

## Melbourne Marathon 2015 – Dave Alcock

Now I'm not one of those people that give you a blow-by-blow account of the Marathon race day. The race flew by with a blank mind for most of the race; accept for a couple of key moments...which I will get to later. Probably the thing that I can give you is some of the insight into the build-up that led to the big day.

### Before MMM

For those that don't know me, I joined the Milers last August after the previous 6 years running solo. In those 6 years I managed to get my marathon down from 3:30 to 2:49:19 through a lot of trial and error & plenty of pain. I didn't run with a fancy watch for marathon no.1, didn't understand carb loading, gels and much about prep, maybe a couple of runs close to 30km, and one 5km R4TK (getting out kicked by a kid that looked all of 5!) and the half Age Melbourne (getting my first 15km under the belt on the Wednesday before the run) leading up to my first marathon at Melbourne in 2008. Since that time I've managed to knock off over 20 ultras including the Coburg track 6hr ultra and lucky enough to run pretty cool overseas marathons including New York and Boston.

I use to frequent the tan quite a bit at lunchtime 'BMMM' (before Melbourne Midday Milers), and saw the Milers rip around the track all looking so fast & serious, including one Dozer. I first met Dozer in 2011 before the Marysville 50km. We got chatting the night before the race and he asked whether he could get a lift. No problems, I knew this might not be a good idea; he certainly looked the part as a runner, he made me look stocky and had 2 matchsticks for legs and was wearing a Boston jacket. How right I was, he obviously won the bloody thing, but lucky enough for me I came a respectable 3<sup>rd</sup>, also behind another great runner in Kevin Mannix.

I would see the Milers rip around the tan over the years, but didn't feel like I had the capabilities to keep up. Anyway I came into contact with the Milers once again when I changed jobs and moved into the same building as Slips. It still took me some convincing, but after I managed to run a 2:50 (and securing a win) around the Sri Chinmoy Princes Park marathon in 2014, I decided that it might be a good idea to at least check out the club, and see what it's all about.

### On the Milers' Bus

I only had about 6 weeks with the Milers leading up to Melbourne but I knew straight away what a benefit the club would be to my running and just in general. I ended up running the Melbourne marathon in the Milers red in 2014, and what a great experience it was. Even though most people at that time didn't know my name, the 'Go Milers' coming my way and receiving the personal drinks were a great experience. I ended by running a small PB 2:48:50, so was pretty happy with that. The one small problem was I ended up with a shin issue whereby I

could hardly walk the next day. I looked like I spent the previous night doing roundhouse kicks against a brick wall, had a massive bruise running up my leg. After a review by Dr Dave, and a shake of the head, I was off to get a MRI the following morning. This wasn't exactly ideal, my beautiful wife Hayley needed to drive me to the hospital even though she was ready to pop with baby no. 2, ouch. She was booked into her planned caesarean 2 days later, sorry Hayley! Anyway lucky for me it turned out to be a low-grade tear of the extensor digitorum longus muscle (muscle behind the tib anterior that helps with movements of the toes) and not the stressy that was expected. I got told to have 4 weeks off, which was pretty easy to do with a newborn and another 2-year-old terror to look after.

When I eventually got back, I felt like I was running in quick sand. To begin the year I crazily completing a Carb running study through the Catholic Uni, which was a bloody hard slog. You needed to run 4 half marathon distances on a treddie, without any stimulation – whether that is music, entertainment or feedback except for gel every 30 mins. They also took a blood test every 20 mins which wasn't the easiest thing when you're running at over 14 km p/h. One day it was 80% humidity in there, and they gave you vitamin B2 pills in 2 of the studies, which made you feel like a human beetroot & irritated your skin, not good on a stinking hot day! Anyway this little experiment was good for the mental fortitude, and managed to get the fitness back quicker than expected, the test was every 2 weeks, and I managed to squeeze in a long run of 20km-ish in the week between.

### Gold Coast Marathon

After this concluded in early March, I decided to ramp up the training to try and give sub 2:45 a nudge at Gold Coast in early July. My training wasn't too crazy by any means, probably mid 70s for the majority of the time leading up. I had a few niggles & sick days along the way that put my out of action of a few days. I thought that the 2:45 wasn't really realistic until I ran my first half in over 4 years at the Burnley Sri Chinmoy. I ended up running a massive PB by nearly 4 minutes, running a time of 78:30.

That gave me a massive amount of confidence that I could fly up to Goldie and rip another PB. Gold Coast was a massive soft spot for me, it was my first sub 3hr in 2011, struggled to get there after all the Tiger flights were grounded due to safety concerns – what about my bloody sub 3 hour concerns! (text received Sat very early morning, cheers Tiger!), and this was only 2 weeks before my wedding day. Good stuff all round. Well I shouldn't have got so excited. Now I won't go into too much detail of the day, but if you want a blow-by-blow account, check out Paul Marsh's race report from 2012, it's so spot on! All I can say, bloody hot and nowhere to hide from the sun. I was on track for first 28km, then struggled home cursing and swearing in 2:50:01. Couldn't even find an extra 2 seconds to at least crack 2:50.

