

## Pre Race

Training for the 2011 Boston marathon officially started on Sunday January 2<sup>nd</sup>. This gave me 15 weeks in which to prepare for the race on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April.

A 'perfect' week looked like this:

	Morning	Midday	Afternoon	Total km	X-Train
Monday	15 Slow	6 Run to MSAC		21	30 mins swim
Tuesday		12 Session/warmup/down		12	40 mins cycle
Wednesday	11 Slow	20 Semi long run		31	
Thursday		12 Session/warmup/down		12	40 mins cycle
Friday	15 Slow	6 Run to MSAC		21	30 mins swim
Saturday	16 Tempo/warmup/down		15 Recovery	31	
Sunday	32 Long run			32	40 mins cycle
				160km	3 hrs x-train

Nothing too complicated – speed sessions on Tuesday and Thursday, a race or tempo on Saturday, long run on Sunday, and a bit of junk on other days to get the volume up.

In actual fact, due to races on odd days and other 'complications' (like golf weekends!) I averaged 143km a week for the first 13 weeks (with a peak of 172km and a low week of 98km) before weeks of 103km and 55km in the final 2 week taper. Nevertheless I had covered more kms in my preparation than ever before and had also thrown in some crosstraining which was pretty much new to me. Having scraped into a race which had sold out in 8 hours on the back of an elite start, I wanted to run well and prove that I was worthy.

The preparation went pretty well with the usual ups and downs. I find that when training for a marathon my confidence is often quite fragile and it takes one bad session to encourage the negative thoughts and one good session to blow them all away again. You just need to make sure you get through the bad sessions and remember that each one completed, good or bad, is another one in the bank.

Having run the Lake Kawaguchi marathon on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2010 and the Melbourne marathon 7 weeks prior to that, I think it took my body a while to recover and it probably wasn't until about late January that the training started to feel a bit better and the times started to improve but after that there were more positives than negatives and a few of the key results were as follows:

22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb -	Monafartlek	Pb of 6.20km round the usual tan course
27 <sup>th</sup> Feb -	Sri Chinmoy 15km	49:41
15 <sup>th</sup> March -	Vic Milers 5000m	15:03 for a 15s pb during a week of 166km
27 <sup>th</sup> March -	5Ms Barwon Heads Relay	Pretty solid day with all legs run around pb pace
2 <sup>nd</sup> April -	5 x Tan continuous prog. tempo	14:01, 13:37, 13:17, 12:57, 12:15
12 <sup>th</sup> April -	Tan Corp Cup (solo make-up lap)	11:33 (4s outside pb)

The training also included some really solid long rep sessions with the other Boston protagonists such as 10 x 1km off 4:30, 6 x 2km off 8:00 and 4 x 3km with the reps run uphill in under 10:10. The program also included 10 runs of 30+km.

As far as goals for the race went, the main one was that nothing over 2:30 would be satisfactory. The rest would depend on the weather. When it became clear a couple of days out that race conditions were going to be ideal with a following breeze, no precipitation, lowish temperatures and minimal humidity, an additional goal was added: I wanted a pb (sub 2:25:28). Robert Cheruiyot's massive course record and negative split in 2010 had convinced me that the course, although more challenging than many of the pancake flat European courses, was not as brutal as legend would have you believe.

Nevertheless, looking at the course elevation map, I was pretty sure I wouldn't be negative splitting and needed to make the most of the predominantly downhill first half.

We left home at 6pm on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April and arrived at our hotel in Boston some 30-odd hours later. It was a long day and the 6 hour wait at LAX didn't help, though it was here that we first bumped into Rob de Castella. We had a chat and I took the chance to request a photo with the great man. He was accompanying one of the indigenous Aussies whom he had trained for New York last year. He seemed like a nice modest guy, giving little away to the American sitting next to him on the LAX to BOS flight who asked if he was heading to Boston for the marathon.

Boston is a wonderful city and there are few places in the world I'd rather be than there on a marathon weekend. The architecture and history of the place make it a far less tacky place than many others in the US (not that I necessarily have anything against 'tacky'!). I'd forgotten just how big the race is for both the locals and tourists alike. The race expo is huge and the running culture is amazing. It was awesome to catch up with the other Milers too and hear their stories of training runs in New York's Central Park.

