



Memoirs of a Marathoner

By Slips, The White Kenyan, The Old Coot

The dream

I penciled in running the Gold Coast marathon at the start of 2012 after the minor disappointment of Melbourne 2011. I went out chasing sub 2:40 at Melbourne but some stronger than hoped headwinds in the latter part of the race and probably a small amount of over-estimating my abilities and capabilities at that time meant I had to be content with 2:41:48, still an 85 second PB, but short of my own expectations. In hindsight, 2:41 was probably where I was at.

I figured given I would be 46 before having a crack at my next marathon, the chances of getting a sub 2:40 were diminishing with increasing age, so the temptation of a fast flat Gold Coast course was enough to convince me to start the training early in the year and then if training was going well and the body was holding up I'd ask the family for a few days leave pass to chase the sub 2:40 dream.

The preparation

I started the training in earnest in January 2012, mixing summer track competition with 20+ km runs in the Dandenong's. I started knocking out 30+ km runs in February, scheduled for every second week to ensure I built a good endurance base while hopefully minimising the risk of injury by keeping them spaced far enough apart to ensure the body recovered. By late April, following a big day of running/walking 45 km of the Oxfam course with the Melbourne Midday Miler team, I figured it was time to commit to the Gold Coast so got the all clear from the family, registered for the marathon and booked the flights.

Preparation for this marathon was slightly different compared to Melbourne 2011. Less weekly k's overall but significantly more long long runs in the hills - fifteen runs in the hills of Churchill Park, Lysterfield, Belgrave South and the Dandenong's would hopefully prepare me well for the strength I'd need at the back end of the marathon.

The training went exceptionally well and the body held up much better than expected. This is the third successful marathon campaign in three years and the body seems to have built up some resistance to the hard training. I escaped the cold and flu season of Melbourne 100% unscathed which is miraculous given the number of commuters coughing and spluttering on the one hour train trip to and from work every day – not having young kids who tend to bring home every little bug from kinder/school was also helpful.

I only had three niggling injuries in the three months leading up to the marathon –

- a sore right Achilles that hung around for about 4 weeks in March/April, it didn't restrict my running but was quite painful and meant plenty of self massage and stretching to keep it under control;
- plantar fasciitis in the ball of the left foot that started after one of the few long flat runs that I did along the coastal trail, a 32km run with Paul 'Bacchus' Marsh. It persisted for most of May and was quite swollen and sore. I have significantly flat feet as a rule and literally no ball of the foot so any swelling in the area means that it feels like I'm walking on a ball - a painful, rock hard ball of bound up muscle and tendons. Self treatment was controlling the swelling but it wasn't getting much better but a brutal remedial massage session with Liam Delany from Vigor Health & Fitness in

Fitzroy, where he got stuck right into the foot, released the tension almost instantaneously and it gave me minimal trouble from then on;

- Pes Anserinus Bursitis, tendon inflammation on the inside of the right knee. When you're only two weeks out from running a marathon and just starting the taper, you expect little aches and pains to start appearing - this seems to be a by-product of running less and the body repairing itself. However, when the pain is extreme, and the bone is extremely sore to touch, you automatically start thinking the worst, stress fracture was at the forefront of my thinking. The bone pain lasted for a few days but by day two I was also extremely sore in the upper inside of my right calf and lower inside of my right quad muscle so I had a suspicion that these two tight sore muscles may have been having some impact on the bones around the knee. Tony Hally was quick to identify the likely issue and another remedial massage with Liam, who put some additional work into the surrounding muscles, cleared it up almost immediately. Big relief.

