The Thin Blue Line

The journey was long and taxing to make it to the starting line for the London Marathon. For those that don't know, it's probably the hardest marathon to get in for the non Elite-non UK resident. You either need to try your luck with the 400,000 other ballot entries, get an expensive travel package or go charity, which will cost you at least $3000 before you pay for your airfare and accommodation. I wanted a guaranteed option, and the only way this is possible is through a 'Good for Age' option, which was fine with my previous marathon being under the sub 3:05 qualifying time, but that little thing being a non-current UK resident standing in my way. Lucky for me my UK-based sister was more than happy to help with my endeavours, so she somehow managed to transfer her Internet bill into my name, and the next thing I was seeing was a congratulations of my acceptance in the 2016 London marathon, and this for princely sum of 39 pounds.

Due to my wife Hayley gaining a position with the Mother's Day Classic, it was agreed that I would push it back a year with a deferred option, so she could focus on this event. In the end the year 2016 brought some ups – doing Oxfam with the Milers' boys (first over the line and 3rd overall in a tick over 12 hours), but also dealt plenty of downs with my own navigational demons at Wang Marathon, and then a broken down body that prevented any chance of redemption @ Melbourne 2016. In the end I was happy to get another sub 3 after minimal and interrupted training, but it really wasn't what I was after, it was all about sub 2:40 or bust, and in the end I actually got both, lucky for me the 2:40 came before the bust!

The goal after Melbourne was to work on my speed by doing a mini block, hopefully being able to run a decent 10km at the Zatopek B race in Dec, before going gangbusters in mid-January for 12 weeks + 2 weeks of taper. This ended up not being an option as the body was still bruised and battered so Bevo and I decided to just focus on getting the base up, so hopefully I could hit the ground running with at least 100km p/w when the campaign commenced.

Now my body was still giving me grief at various times while training, but I did managed to start building up my non-existent base of up to 60 km p/w in November, to 100km p/w by mid December. Instead of the old MMM speed sessions, including the favourite 6 x 1km & 3min reps, the main focus was building the MP efforts with tempos sessions on a weekly basis, starting with a 20min effort in early November and gradually building this up to 1hr in 2 months, with various struggles with the pace during this time. There were a couple of sessions where I ran 20min to 35min and I would struggle to stay under 4min Ks, or needed to actually stop as the going for me was too much to handle at that particular time. Excuses were easy, it was a bit too windy or I was just too damn tired. It's a massive confidence flattener, especially when you'd go and look at Strava and compare the sessions you were hitting at the start of the year. I was also running my easy double runs at this pace for some of those runs.   Anyway, things did start to build with the regular tempos, and I managed to

get some level of form up by the start of the campaign in mid January mainly due to the general mileage and increased focus on MP work I was doing.

London Block

Now I didn't get everything right in this 12 weeks, I smashed myself more than I ever have mileage wise, and was running at least 120km most weeks, which was probably 20km p/w more than my previous biggest campaign. I think I did over 1800Kms from the start of the year until race day. I was also getting smashed at home, with a crazy 2 y/o as well as a 4 y/o along with my wife who was also working FT. It was challenging, especially at night, and I generally got to sleep after 11, with a wake-up at generally 5:30. I also did things markedly different than previous campaigns session wise. Gone were the regular Tues/Thurs Milers sessions. In their place were longer session (Speak to Malibu about Canova!) or 4 lap tan progressive sessions on a Wed, then some MP work within the SLR every 2nd week. I think these sessions are like gold dust, I know there has been plenty of successful runners and especially Milers doing the regular shorter interval stuff, but these sessions definitely worked for me.

The other stuff was usually made up of easy runs (slower than I was previously use to), commuting to work 3 times a week, with a couple of doubles commonly thrown in to build up the Ks. I even visualised running under 2:40 a few times during these easy runs when I felt like this was starting to get achievable. Not only did this get me pumped up, it certainly made the easy commuting runs a tiny bit more enjoyable.