Now obviously you go through a range of emotions when you end up miles away from where you want to be. The main emotion was being bloody pissed, and how can I make sure I'm not feeling the same in a few months time at Melbourne.

I decided to send an email to Dozer, Slips and Bevo, to seek anything I could do to improve. I thought I wasn't a long way off, maybe it was the heat, but I didn't want to leave anything to chance. They all agree that my mileage was well off the mark at 70ish, and that it would be a good idea to try and at least crack 100 leading into Melbourne. Bevo actually went one better and said that he would be happy to write up a program and help me leading into Melbourne. So began the Bevo stable.

### The Stable

The Bevo stable wasn't two for very long, and quickly expanded from JC & I to include Fitter, Duff, Courts, and later down the track Pam. The next 3 months was some bloody tough stuff compared to what I was used to but definitely improved not only my running ability but also my confidence that I could get to the 2:45 and potentially even quicker. Now I'm not going to say that it was all smooth sailing in those 3 months. The flu a few days before Burnley, struggling home in 1:21 when I was hoping to run in the low 77's. I had Bevo pacing me and was on track for the first 8km but I knew I was never really a shot, and slowed to 4/min ks by the end. Disappointing was an understatement, especially considering the weather was calm and coolish, and the majority of the stable and milers for that matter running strong PBs. I knew I was in good form, ran a 30 sec PB in the 8km progressive on the Tuesday prior, if only the run was a week earlier!

My weekly mileage 10 weeks before taper leading into Melbourne was 97, 99, 111, 104, 113, 110, 85 (Burnley mini taper), 62 (sick), 118, 113 = 101km, with 3 weeks of taper. I ended up starting the taper one week earlier than planned due to a similar shin issue, but this time on the right leg. Went to see the magic 007, and after 3 days off running and plenty of icing, it seemed to do the trick.

Some of the key sessions in the program including the 1hr tempo's then backing up for a 30+km long run the following day, which usually amounted to the mid-50km for the weekend. I also had never really done track work before, and besides hitting the tan for the usual 6 x 3min, 8km progressive and 3 x lap tan amongst other things, really saw some massive gains in when doing these sessions, from the 6 x 1km to 4 x 2km. I also managed to knock out a confidence boost solo 32km at 2:05 after the misses and I had a Barney over my running/time, so it gave me a hurry up to get the most k's done in close to 2hrs. I also was introduced to the Tilt 100, which was a great endurance session before closing into the big day.

### Here comes Race Day

The race day arrived and things went as well as expected. I managed to get over the celebration & excitement of witnessing the Hawks 3peat, and avoided getting any more injuries or sicknesses. It seemed like half the Milers had copped some calve complaint or mystery illness, so I was treading on eggshells by this time. We had done the customary drinks handover at the European Bier

Café on the Friday before race day. Fitter & I were lucky enough to be paired with Racer for the drink support. He explained that he was an old hand at this job, so we would have no worries seeing him out there. Sweet, sounds easy enough, will run 42km, and will have my drink hand delivered at every 7km interval, nothing could possibly go wrong....

Race Morning Arrived – Woke up at 4:30, tin of Rice Pudding for breakie, washed down with a bottle of Powerade, Left home 5:30 on trusty Piaggio Scooter, Arrived near the G before 6, Managed to drop the bags off and sort myself by 6:30, quick 1km warm up near the start line, then into Preferred start area where I caught up with all the other Milers with about 15mins to go. Weather was perfect, still, about 12 degrees, with a top of only 19 but still sunny, what more could you want for a marathon. I was bunched up with Fitter, Hoju and 700, who were all aiming for between 2:44 and 2:46.

We took off and all got quickly into groove. I tried to run reasonably quickly up the start to avoid the hordes of runners heading up Batman Avenue. We were all fairly close by for the first 2km but 700 decided to step on the gas, and was a good way in front only a few k's in. I had Duff, Tait, Fitter and Hoju in the general vicinity for the first 4/5kms from what I can remember. I really wanted to stick below my target pace of 3:55 as much as possible, so ended up starting to push away from Fitter after the 7km mark. They all weren't far off the mark though because I could hear the Milers Support group calling out various names after I pass a bunch of them about 9km in.