I raced four Athletics Victoria races from late April through to early June, increasing in distance from 6 km and 8 km cross countries to 10 km and 15 km road races. The first three races were not stand out results, running on tired legs and no taper leading in to the races probably had an impact on the times. I went into the 10 km race at Flemington race course in late May thinking I was capable of running about 35 minutes flat and stopped the clock at 34:59. The stand out race for me was the 15 km road race at Ballarat, 2 and a bit laps around Lake Wendouree, almost perfect conditions, cold and only the slightest of breezes, and the flattest of courses you can get. I'd say that this was, without a doubt, the best I've raced since starting running seriously in 2006 – a very evenly paced race, averaged 3:32 per km, and ran 52:56, a 46 second PB over the time recorded in 2011. This was the confidence booster I needed three weeks out from the marathon. I'd raced on tired legs but maintained the strong running throughout the full 15 km. It also gave me some confidence that I was pretty good on fast flat courses, albeit in the very cool conditions that Ballarat can dish up.

A quick summary of the training and preparation since the start of the year:

- 30+ km runs - 9 (5 in 2011)
- 20+ km runs - 12, including 4 mid week WKKs (10 in 2011)
- Races – 4 (see above)
- 3 x 3 km reps – 3 (not completed as quickly as in 2011 preparation)
- 3 x Tan – 1
- Mona Fartlek – 3 (5.7 km for the three 20 minute attempts, two early morning solo runs)
- Telford Fartlek – 2
- Fast tan attempts – 1 (solo 12:52 on Friday 22/06, very disappointing effort)
- 1 hr Remedial Massages – 4 (preventative maintenance, critical in the preparation)
- Birthday – 1 (turned 46 in May)
- Bike incidences – 0 (a lowlight of my 2011 marathon campaign, 4 weeks out from Melbourne)
- Average weekly kms – 90
- Maximum weekly kms – 124

The long runs look like this:

Date	Flat/Hills	Distance	Time	Location
04/01/2012	Flat	21.4	1:37	Mid week long run - Tan
08/01/2011	Hills	21.0	1:43	Dandenong's
22/01/2012	Hills	25.2	2:03	Dandenong's
05/02/2012	Hills	31.7	2:40	Lysterfield to Belgrave

Date	Flat/Hills	Distance	Time	Location
19/02/2012	Hills	32.0	2:48	Churchill Park & Lysterfield
04/03/2012	Hills	28.0	2:13	Churchill Park & Lysterfield
24/03/2012	Hills	33.4	2:54	Dandenong's
06/04/2012	Hills	30.0	2:24	Churchill Park & Lysterfield
15/04/2012	Hills	25.3	1:59	Lysterfield to Belgrave Sth
18/04/2012	Flat	20.4	1:31	Mid week long run - Tan
20/04/2012	Hills	45.3	4:54	Oxfam (running/walking)
25/04/2012	Hills	22.0	1:47	Churchill Park & Lysterfield
29/04/2012	Flat	32.1	2:24	Beach trail
02/05/2012	Flat	20.0	1:31	Mid week long run - Tan
06/05/2012	Hills	25.0	1:59	Churchill Park & Lysterfield
09/05/2012	Flat	20.4	1:29	Mid week long run - Tan
12/05/2012	Hills	36.0	2:45	Churchill Park & Lysterfield
20/05/2012	Hills	33.0	2:43	Wantirna Sth to Olinda run
03/06/2012	Hills	34.4	2:39	Churchill Park & Lysterfield
11/06/2012	Hills	22.0	1:41	Churchill Park & Lysterfield
17/06/2012	Flat	22.3	1:37	Back roads of Clyde

The plan

The plan was to go out and chase 2:39. The Gold Coast is a long way to go to run a marathon if the target isn't a stretch target and all along the idea of going to the Gold Coast was to chase a PB and sub 2:40 if possible. This meant averaging 3:46 per km, 18:50's per 5 km, through half way (21.1 km) in 79 minutes low and hold on for dear life in the second half.

The lead up days

The last couple of weeks leading in to the race was usual taper stuff, tried and true plans that have worked successfully for the previous two marathon attempts, specific sessions, specific distances, rest and recover as much as possible.

Lunch with Bacchus and coach and mentor Anthony 'AL' Lee on Tuesday 26th was a final chance to sign off on 'The plan' and get a final pep talk that what I was chasing was achievable. If you're after a very very good chinese meal at rock bottom prices, you cannot go past the Pacific Seafood BBQ house in Victoria Street, Richmond – do yourselves a favour.