Injuries - Now if you are reading this you know how I went at London, and you might know that post London my body didn't feel too crash hot. 2016 was very interrupted, with tendinosis of the right glute. By 2017 by right side was fine, but as I started to build up the Ks my body started having loads of aches and pain on the left side. All this was manageable though; it wasn't slowing me down, and was hitting all the targets paces in my key sessions. Some of the issues I was having were pain and weakness in the right glute & tight left adductor. I had other niggles in the hammie, and tight lower legs, but nothing of too much concern. It probably was, but you body does a great job of masking it!

Nutrition and Health – I'm a pretty healthy person generally, oats for brekkie and sandwiches for lunch most days, but I decided to take it up a notch, didn't want to take anything by chance. Some of the changes I did included supplements, which I incorporated into my diet - including fish oil tablets, vitamin B & beetroot juice. I also canned the booze for the 2 months leading in, was doing Pilates once a week, as well as a strengthening program for 30 minutes each night. I definitely felt this helped, especially the exercises, which I haven't really done on a regular basis in the past.

Key Sessions – As mentioned above, gone were the shorter interval stuff, where you were struggling to stay upright by the last rep. In it's place, longer stuff closer to MP. Some of the sessions included;

- 5 x 3km @ MP with 1km float (25/01/17)
- 4 x 4km @ 104% MP with 1km float (21/02/17) 14:39,14:35,14:33,14:32)
- 4 x 5km @ MP with 1km float (14/03/17) 18:44,18:34,18:31,18:38) *was so stuffed was close to tears prior to work*
- Bevo's Badness 4k MP/2k HMP/1k float x 3 (21/03/17)
  15:19,7:07,4:30,15:03,7:08,4:48,7:03,4:36) *Probably one of the hardest sessions I've*

ever done. Running solo at the cracka along Port Melbourne into a massive headwind, rain blowing sideways. The first 3km was a struggle getting under 3:55 pace, when I was trying to run 3:45. It was much easier doing H/MP at a quicker pace with the tail!

- 4 lap Progressive 28/03/17 – 15:11,14:36,13:58,13:33; *did two other times 07/02/17, 07/03/17, it's all in the pacing, couldn't even do a 3 lap progressive after 14:47, 14:33 10/01/17)*

Taper/Pre-London

The taper finally arrived, and I really couldn't have been in better shape. I only really had one hit out, and that was R4TK 2 weeks before London, and managed to run the 14.5km in 51.51, coming 30th overall. I felt very strong over the 2nd half, so that gave me a bit of confidence that I was well prepared for London. I was only sick once in the campaign, and it was 3 weeks out, which prevented me from doing a 1:50 MP simulation, but in retrospect, it gave me a 3 week taper which might have worked in my favour.
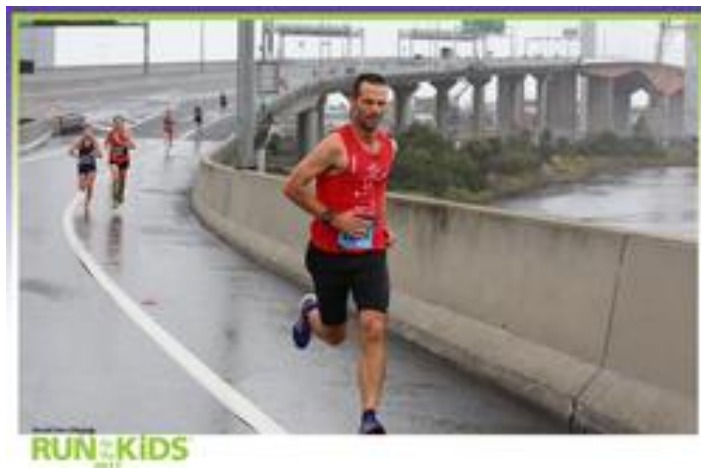
You know you're ready for a marathon when you look like you're in need of a good meal.