I got out for a couple of nice early morning runs through Boston Common and along the Charles River and enjoyed the icy conditions. We took it pretty easy during the day, doing a bit of shopping and sight-seeing. A particular favourite store of mine is Niketown and upon seeing a nice pair of orange Nike Lunar racers (which I hadn't yet seen back home) and knowing how well they'd match my race outfit, I was unable to resist. I'd worn the model and size before and thought that if I wore them for the rest of Saturday and went for a jog in them on Sunday, they'd be fine for the race on Monday...

During our jog, Thorny and I took the opportunity to watch the 5km race which featured Aussie Ben St Lawrence who was narrowly beaten in a sprint finish. I later came back to watch the invitational mile, also run on a street circuit and narrowly won by Andrew Baddeley despite being on the receiving end of a bit of push and shove as they crossed the line. Great racing!

On Sunday afternoon Thorny and I attended the race briefing at the 5 star Fairmont hotel (taking another opportunity to hit up Deek for a photo) before heading to a Milers 'team' lunch in Little Italy. Good work by Thorny on the organisation.

On race morning, Thorny and I boarded the elite bus to take us to the start at Hopkinton. It was a relaxing ride in a nicely appointed touring coach as opposed to one of the old yellow school buses taking the bulk of the field out to Hopkinton. The police escort which cut a swathe through the otherwise heavy traffic was an added bonus!

The elites were housed in a Korean church just metres from the start line and it was quite a buzz being amongst the big names as they completed some run-throughs prior to race start. We had a warm little room upstairs and had a good chat to Shireen Crumpton, a Kiwi elite who had won Gold Coast a couple of times and with whom Thorny had run much of his marathon debut. She was racing as a master and hoping to finish in the money despite having had heel issues coming into the race.

Speaking to Thorny before the race, I advised him that my plan was to run between 71 and 72 mins for the first half and hopefully towards the lower end of that range. I would then hope to maintain a fairly similar pace until the Newton hills before drifting a bit and hanging on for a 72 or 73 minute second half which would give me between 2:23 and 2:25 overall (again, hopefully toward the lower end!). These were the best possible race conditions and I believed I had arrived in career best shape.

### The Race



Above: Shireen and Thorny pre race. And on the right near bag 55, one of the shoes I wish I'd worn...

At 9.50am we were led out to the start and had a nice little area in which to warm up in front of the 9000-odd age-groupers behind us. I was able to say g'day to Troy who'd secured himself a good spot at the front of this crowd. A huge crowd lined both sides of the start area and conditions seemed almost perfect with WSW tailwinds averaging around 19km/h and a starting temperature of about 8 or 9 degrees, rising to about 13 by race end.

<http://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/KBOS/2011/4/18/DailyHistory.html>



Above: Would my pre race Cheesecake Factory nacho-loading pay off?

I duly took my place at the back of the 80-odd elite men, knowing that after a couple of kilometres most of them would be the best part of 200m ahead.

After hearing one of the better renditions of the Star Spangled banner, it was 10.00am and as expected, we were away right on time. After the usual shuffle for the first hundred metres where you just try to survive without tripping over yourself or anyone else, the pointy end of the field spread fairly quickly and I was able to find a nice rhythm, ploughing through the first steeply downhill kilometre in 3:08. The first three miles descended a net 69 metres so rather than putting on the brakes, I ran at a comfortable pace passing the 5km mark in 16:29 and feeling great. I had however already become aware that I was fast losing the skin from the back of my heels.

I ran much of the next 10km by myself, not totally isolated but not as part of a pack. I am often more comfortable alone running at my own pace than jumping into a pack that might be running a couple of seconds too quickly or a couple of seconds too slowly per kilometre and it's also nice to be able to have a good view of the road in front of you without worrying about clipping someone's heel.

The crowd support was amazing throughout the race. Families out in front of their house with 'ghetto blasters' playing Rocky music, kids trying to hand out lollies, and even one or two supporters with Aussie flags to whom I gave the thumbs up as I ran past. I did however hear one youngster say to his old man, "Look at the fat guy" as I ran past. I looked over my shoulder but The Job was nowhere to be seen...

