:42:19 (0:40:57)                 | 0:20:25    | 09:52:19     |
| 15km         | 01:02:57 (1:01:35)                 | 0:20:38    | 10:12:57     |
| 20km         | 01:24:20 (1:22:58)                 | 0:21:23    | 10:34:20     |
| 25km         | 01:45:59 (1:44:37)                 | 0:21:39    | 10:55:59     |
| 30km         | 02:07:32 (2:06:10)                 | 0:21:33    | 11:17:32     |
| 35km         | 02:28:53 (2:27:31)                 | 0:21:21    | 11:38:53     |
| 40km         | 02:51:07 (2:49:45)                 | 0:22:14    | 12:01:07     |
| Finish       | 03:00:45 (2:59:23)                 | 0:09:38    | 12:10:45     |

## The Training

| Week      | KM's | Highlight              | Commentary   |
|-----------|------|------------------------|--|
| Beginning |      |                        |  |
| 27/10/13  | 12   |                        | Overseas   |
| 3/11/13   | 7    |                        | Overseas   |
| 10/11/13  | 46   | 20k @ 4:22             |  |
| 17/11/13  | 72   | C2S 14k @ 3:47         |  |
| 24/11/13  | 94   | 25k + 12k tempo @ 3:53 |  |
| 1/12/13   | 138  | 23k & 25k runs         | 37.5k done on the Friday (12.5k am; 25k pm)                                      |
| 8/12/13   | 127  | 30k @ 4:42             |  |
| 15/12/13  | 50   | 8x400 avg 69.8         | Some plantar fascitiitis   |
| 22/12/13  | 6    |                        | Hamstring  |
| 29/12/13  | 11   |                        |  |
| 5/1/14    | 32   |                        | Probably really screwed the hammy this week                                      |
| 12/1/14   | 42   | 15k @ 4:38 with pain   | Shouldn't have been running  |
| 19/1/14   | 0    |                        | Diagnosed grade 3 hamstring tear; 12-16 week best case recovery to full training |
| 26/1/14   | 3    |                        |  |
| 2/2/14    | 58   | 28k @ 4:46             |  |
| 9/2/14    | 23   |                        | Feeling pretty good  |
| 16/2/14   | 49   | 21k prog tempo         |  |

## The Future

I'm still very hopeful of improving. I've certainly got some soft PB's to work on. 3 weeks post Tokyo and I actually managed to snag a 5k PB. I won't race another marathon in 2014. I need to strengthen up in a number of areas else my running will come to a premature end. I won't declare my retirement from marathons, because a sub 2:50 is still on my wish list. Perhaps a miler group to Berlin in 2015?