I left Melbourne on the Wednesday prior to London, and was prepared as much as possible for a good trip. I tried to sleep, moved around on the plane; keep hydrated with hydrolyte tablets and had the compression tights to keep the legs in good knick. The 27-hour flight was as good as could be expected, I manage to use the common line 'I'm about to run the London marathon' which helped me get the best seat in the plane I didn't need, as I was leaving Melbourne to Brunei @ Lunch, but had the tight cramped affair for the rest of the way when I needed sleep. This obviously wasn't ideal when you're running a marathon in 3 days. My sister Justine collected me from the airport; I hadn't seen her for a few years so it was bloody brilliant to see her again. It was also fantastic stepping outside the terminal and getting that cold still fresh air hit your face, and know that conditions would be certainly better than what I was training in for 75% of the time back home during Melbourne's summer. The rest of the time was taken up hitting the Expo, catching up with my sister and her family, and the most important thing, carbo-loading!

Race Day

The morning of race day commenced at 5:30, but in true pre-race nerves, I spent the night tossing and turning working up an Undertaker/S'moore like sweat. I was lucky that the preceding 2 nights I slept like a baby so I felt good enough when I finally rolled out of the airbed. Nothing but the best for a 'professional' athlete like myself. Continuing the theme, I got stuck into my pre-marathon brekkie, which consisted of a can of cold rice pudding, a coffee and a Passionfruit Lucozade. The race starts at 10am, so it was a very relaxed way to the start - the usual pre 5am start wasn't required. I left the house with my sis at 7am, and we managed to get to Greenwich by 8:30. After a toilet stop and a bit of a warm-up, I said my goodbyes, and I went into the holding pen to chill-out prior to the start. London was my 3rd major, and definitely the most relaxed getting there and prior to the start. Boston and NY you needed to get up at the cracka (4am) for a 10am start. The weather was absolutely perfect, not a breath of wind in the air, and about 10 degrees at the start. I managed to get right near the start of the Good for Age wave. London has 3 different starts, and you all merge together after a few Ks. I thought that I might be just behind the elites, but there were no skinny Africans in sight, just me and a few skinny-ish pale English guys near the start of the wave.

I was feeling pretty good, wasn't too nervous even though I did have a solid weight on my back going in. Bevo and Duff had run out of the park @ Tokyo so the expectation from the Milers was high, and even though I had trained very well in the lead-up, I did have a few mental demons with my last true marathon de-tour hit-out @ Wang. My last overseas marathon at Boston I also ended up in a world of pain, blowing up and basically crawling back to the finishing line, it was 30 degrees at the start, and the run was the 2nd slowest winning time in 25 years so I wasn't the only one I suppose.

The race started and I felt very good, I was all over my Garmin to make sure I didn't go too hard. This wasn't easy as it was a decent little net downhill in the first 5km. I was aiming for

18:45 per 5km, which if I managed in the first 32k it would set me up for great chance of sub 2:40, 4m/k for last 10km. When we merged with other runners I noticed there was loads of other runners ahead, which was very off putting indeed. Not so much that others were in front of me, but I was running reasonable fast, 18:27 for the first 5km split. They did have massive clocks at these junctures, and I did also notice that my Garmin was running more than 1min behind. I was praying that there wasn't some crazy shenanigans going on, and I was really running at this pace, but your mind sometimes doesn't work the best when your trying to run 3:45 pace for 42km. I keep ticking the Ks over and trying to stay as relaxed as possible, and just running my own race. One of the best things about the London marathon is there's a blue line on course that is the shortest route. I would love to have this blue line at every single 5Ms and the Wangaratta marathon, it certainly would have save me some heart aches! Anyway, this was another distraction so I could just focus on making sure this was in my sights on a semi-regular basis.