From 6km to about 24km, the course is reasonably flat with a few undulations but little overall elevation change. The splits for 5 km to 10km and 10km to 15km were 16:55 and 16:51 respectively and I maintained a fairly consistent pace, with a slowest km of 3:25 and a quickest km of 3:17.

At about 15km I was caught by a pack of about 8 runners and I jumped on board for a few kilometres. We continued on at a pretty good pace, covering the 5km to the 20km mark in 17:07. Apart from the first 500m of the race, the next 500m was my quickest at 1:35. No, it wasn't downhill, but running past the yelling Wellesley College spectators is the highlight of the whole race and perhaps I got a little carried away. I gave a few high fives to those most "deserving" and the crowd made noise that I'd previously only seen during footage of The Beatles arriving in Australia or during my time as a Chippendale when I was putting myself through uni.\*

\*Note: any semblance to my actual uni job of working a Target checkout is purely coincidental.

After passing Wellesley, I realised I'd inadvertently sped up and slowed back to a more suitable 1:44 for the next 500m and our little pack re-formed, clocking a respectable 1:11:02 for the first half. I couldn't believe a day would come when I could run a 71 minute half and feel this good but there it was. Only the increasing blister pain was causing any concern but I knew it was something you could run through.

The 25km came up with a split of 17:08 and I had maintained my record of running every kilometre in under 3:30 to this point. Our pack was fragmenting a little as we were about to enter the first of the Newton hills. I continued to take Gatorade at most of the stations but my hydration technique when drinking from plastic cups on the run needs a fair bit of work and despite the low temperatures, the sun was out and I could have used additional hydration.

The first of the hills starts at about 25.5km into the race and goes to about 26.5km, and I covered it in about 3:33, my slowest km to date but pretty solid up the incline. I then ticked through the 28<sup>th</sup> km in 3:29 for a total time of 1:34:54 or 3:23 per km. If I could continue on at this pace I would be looking at a 2:23:01 and a big pb!



There was another 'climb' in the 29<sup>th</sup> km of about 50 feet and it was just as I was nearing the peak that I started to feel a bit of pain in my left calf. I pushed on to the top of the hill, now limping a little, but hoping that I might have a touch of cramp which would go away and knowing that the next couple of kilometres took us down a slight descent. Unfortunately the pain worsened and I struggled through the next 1.5kms at worse than 3:40 min/km pace. My 5km split to 30km was 18.00 with the last 2km having been completed in 3:43 and 3:45. By this stage I was really hobbling and, still hoping that it was cramp, I stopped to have a stretch. The attempted stretch made it clear that it wasn't cramp and that somehow I'd strained my calf.

At this point the embarrassment kicked in. As soon as you stop the crowd starts 'supporting' you with "You can do it buddy", "good job dude, keep it going" and that old favourite "not far to go now mate, almost there!" Not that I blame them – I'd be saying the same things myself if I were in the crowd. Except for the "almost there" bit. 12km from home when you're limping with a calf injury and you have a couple of red shoes (which didn't start off red) due to blisters, you're not "almost there!" At this point I was ready to step off. I didn't think I could make it without doing further damage to my calf and I knew that even a brisk walk would mean I wouldn't finish for another two hours. A few things managed to keep me going though:

- Half way round the world is a long way to go to not finish a race
- I've never stepped off before (Gold Coast half marathon was a close call though!)
- If Dozer can do it tough for 50km at Oxfam surely I can battle through 12km
- There were too many people in the crowd telling me to keep going
- I didn't know how long it would be before I could get a lift back
- It probably didn't matter if I did more damage as I wasn't intending to race for the best part of 3 weeks after Boston
- And finally, the fact that I'd spent the best part of an hour before the race talking to Thorny and Shireen and mercilessly bagging a couple of high profile Victorian based runners with a long history of DNFs.