The k's kept ticking along, but I don't know whether it was good or bad, but I seem to be spending more time running alone than with others. I got to the start of Beaconsfield Parade heading towards Port Melbourne and I could see 4 other runners about 20/30m ahead of me. Bevo popped out and like a good coach told me to try and get onto their tail, the wind had pick up heading the other way down Beaconsfield Parade, so there was going to be roughly 7km of a annoying headwind, which wouldn't be pleasant doing it solo. I managed to catch the group after a couple of k's and quickly got to the front, but tried to sit in behind them heading into the wind. Unfortunately for me, their pace wasn't the same as mine for too long so I decided to push on. As luck would have it, Bevo popped out again and could see that I didn't have much cover, so he decided to pace me for roughly the next 5km. I could see 700 and the group of runners were gradually starting to get into range through this period. Even though the headwind was strong enough to be more than annoying, I ended up running the next 6km pretty well. Bevo wished me luck at the turnaround near Elsternwick, and it was a relief to know the headwind was now behind me. 700 and his group were now only a short distance in front, so I just put the head down and tried to catch them without going too hard. I managed to pass him around the 28km mark. We ran together for a bit, but I think the speed he took the first half was started to affect him more than me. I think he wasn't the only one, as his group of about 5 had all splinted by this time.

I pushed on and was still tracking very well. Usually the 30km mark of Melbourne is a good indication on whether the next 12 are going to be especially

painful. There's an elevation that seems a hell of a lot bigger than it is leading up to the Esplanade in St Kilda if you're on Struggle St. My first marathon in 2008 was like this, cursing why the hell did I pay good money to torture myself like this.

I was still tracking well and was under goal pace at this time. The main problem was that I was still all on my own, didn't have anyone to help push me along. I was still travelling well down St Kilda Rd but knowing the real test was just around the corner. Everyone who's done the Melbourne Marathon knows the real test is between the 36km to 38km mark, you hit the tunnel, and then you need to move up Alexandra Ave through Birdwood Ave. While it's not exactly the steepest of hills, hardly noticeable when you're doing a reverse tan, it doesn't seem that way after running 36km at a fairly quick pace prior. This time last year I had a surging Obama to contend with, I felt like he carried me up the hill and away from the 2:50 pacer, before he left me in my dust heading down Domain Rd. This year the only thing that was going through my head was where the bloody hell is Racer? His statement 'I've done this many times before, you'll have no issues with me getting your drinks' ...yeah righto Racer, what about the 35km mark? Actually I have to admit I wasn't that fussed on anymore sports drinks, felt like I was up to my eyeballs in sugar ...but it's definitely something else to contend with, and for some reason I really wanted to see his face at that time, even seeing Racer's face gives you encouragement 7kms out. Slips popped out and told me to push on, so I tried my best to not let the pace drop. Racer eventually appeared on the pushie as I started down Domain. He was extremely apologetic and I grunted a couple of 'I'm fine', I wasn't in the mood for chitchat, I obviously left that for Racer, which he does so well from time to time. Anyway he carried on riding in his guilt while holding my drink/gel in case I needed it.

We hit St Kilda, only 3kms to go...he said you're travelling very well keep going; you're well on track for that sub 2:50 your after. Well he can stuff up the drinks, but you can't chuck a sub 2:50 statement when all that has been going through my head in the last 2:30hrs, and 12 weeks of training before that for that matter is sub 2:45! I think I may have grunted sub 2:45, well a few more apologies from Racer came my way. The last couple of k's were a bit of a blur, all I can remember is telling myself to hold on, not long now. I finally managed to get to the entrance of the G knowing that to get under the sub 2:45 mark might require a bit of a sprint, not what you want after 42km. Anyway the entrance was a bit crowded with runners of other events. Why they don't separate the whole course is beyond me. Anyway, I was still looking back from my watch to the finish line, and with about 100m to go I knew that I wasn't going to make it, bummer! Anyway, 2:45:10 was certainly better than the 2:50:01 at Goldie, and a PB before 3:40, so you can't really complain too much about that. I was pretty shattered crossing the finish line, ended up staggering into the arms of a volunteer, and having a bit of a sit-down at the St John's tent.

There were a string of PBs from the milers, 700 came through less than 90 seconds later. The entire stable ran well, especially Fitter and Duff getting sub 2:50s, Courts missed the sub 3, but I'm sure it's just around the corner. Pam ran a big PB of 10mins running a 3:35. I managed to finally knock Fitter off in a race,

he had me covered in everything from 3km all the way to the half this year, but gods help me in the following year or two. The day was topped off nicely with a few beers and a burger at the Precinct with the rest of the Milers / Support Crews. It was a great end to a great day but for some reason half the people who came along forgot to pay before they headed out of the pub so Racer had to pick up the tab....ah karma Racer!

### What's up next...

Definitely want that 11 seconds. Hopefully I can get a couple more minutes than that in 2016.