My next goal was the area around Cutty Sark in Greenwich, 10km in, as my sis said that this would be the first point she'd try and see me from. Sure enough I could hear Justine screaming above all others, which gave me a bit of a lift, and these are great little boosts to have during those long stretches in a marathon. I went through the half in 1:18:41, which was only 11 seconds outside my half marathon pb, so hopefully this also means I can run a half a bit quicker when I'm fit and firing again. This was also a special part of the race, as you cross over Tower Bridge just prior, so you feel that your getting into the nitty gritty part of the race, as well as getting into the city centre of London.

My next 9km things continued to track fine, I managed to get to Canary Wharf and run past my old work hood (I lived in the UK for 7 years on/off from 1998 to 2007), and saw my screaming sis again for the 2nd time. I knew I was going well when I looked at at my watch at the beep of K 31 seeing a 3:36 appear on the Garmin. I had a 2nd wind feeling over the body, I was saying to myself, this is bloody great, just need another 11km of this and I'll smash this marathon out of the park. I managed to run a solid next K in 3:42 as well, and looking at my watch I calculated that I wouldn't have to run much quicker than 4 m/k to get the sub 2:40.

Sadly my 2nd wind decided to bugger off as quickly as it came, and I gradually slowed until the 38K mark when a 4:18 appeared on the watch, my first 4min K. While this wasn't great, it made me kick into action as best as I could, as I knew I didn't want to blow a sub 2:40 when I put so much into it, and also run so well in majority of the race. In hindsight I probably wish I'd taken some more carbs past the 2hr mark (took 4 gels, 15 prior, 50m, 90m & 120m), but I found the Lucazade sport that they provided in a bottle, while it was super convenient, the strength was way too strong. As I was running into the last couple of Ks, I also managed to spot Peely, which gave me another kick up the backside when I was struggling to stay upright.

The last 1 mile you get about 4 different signs giving you the distance to the finish, 25 mile, 1km to go, I can't remember the last 2 but they are some random painful number that you wish you didn't have to run. I always visualised in the lead-up to London that I would be sprinting down the last mile to get that sub 2:40, but I was definitely hanging onto dear life, and the photos are strong evidence of this fact!

No matter what, must stop the Garmin!

When I finally could see the finishing clock as I was getting near, it was showing 2:40:30 seconds, I was praying that this wasn't my finishing time. When I eventually did stagger across the line, getting a tiny bit of assistance from the St John's dudes, getting my happy snaps with my medal, I found Justine and her family about 500m up the road. This was also pretty tiring as I was getting a lot of congratulations from all the volunteers from the bag drop-offs. I'm communicationally challenged at the best of time, but I really was knackered! The first thing I asked her, what was my time, can I see your phone to confirm my Garmin isn't a piece of shit. Seeing the 2:39:28 was an emotional relief, and sense of achievement after the previous 2 years of hard work. When I also later found out that I came in the top 300 out of over 40K, and 41st in my age group, it really topped it off.

Other notable things that I didn't mention prior;

- Amazing Support on Course, crowd were going bananas all the way along. It tops Boston & NY in my eyes. I've heard that Comrades is even better…need to get there, what's another 45km?
- There were also bands on course, and some were crazy loud.
- Managed to pass a dude dressed as an Orange and another in Swim shorts, goggles and a snorkel. I definitely didn't want to get beaten by someone running like this, it would really feel like your face is getting rubbed in the dirt.
- Info from the London marathon website, in the first 35Km I passed 3487 people, and 19 passed me, and I passed 49 runners over the last 7.2Km and 13 passed me, nice.

Post Script

Body still very sore, so off to get an MRI on 23 June 2017, exactly 2 months after London. Those niggles have turned into osteitis pubis (inflammation of pubic area), a left adductor origin enthesopathy (disorder involving attachment of a tendon or ligament to a bone) as well as partial thickness tear, low grade trochanteric bursitis (inflammation of the bursa at the head of the femur/hip) and hamstring origin enthesopathy. Sound good doesn't it, who said running was healthy!