Reluctantly I got going again. The 32<sup>nd</sup> km was my worst for the race – 5:04. The 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> weren't much better. The stretching of the calf caused by the uphill was particularly painful. The 5km split to 35km was a race worst of 23:34. During that time I was passed by Thorny and Nick Browne, a Kiwi who runs for Melbourne Uni. They offered a pat on the back and a bit of encouragement and it was great to see them both running strongly. The crowd continued to offer their support. "Looking strong, finish it off buddy!" as what seemed like the whole field ran past me as though I was standing still.

The calf though still painful was less of an issue on the flat and the downhill, and I was able to find some sort of shuffling rhythm. Mental calculations ran through my head. What would I need to run the last 10 km in to break 2.49 (4 min/km) or even 3 hours?

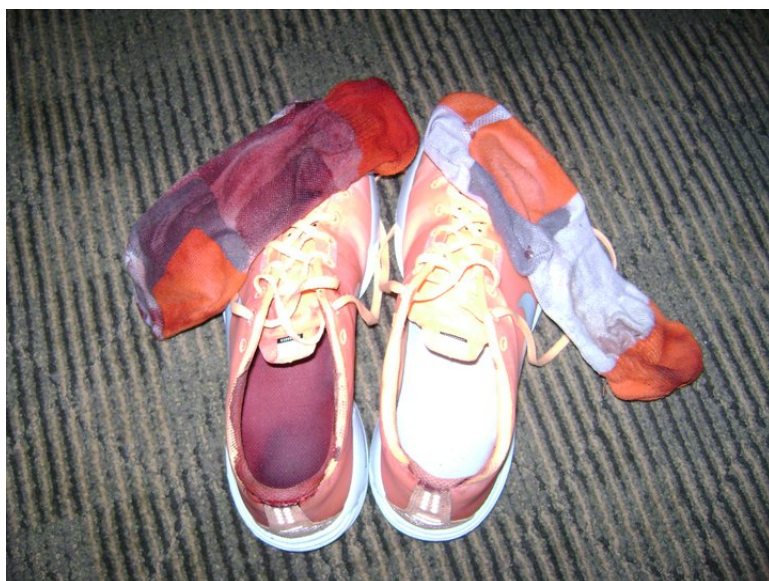
Troy went past somewhere around this stage. I offered him some encouragement. He wasn't flying, but looking at my watch, I suspected he was on target for a pretty decent pb. He gradually drifted off into the distance and still runners continued to flow past while I watched the ground. I looked up briefly, and seeing a guy with a huge sign which simply read "HTFU", I quickly looked back down at the ground. When all you're hoping to do is tick off the distance markers as you pass them, a mile is a bloody long way! Bring on the metric system! Thank goodness I had the Garmin with its trusty 500m splits.

The last 7km, though significantly downhill, seemed to go forever. I had stopped worrying about my finishing time and just wanted it to be over. 40km came up with a split of 21:57. At least somehow I had sped up. I was surprised as it felt more like 6min/km pace.

Finally we turned into the home straight – Boylston St. Like the home straight at the Sandown 10km, the finish line looks closer than it actually is. The crowds on both sides were amazing and somehow I lifted to a less than blistering 42<sup>nd</sup> km of 3:57. I couldn't raise a gallop though as others mustered a sprint finish, leaving me in their wake. I caught a glimpse of Deb and her parents and gave them a quick somewhat sheepish wave before crossing the line and forgetting to stop the Garmin.

## Post Race

I wasted little time at the finish line before shuffling into the Elite tent and taking a seat. It was only when I stopped that I realised how nasty the blisters were as I removed my shoes and socks. In hindsight the new shoes may not have been my smartest decision...



Sitting down I saw Thorny and had a bit of a chat. He had run a very solid race but did not seem to be over the moon about his result. Nevertheless, a great result to run a good race on such a big stage and quite an achievement to manage a negative split over the rolling hills of the back half. I read with interest and amusement the post-race forum banter between Thorny, The Fury, The Analyser and of course PM. There were certainly some high expectations post-race for all the Milers involved, some of which were realistic and some of which weren't.

I eventually left the tent to meet Deb, limping barefoot to the meeting area. Several officials suggested a wheelchair but I politely declined. I found Deb and had to have a bit of a sit down as I was feeling a little light-headed. We were lucky enough to score a cab pretty quickly and head back to the hotel for the most painful part of the race – the shower on the blisters! I struggled, having to sit down in the shower for a while but after a couple of bottles of coke I started feeling better and it was soon time to meet the others at the pub.

