

Melbourne Marathon 2016

Pete 'Larso' Larsen

Intro

I can't say I've ever written a race report before but I suppose you don't break 3 hours for the first time every day so why not.

Build up

After a really good build up last year I picked up a niggle (hip/groin) in the taper two weeks out with not enough time to recover and it impacted me heavily during the race so the primary goal this year was to get to the start line in one piece. The older I get the more I adhere to the principle of *"better to get to the start line at 100% with 90% of the training rather than vice versa"*.

I actually reduced the program back to 5 days (from 6 last year) but kept the kms roughly the same (averaging around 80kms pw for the last 2 months. I must admit the reduction from 6 to 5 wasn't entirely by choice as I had a bit of Achilles/lower leg stuff which was manageable but the extra day of rest just seemed to help.

I had a rest day on Fridays and moved my long run to Saturday (from Sunday). I know there's plenty of arguments for running on tired legs etc but I found the longer run after a rest day seemed to give me an uplift in quality of the longer stuff. I got in 7 runs of over 30kms including 3 of 35-37kms and 2 30km efforts at race pace. I upped the tempo and pace running more than interval stuff which seemed to work for me particularly on the 5 day program. So I was ready to roll both physically and mentally and better placed than last year on pretty much every measure but most importantly at full fitness.

Malibu's comments from his Tokyo report really resonated in that he said it was the first time he really felt he 'raced' a marathon. Not sure I really raced this one it but I certainly get what he meant in that I had a clear goal and was ready to execute the plan (at least in terms of the factors within my control).

Race day

Fairly uneventful start to the day. Usual breakfast etc and got there with plenty of time to spare and got myself sorted. I could see a few miler shirts up ahead and realised I was probably on the wrong side of the road as I found myself in the Spartan area. No big deal. I was not quite up to the 3 hour markers but close enough and was all set to go and nestle into the 3 hour pack according to plan.

Never ceases to amaze me how many slow runners seem to need to be up the frontso a bit of zigzagging over the first km but by the time I was on St Kilda Rd I had spotted the 3 hour pack including Bermuda, Courts and Blommy. Good to see some familiar faces and a few pokes at Courts for wearing the Bevo singlet with a bit of friendly banter.

Around 5km - first deviation from the plan. The pace was very to the point I felt I should just let the legs go and pulled ahead of the 3hr pack only slightly but ahead nevertheless. No turning back now I suppose. First bit of the gusty wind stuff around the lake and I absolutely swallowed one of the bloody flies in one foul swoop. Not a little bug either - a decent meaty fly thing. Anyway no choking on it as it just went straight down.

The kms kept ticking over nicely right through to the next windy bit at around 15kms. I wouldn't say I ever felt fantastic but it was pretty easy to this point and didn't feel I had chewed too much juice.

Great seeing the leading runners flying back along Beach Rd. All the milers up ahead still seemed in fairly good shape and there was plenty of thumbs up signs at this point.

At the 18km turn I could see I was about 100m ahead of the 3-hour pack. Although I should have been heading into one of the easiest section back towards Elwood this was probably the most uncomfortable section for me (other than the last few kms). The hip started to get a bit tight – not terrible but enough to be annoying and to know it may give me grief later and plant that seed of uncertainty. I suppose it was just my body telling me to I was going a bit quicker than I was used to.

22kms – first key point of the race for me. The 3hr pack absolutely raced up to me and swallowed me. The pack was still big at this point (30+ runners) and the sound of the pack closing in was actually quite loud. Quite deflating especially as I was still on 4.15kms but this was exactly what I needed at the time as I was in a bit of a flat patch. No sign of Courts but I heard Bermuda give me a ‘C’mon Larso’ and I had to hang on to them until the turn for the run back into the wind. Little did I know I would be within about 50m of him until around 40kms. The next 2 kms I did 4.07s but the pack continued to pull away (further deflation) so the 3 hr pack was moving along at close to 4.00s at this point and quite understandably ‘banking some time’ (which would prove gold later on). I got my second gel into me at 24kms and a drink from Grunter and I felt somewhat back on track. The pack had opened up a lead on me of around 40m by the turn. I turned and got hit by a massive gust so next tactical decision was made without hesitation. I put in what felt like a sprint of around 200m or so to catch the tail of the pack and nestled in behind which was where I would be for the next 5kms or so. I was very fortunate to benefit from the pack running over that patch back to St Kilda. It would have been a lonely road trudging up there into that wind with no shelter and I certainly I learnt the value of pack running for the first time (in a marathon at least).