Thanks

To my wife Hayley for the support, allowing me to head overseas, away from the family to run this massive event. These things can't happen with strong support networks, especially with a couple of young kids. My sister Justine for her support and her loud cheering voice during my stay in London, it's a bugger London is so far away. Malibu for his inquisitive mind and introducing Canova into my world. Lastly Bevo for his guidance and support, we finally got there mate.

Next steps

Looking forward to helping others achieve their goal time at Melbourne. As JC would say, let's roll!

1K Splits from the Garmin

Lap	Distance	Time	Pace	GAP	Elev	HR
1	1.0 km	3:40	3:40 /km	3:42 /km	-3 m	151 bpm
2	1.0 km	3:42	3:42 /km	3:37 /km	5 m	162 bpm
3	1.0 km	3:42	3:42 /km	3:44 /km	-3 m	162 bpm
4	1.0 km	3:37	3:37 /km	3:50 /km	-16 m	164 bpm
5	1.0 km	3:42	3:42 /km	3:49 /km	-8 m	166 bpm
6	1.0 km	3:36	3:36 /km	3:44 /km	-10 m	167 bpm
7	1.0 km	3:42	3:42 /km	3:45 /km	-4 m	164 bpm
8	1.0 km	3:43	3:43 /km	3:42 /km	1 m	163 bpm
9	1.0 km	3:47	3:47 /km	3:44 /km	3 m	164 bpm
10	1.0 km	3:44	3:44 /km	3:41 /km	2 m	165 bpm
11	1.0 km	3:44	3:44 /km	3:50 /km	-6 m	165 bpm
12	1.0 km	3:43	3:43 /km	3:43 /km	0 m	166 bpm
13	1.0 km	3:40	3:40 /km	3:42 /km	-1 m	166 bpm
14	1.0 km	3:44	3:44 /km	3:46 /km	-3 m	166 bpm
15	1.0 km	3:44	3:44 /km	3:35 /km	8 m	167 bpm
16	1.0 km	3:48	3:48 /km	3:51 /km	-6 m	166 bpm
17	1.0 km	3:38	3:38 /km	3:39 /km	1 m	166 bpm
18	1.0 km	3:43	3:43 /km	3:44 /km	-2 m	164 bpm
19	1.0 km	3:43	3:43 /km	3:42 /km	2 m	166 bpm
20	1.0 km	3:47	3:47 /km	3:48 /km	-2 m	167 bpm
21	1.0 km	3:44	3:44 /km	3:34 /km	10 m	167 bpm
22	1.0 km	3:43	3:43 /km	3:46 /km	-4 m	168 bpm
23	1.0 km	3:42	3:42 /km	3:40 /km	-0 m	168 bpm
24	1.0 km	3:43	3:43 /km	3:46 /km	-3 m	167 bpm
25	1.0 km	3:45	3:45 /km	3:35 /km	-2 m	168 bpm
26	1.0 km	3:39	3:39 /km	3:40 /km	-1 m	169 bpm
27	1.0 km	3:42	3:42 /km	3:42 /km	-1 m	168 bpm
28	1.0 km	3:45	3:45 /km	3:34 /km	10 m	171 bpm
29	1.0 km	3:42	3:42 /km	3:47 /km	-9 m	172 bpm
30	1.0 km	3:49	3:49 /km	3:23 /km	18 m	175 bpm
31	1.0 km	3:36	3:36 /km	3:46 /km	-14 m	173 bpm
32	1.0 km	3:42	3:42 /km	3:44 /km	-3 m	173 bpm
33	1.0 km	3:47	3:47 /km	3:47 /km	0 m	173 bpm
34	1.0 km	3:47	3:47 /km	3:42 /km	4 m	175 bpm
35	1.0 km	3:52	3:52 /km	3:56 /km	-4 m	175 bpm
36	1.0 km	3:50	3:50 /km	3:44 /km	7 m	175 bpm
37	1.0 km	3:47	3:47 /km	3:46 /km	-0 m	176 bpm
38	1.0 km	4:18	4:18 /km	4:16 /km	2 m	176 bpm
39	1.0 km	3:55	3:55 /km	3:58 /km	-8 m	176 bpm
40	1.0 km	3:54	3:54 /km	3:51 /km	1 m	176 bpm
41	1.0 km	4:02	4:02 /km	3:52 /km	8 m	177 bpm
42	1.0 km	4:00	4:00 /km	4:07 /km	-5 m	174 bpm
43	0.3 km	1:17	4:02 /km	3:52 /km	4 m	171 bpm