I won't go into too much detail about the other Milers as they've already written their reports but a few beers with the guys and their families at the pub and later at the post race party at House of Blues were just what I needed.



### **Post Mortem**

Initially I wasn't too upset. It hurt when I finished but I just thought that I'd had one of those days that sometimes occur in marathon running. I was surprised to find out that I'd still run 2:37:33, far from what I'd hoped but much better than the 3:00 time I'd been afraid of when I first started to struggle.

Now however, I'm quite disappointed. I recently watched the race having set the Foxtel IQ while I was away and I now realise what an opportunity has been wasted. I look back on the amount of training I'd put in, the fact that I'd travelled half way round the world with my wife and her parents for a race, and the fact that the opportunity provided by the weather was something which apparently occurs at Boston around 1 in 20 years.

At the time I strained my calf, I was confident I'd be able to run under 2:24. The way I felt after the race – exhausted, light-headed and queasy – means maybe I would have hit the wall anyway. I'll never know. Given the set-up of the course and the conditions, I certainly have no regrets about clocking a 71 minute half and in the same weather I'd do the same thing again.

Training-wise I felt well prepared. If I was going to make any changes I'd quicken the pace of a few more of my long runs and try to get up into the hills a bit more. I still believe that a 2 week taper which maintains some decent intensity but lower volume is right for me. I still however have a long way to go in relation to diet and slimming down to a decent racing weight.

My disappointment means that I feel I still have quite a few things I'd like to achieve in running. Every marathon website I look at seems to hold some appeal. I'll have to make sure I don't end up locking myself in to 12 marathons next year! I think I'll be putting off those crazy triathlon plans for a while.

Thanks to Deb for all the support and to the Milers for making Boston a great trip. Despite my disappointment, I couldn't recommend Boston more highly as a place to run. If you ever have the chance, jump at it.

I look forward to the next Milers World Marathon Tour.

PS. I looked up Shireen on Facebook to find out how she'd gone and was surprised to find that she'd joined a select group of runners, initiated by Selim, who'd lost a tooth while opening a water bottle during the race. Nevertheless, she'd finished in a respectable 2.52.

**Appendix – For The Statisticians**

Elevation change by mile:

Mile	Km End	Town	Elevation Ft	Change Ft	Change Metres
0		Hopkinton	490		
1	1.6	Hopkinton	360	-130	-40
2	3.2	Ashland	320	-40	-12
3	4.8	Ashland	265	-55	-17
4	6.4	Ashland	180	-85	-26
5	8.0	Framingham	205	25	8
6	9.7	Framingham	180	-25	-8
7	11.3	Framingham	155	-25	-8
8	12.9	Natick	180	25	8
9	14.5	Natick	150	-30	-9
10	16.1	Natick	170	20	6
11	17.7	Natick	180	10	3
12	19.3	Wellesley	165	-15	-5
13	20.9	Wellesley	145	-20	-6
14	22.5	Wellesley	130	-15	-5
15	24.1	Wellesley	160	30	9
16	25.7	Newton Lower Falls	60	-100	-31
17	27.4	Newton	115	55	17
18	29.0	West Newton	145	30	9
19	30.6	Newton	130	-15	-5
20	32.2	Newton	150	20	6
21	33.8	Newton/Chestnut Hill	230	80	24
22	35.4	Boston/Brighton	150	-80	-24
23	37.0	Brookline	95	-55	-17
24	38.6	Brookline	60	-35	-11
25	40.2	Boston/Back Bay	15	-45	-14
26	41.8	Boston/Back Bay	10	-5	-2
26.2 Finish	42.2	Boston/Copley Square	10	0	0

How much did the wind help? Depends what place you finished in:

