

Firstly, thanks to all the milers for their words of encouragement at Sunday's marathon - very much appreciated and certainly helped in getting me over the line.

The day started well - slept reasonably well and up at 4:00am, had the traditional breakfast of black coffee (strong of course) and english muffin, with peanut butter, honey and banana -some would call it the Elvis special. Left the house at 5:10am - easy hassle free drive to the Arts Centre where I parked the car. Made good use of the toilet at the Arts car park - less hassle & smell than using any of the porta loos around the MCG.

Once outside the Arts Centre I jogged part of the way to the G partly because of the cold and partly because of nerves. Although a lot less nervous than last year - this year was my 2nd marathon. Got to the MCG just on a little after 6:00am and then made my way to the clothing drop off area where I left my warm clothes. Once outside the confines of the bowels of the MCG - I thought man its cold, hope it warms up otherwise I might be in trouble with cramping, maybe I should have worn long skins instead of short ones. Briskly made my way to the start area - which at that time was pretty sparse with officials out numbering competitors. Looked at my watch, about 25 minutes to race start.

Filled in the time before the start getting a drink of water, walking to and from and jumping up and down in order to keep warm. The formalities of Deekes pre-race pep-talk and the national anthem over - finally it was race time. My aim was to better last years time of 3:23:38 and so I was aiming for a time between 3:10 and 3:20.

The first couple of kilometres flew by and felt pretty comfortable. Got to Albert Park and very little winds if any - great and then just before the 10.5 km mark a twinge in the right IT band. Over the first timing mats in 48:08 which had me on 13.1 km/hr pace. At this point I was on track to make my goal time. Somewhere between the quarter and halfway point along Beaconsfield Parade my right hamstring decided to join in the fun and decided to cramp/tighten up. At this point the 3:10 marathons had caught up to me and so I decided to run with them for as long as I could. Went over the halfway point in 1:35:35 which had me on 13.3 km/hr pace perfect right on marathon pace. By this point the IT band and hamstring hadn't gotten any worse but they hadn't gotten any better . somewhere just after the halfway mark and Elwood the underside of my left fore-foot just beneath the toes started to hurt. I knew immediately that it was a blood blister. This ended up being the mother of all blood blisters it was about the size of twenty cent piece and it drained between ½ to 1 tablespoon of blood and fluid. At this point I'd lost touch with the 3:10 group but was a head of the 3:20 group so basically still on track.

Now it was a matter of staying focused despite the pain and as my spin instructor is fond of saying keep pushing I know sounds like a frustrated obstetrician. From Elwood through to St Kilda on Beach road wasn't too bad and I was still on pace to come in under 3:20. The little rise on Fitzroy St on the way back seemed like hill and hurt. Then I caught the half marathoners coming out of Albert Park and up St Kilda Road more pushing more pain as I

found gaps to pass a good number of them. Go to South Bank Boulevard when I got caught my House and his 3:20 group. I decided to try and join the party that was the 3:20 group but could only manage to stay with them only till Alexander Avenue. By this stage the left foot was burning and the right leg continued to ache.

Next was Mount Birdwood Avenue. At this stage I decided if I could finish no more than around last years time of 3:23:38 plus 2 minutes at the most I'd take it happily. Along Birdwood Avenue I was handed a drink by one of the Milers on drinks duty and encouraging words of come on Frances which came just as I needed it. I was pretty much on auto pilot at this point focusing on finishing. Whoever though of putting Mount Birdwood Avenue in the last few kilometres of a marathon clearly a sadist and one very very sick individual.

Down Domain Road and past the 38km mark in just over 3:05 so basically tracking close to last years time there hope still I though. Keep pushing was clearly become my favourite phrase by this stage. Back along St Kilda Road and with a little over 3.5 km to go I hear another Miler yell some words of encourage that did it. Decided to push a little more pick up the pace a little turned the corner into Flinders street and knew I was almost home. With 1 km to go I'd had enough of my left foot and right leg and despite the pain decided to push again so picked up the pace and started to pass a string of runners marathoners and half marathoners .

Once in the MCG tried to sprint the last few hundred metres by this stage was well and truly tired of having slower runners block my line. I was really pleased when I saw that I'd cross the line in 3:23:39 which gave me a net time of 3:23:38. Exactly 2 minutes slower than last year. Not too shabby considering the hellish party that my left foot and right leg were having along the way.

I take 2 minutes any day. Finished 7th out of 103 in the female 45-49 age group and 81st out of 923 female competitors. Guess I'll be back next year to try break somewhere between 3:10 and 3:20 Sorry for the length of this report but 42.195km is a long way