5K Splits from Website

Split	Time Of Day	Time	Diff	min/km	km/h	Place
5K	10:19:37	00:18:27	18:27	03:42	16.27	-
10K	10:38:15	00:37:05	18:39	03:44	16.10	-
15K	10:57:00	00:55:49	18:45	03:45	16.01	-
20K	11:15:47	01:14:36	18:48	03:46	15.97	-
Half	11:19:51	01:18:41	04:05	03:43	16.15	-
25K	11:34:28	01:33:18	14:38	03:45	16.02	-
30K	11:53:17	01:52:07	18:49	03:46	15.95	-
35K	12:12:21	02:11:10	19:04	03:49	15.74	-
40K	12:31:43	02:30:33	19:23	03:53	15.48	-
Finish	12:40:39	02:39:28	08:56	04:05	14.75	296

s

Proud moment & thank god that's over!

APR 17-23
5h 28m   271 m
82 km

11.1   9.9   Rest   8   8.5   Rest   44.3
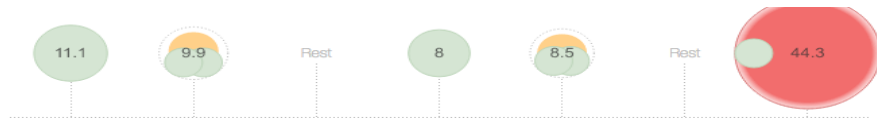
APR 10-16
6h 23m   189 m
83.2 km

12.6   11.8   16.2   14.5   10   18   Rest

APR 3-9
7h 19m   550 m
99.2 km

14.1   15.9   Rest   13.3   26.7   Rest   29
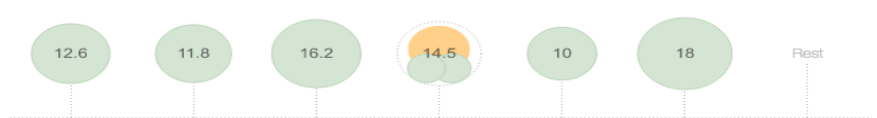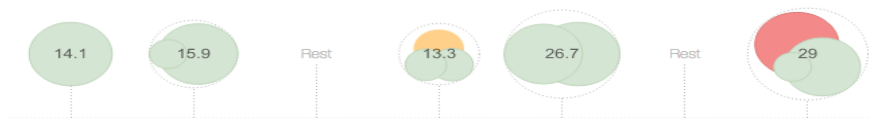
MAR 27-APR 2
8h 17m   325 m
109.6 km

12.5   11.8   21.5   19.5   14.1   Rest   30
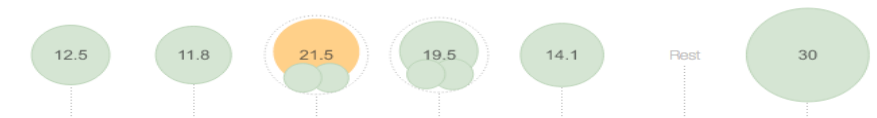
APR 1

MAR 20-26
9h 55m   278 m
129.8 km

14.1   14.1   28.2   12   26.8   34.5   Rest

MAR 13-19
9h 21m   305 m
124.8 km

15   10.1   31.8   10   26.6   25   6.1
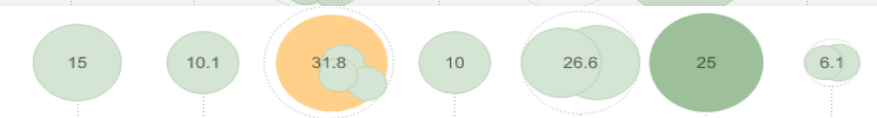
MAR 6-12
9h 46m   482 m
130.7 km