<b>Boston Marathon Times by Place and Sex</b>				
	<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>	
	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>1</b>	2:03:02	2:05:52	2:22:36	2:26:11
<b>10</b>	2:08:44	2:12:33	2:27:00	2:31:55
<b>25</b>	2:21:11	2:21:44	2:42:42	2:44:01
<b>50</b>	2:26:06	2:27:26	2:52:42	2:55:13
<b>100</b>	2:30:44	2:32:55	2:59:47	3:02:45
<b>200</b>	2:39:13	2:39:40	3:07:56	3:09:33
<b>300</b>	2:43:27	2:44:09	3:12:02	3:13:45
<b>400</b>	2:46:34	2:46:51	3:15:36	3:16:49
<b>500</b>	2:48:44	2:49:20	3:17:46	3:19:09

Official splits:

5k	10k	15k	20k	Half	25k	30k	35k	40k
0:16:29	0:33:24	0:50:15	1:07:22	1:11:02	1:24:30	1:42:30	2:06:20	2:28:17
			Pace	Proj. Time	Offl. Time	Overall	Gender	Division
			0:06:01		2:37:33	174	154	130

Garmin Splits:

Km			Km Split	5km Split
1	1:34.2	1:34.5	<b>3:08.8</b>	
2	1:41.4	1:38.1	<b>3:19.6</b>	
3	1:37.2	1:40.9	<b>3:18.1</b>	
4	1:37.6	1:45.3	<b>3:22.8</b>	
5	1:36.8	1:40.6	<b>3:17.4</b>	<b>16:26.7</b>
6	1:39.5	1:41.8	<b>3:21.3</b>	
7	1:42.8	1:42.7	<b>3:25.5</b>	
8	1:43.7	1:39.8	<b>3:23.5</b>	
9	1:42.4	1:41.3	<b>3:23.7</b>	
10	1:40.1	1:37.7	<b>3:17.7</b>	<b>16:51.8</b>
11	1:41.2	1:40.5	<b>3:21.7</b>	
12	1:39.8	1:40.9	<b>3:20.7</b>	
13	1:47.8	1:36.5	<b>3:24.3</b>	
14	1:41.1	1:41.6	<b>3:22.7</b>	
15	1:40.3	1:41.4	<b>3:21.7</b>	<b>16:51.2</b>
16	1:44.2	1:40.8	<b>3:25.0</b>	
17	1:43.2	1:43.2	<b>3:26.4</b>	
18	1:43.1	1:45.2	<b>3:28.3</b>	
19	1:38.4	1:41.7	<b>3:20.2</b>	
20	1:43.8	1:40.6	<b>3:24.4</b>	<b>17:04.3</b>
21	1:35.7	1:44.1	<b>3:19.8</b>	
22	1:40.0	1:43.6	<b>3:23.6</b>	
23	1:42.8	1:43.9	<b>3:26.8</b>	
24	1:43.3	1:46.6	<b>3:29.9</b>	
25	1:44.4	1:40.8	<b>3:25.2</b>	<b>17:05.3</b>
26	1:37.8	1:43.7	<b>3:21.5</b>	
27	1:49.0	1:44.5	<b>3:33.6</b>	
28	1:45.7	1:43.2	<b>3:28.9</b>	
29	1:48.5	1:54.3	<b>3:42.8</b>	
30	1:55.4	1:49.8	<b>3:45.2</b>	<b>17:51.9</b>
31	1:50.1	2:33.2	<b>4:23.3</b>	
32	2:39.1	2:25.2	<b>5:04.3</b>	
33	2:19.5	2:25.1	<b>4:44.6</b>	
34	2:32.6	2:19.5	<b>4:52.1</b>	
35	2:13.7	2:16.5	<b>4:30.3</b>	<b>23:34.6</b>
36	2:13.8	2:17.8	<b>4:31.6</b>	
37	2:13.3	2:16.1	<b>4:29.3</b>	
38	2:11.9	2:11.9	<b>4:23.8</b>	
39	2:06.7	2:07.0	<b>4:13.7</b>	
40	2:09.6	2:04.7	<b>4:14.2</b>	<b>21:52.7</b>
41	2:06.8	2:04.5	<b>4:11.4</b>	
42	1:58.0	1:59.1	<b>3:57.1</b>	<b>8:08.5</b>
<b>42.195</b>	1:47.0	(Includes garmin correction)		<b>1:47.0</b>
<b>Total</b>				<b>2:37:33.9</b>

Thanks for listening!



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