### Special Thanks

- Hayley - Firstly I have to thank my beautiful and understanding wife. She puts up with my running obsession, while also raising a house with 2 demanding girls of 1 & 3. It goes without saying that she is the glue of the family, and I really appreciate her amazing support.
- My kids – Ruby and Molly – intense & loud, they certainly make the SLRs so much easier! If they end up running as fast as their mouths, watch out!
- Bevo – supercoach, top bloke, thanks for all your tips, extensive emails, help and especially pacing in the races, especially Melbourne. I couldn't have done it without your PB white singlet, cheers mate. It's amazing how you do it, and you do it with a fairly big stable of people. You certainly have a very supportive employer, or you're bloody quick on the keyboard ☺
- JC – Top bloke all-round. Was training the house-down and looking the goods for a sub 3 before the heel injury struck. Now I'm the kinda bloke that would be moping around the place if I couldn't run especially if that was a marathon, just ask the misses, but JC was always so positive & vocal, and tried his balls off to make it to Melbourne. No doubt a sub 3 is on the cards in 2016. JC, I'm pulling for you.
- The Stable – pushed me to bigger and better things, especially Fitter, and Duff and Courts especially on a last interval rep ☺. I was definitely pushed faster than I thought was possible for my speed challenged legs. Looking forward to seeing everyone in the stable continuing onto more great things in 2016.

- Racer – Looking forward to seeing you at the start line in 2016!



My 35km drink bottle.....

- Milers – Cheers to all the Milers throughout 2015. Thanks to everyone for their support and encouragement. Thoroughly enjoyed the year, looking forward to another big year in 2016.

The Marathoners, all sub 3hrs & first in the team event –Hally, me, House, Fitter, 700, Hoju, Tait, Duff, Obama & Stodds (who completed the half).



## Melbourne Marathon Splits

Splits	Avg Pace	Cumulative Time	Elev Gain	Elev Loss
1	3:54	03:54	24	--
2	3:51	07:44	8	24
3	3:51	11:36	15	9
4	3:56	15:32	15	17
5	3:55	19:27	18	6
6	3:54	23:21	--	8
7	3:51	27:12	--	12
8	3:54	31:07	4	--
9	3:51	34:58	12	10
10	3:49	38:47	--	6
11	3:54	42:41	--	--
12	3:54	46:34	--	3
13	3:52	50:27	4	--
14	3:57	54:24	11	3
15	3:49	58:14:00	--	8
16	3:51	1:02:05	2	3
17	3:53	1:05:57	6	--
18	3:53	1:09:50	--	9
19	3:53	1:13:43	4	5
20	3:54	1:17:37	4	--
21	3:50	1:21:27	--	3
22	3:50	1:25:17	2	--
23	3:51	1:29:08	--	5
24	3:57	1:33:05	--	--
25	3:53	1:36:58	--	--
26	3:51	1:40:48	4	--
27	3:48	1:44:36	--	2
28	3:50	1:48:27	--	4
29	3:49	1:52:16	3	--
30	3:50	1:56:05	3	--
31	3:52	1:59:57	9	--
32	3:52	2:03:49	6	--
33	3:53	2:07:43	23	23
34	3:58	2:11:40	--	9
35	3:54	2:15:34	2	5
36	4:08	2:19:43	12	5
37	4:03	2:23:46	13	6
38	4:03	2:27:49	--	--
39	3:54	2:31:43	--	6
40	3:59	2:35:42	--	4



41	4:04	2:39:46	10	--
42	4:03	2:43:49	2	17
43	3:41	2:45:11	11	--
44	4:29	2:45:12	--	--
Summary	3:54	2:45:12	230	212

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Ended up coming equal 45<sup>th</sup> with 2 others @ 2:45:10

<b>Overall Rank</b>	<b>Category Rank</b>	<b>Gender Rank</b>
47	33	43

SHOW SPLITS

SPLIT		ACCUMMULATIVE					
LOCATION	TIME	DISTANCE	SPEED/PACE	RACE TIME	OVERALL	DIVISION	GENDER
5k	00:19:28	5.0km	15.41 / 3:54	00:19:28	78	52	72
10k	00:19:36	5.0km	15.31 / 3:55	00:39:05	75	51	69
15k	00:19:27	5.0km	15.42 / 3:53	00:58:32	74	49	67
20k	00:19:25	5.0km	15.45 / 3:53	01:17:57	68	47	64
25k	00:19:21	5.0km	15.50 / 3:52	01:37:19	64	46	61
30k	00:19:16	5.0km	15.57 / 3:51	01:56:36	52	36	48
35k	00:19:34	5.0km	15.33 / 3:55	02:16:10	50	36	46
40k	00:19:59	5.0km	15.01 / 3:60	02:36:10	47	33	43
42.2k	00:09:00	2.2km	14.67 / 4:05	02:45:10	46	32	42