14.1   17.8   33.7   14.9   14.1   36   Rest

FEB 27-MAR 5
11h 7m   439 m
143.1 km

14   13.1   33.2   22.3   14   36   10.2
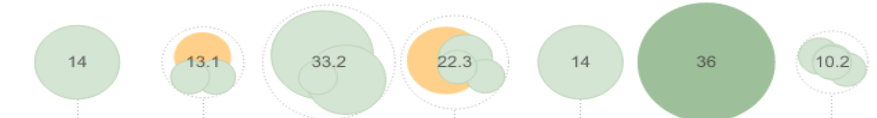
MAR 1

FEB 20-26
9h 34m   557 m
127.1 km

14.5   13.6   27.7   20.1   36   Rest   15
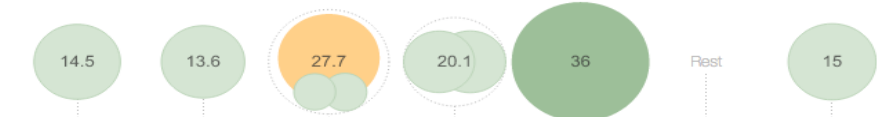
FEB 13-19
9h 27m   444 m
123.6 km

14.2   13.7   31.3   16.2   14.1   34   Rest

FEB 6-12
7h 43m   722 m
103 km

| 12.7 | 11.9 | 21.2 | 12 | 14.1 | 9 | 22 |
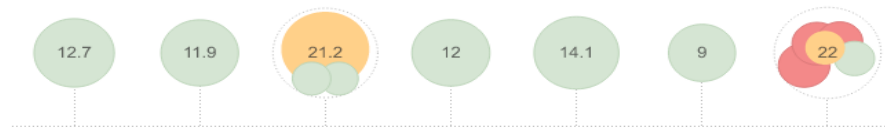
JAN 30-FEB 5
8h 43m   278 m
113.7 km

| 12.4 | 13.2 | 28.8 | 12.1 | 14 | 33 | Rest |
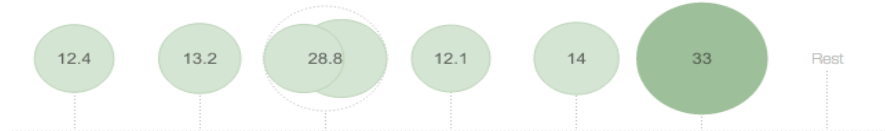
FEB 1

JAN 23-29
9h 21m   290 m
121.9 km

| 14.4 | 11.3 | 29.1 | 22.5 | 12.4 | Rest | 32 |
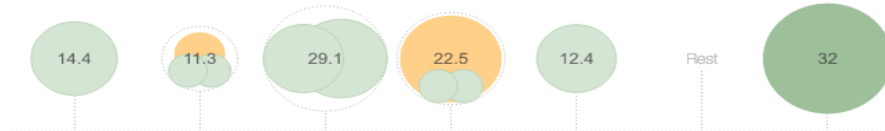
JAN 16-22
8h 28m   478 m
113.3 km

| 13 | 17.6 | 28.3 | 11.4 | 10.9 | 31.9 | Rest |
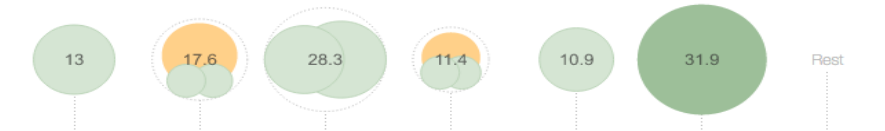
JAN 9-15
8h 23m   174 m
113.8 km

| 12.4 | 13.4 | 19.8 | 25.7 | 12.4 | 30 | Rest |