In hindsight I probably didn’t actually need the big sprint to catch the pack at the turn as the pace slowed noticeably heading back into the wind to the point we were getting tangled a bit etc but at 28kms we had a 2min buffer to 3hr pace (we were in safe hands with Bret Coleman et al) and with the few easier kms in the pack I knew if I could hang on for another 5kms or so I was in with a real chance of sub 3.00.

The pack had reduced but was still around 20 as we merged with the half marathoners near St Kilda Rd and there were some choice words being exchanged as we were dodging in and out of the half marathoners. At this point the legs were actually feeling ok and my confidence started to grow. The hip was sore enough to be annoying but not causing any major issues. My km splits were still nice and even and I still had Bermuda in sight. Funny how for that whole period from Elwood right back to St Kilda Rd he was never more than about 30m ahead but I didn’t quite feel like I could put in a burst to catch up but I was close enough to see he was clearly in good shape at that point as the pack started to disintegrate.

Around 34kms, the pacers’ job was done and as we were ahead of pace he eased off to finish bang on 3.00 while those who had a bit left pushed on ahead. There wasn’t really a pack anymore so I just focussed on keeping Bermuda in sight and had my last gel as we headed down in the loop around the arts centre and got my final drink from Grunter at 36km just before the hill. I was starting to hurt but the legs were ok. The hip was still sore and the calves starting to get a bit tight but unless I cramped or something crazy happened I was confident now I was going to get there under 3.00. I actually pushed over the hill quite strongly and my 2 splits through 36-38 were a 4.16 and a 4.20. It was great to see the miler support crew around 39km and Simon Tu ran with me for a bit around the 40km mark also which lifted the spirits.

As per last year the Garman ticked over 42.2 before even entering the MCG. Crossed the line with a shiny new 18min PB and a first sub 3. Fair to say I was totally spent but pretty pleased with myself. Also fair to say Bermuda was pretty surprised I had followed him the whole way and was only about 40 secs behind him at the end. It helped immensely having him in my sights pretty much the whole second half of the race – thanks mate.

Plenty of milers grouping around at the end and a nice photo with Monners with about 7 of us (not sure if we are able to get a copy of that one – a nice bit of nice gratuitous publicity for the website).

Wrap Up

Not a chance in hell I thought I would have run a sub 3hr marathon 2 years ago when I first rolled up to the milers - just wish I had done it sooner and now I suppose just looking to see if I can go a bit quicker next year.

Thanks to Grunter and the whole miler support team on the day - a fantastic effort. The efforts of the support guys helping the runners who were doing tough really gave me a lift. And of course thanks to my wife, Nicky for fitting in all the training around our busy family life.

Larso

Some stats

NET TIME	Overall Rank	Category Rank	Gender Rank
	154	32	140

 **02:58:06**

SHOW SPLITS

LOCATION	SPLIT			RACE TIME	ACCUMMULATIVE		
	TIME	DISTANCE	SPEED/PACE		OVERALL	DIVISION	GENDER
5k	00:20:37	5.0km	14.55 / 4:07	00:20:37	277	54	252
10k	00:20:57	5.0km	14.32 / 4:11	00:41:35	225	46	208
15k	00:20:44	5.0km	14.47 / 4:09	01:02:20	225	44	208
20k	00:21:15	5.0km	14.12 / 4:15	01:23:35	223	42	206
21k	00:04:34	1.0km	13.14 / 4:34	01:28:09	224	42	207
25k	00:16:23	4.0km	14.65 / 4:06	01:44:33	238	46	221
30k	00:21:19	5.0km	14.07 / 4:16	02:05:52	227	44	210
35k	00:21:01	5.0km	14.27 / 4:12	02:26:54	182	35	167
40k	00:21:35	5.0km	13.90 / 4:19	02:48:30	158	33	144
42.2k	00:09:36	2.2km	13.75 / 4:22	02:58:06	154	32	140

Here are my toes 2 weeks after the run. Actually not that sore. Looks worse than it is. Apologies if too much information.