I flew into the Gold Coast on Thursday afternoon to be greeted with cold conditions, bucketing down with rain and blowing a gale. They'd had 75 mm of rain in the last two days, hopefully it would clear and clam down in time for Sunday. I was met at the airport by my mum's ex, Trevor, a great bloke and a very dear friend. I'd be staying with Trevor at an outer suburb of the Gold Coast, Mount Nathan, about 20 km east of Southport, an almost rural area, deadly quiet at night and a great place to chill out and relax. Trevor had offered me use of his car when required and was also going to provide me taxi services into Southport on race morning. What more could you ask? Thanks Trevor.

Due to my late afternoon arrival and the fact that it gets dark quite early on the Gold Coast in Winter, I ran my final session, a 15 minute threshold, around the dark streets of ???? at Trevor's friend's house, who lives a few houses down from where Michael Shelley lives with his parents. As I was finishing my run and jogged back into the street, I was sure Shelley was just finishing a stretching session on the nature strip out the front of his house, but it was too dark to see clearly and I didn't have the nads to approach him for a chat. Carb loading had started at lunch time and continued in earnest that night. For those not aware, carb loading is the period leading into a marathon where the aim is to take on as many carbohydrates as possible in order to build up maximum muscle glycogen (carbohydrate) stores prior to the run. Someone of my weight (63kg dripping wet) should aim to consume approx 13,500kj per day.

On Friday I headed into the marathon expo with Trevor early afternoon and picked up my race number. Walked around the expo for a while and bumped into the Toomey brother's who were running the Soleus Running Watches booth and doing quite well. Not the first time I'd run into Ben over the weekend. Hung around for a while and listened to Deeks and Tim Rowe talk about the Indigenous Marathon Project and introduce the current squad of 11 who are preparing to run the 2012 New York marathon – it's a very impressive project and although only in its infancy, if the project can achieve its goals, it can make a significant impact on the lives of many indigenous communities throughout Australia.

I also met up with Tony 'Cheddar' George at the expo and handed over his shiny new red Melbourne Midday Milers race singlet. He was looking relaxed as always and ready to go.

The rest of the day was spent eating and resting with some additional eating thrown in for good measure. I picked up some decorations from a \$2 shop to decorate my drink bottles. I'd been lucky enough to score myself a preferred start at the marathon which meant a nice spot right up the front at the start of the race and a special table at every 5 km point throughout the marathon that would hold our own personal drinks. I'd purchased some bright red and yellow sauce bottles (easy to drink from) that would be left at every drink stop but in order to ensure they'd be easy to spot on the table as I was running past, they needed to be personalised a bit. Was in bed by about 9 pm and had a great night's sleep.

On Saturday I prepared my drink bottles with some very clear labelling to ensure they were placed on the correct table and some decorations (a plastic balloon stick stuck to the side of the bottle with some red ribbon wrapped around the top). Full strength Gatorade at 5 km, 15 km, 25 km and 35 km and plain water with an energy gel at 10 km, 20 km and 30 km. I figured if I needed a drink at 40 km, I'd grab water from the drinks tables.



I drove myself into the convention centre at Broadbeach and dropped off my drinks at the expo, purchased an ASICS 2012 GC Marathon singlet and headed off on my

final pre marathon run, an easy 3 km jog followed by a few strides along the Broadbeach foreshore. It was a stunning day, sunny, quite warm and no breeze. Too warm for racing a marathon and I was hoping like hell that Sunday's conditions were a touch cooler. I was halfway through my strides when Robyn Millard jogged past (what are the odds??). She was out doing an easy 2 km and was quite nervous about running her debut marathon.

After the run, I headed back over to the convention centre, got changed in the car in the under cover car park (almost got sprung sans running shorts) and headed upstairs for the AirAsia Legends Carbo Lunch. I'd booked a table of 10 at the lunch and attending were Bacchus, Stephen 'House' Paine, Norval 'Lurch'

Hope, Chris 'CC' Osborne, House's mate Stolzy, Tony Hally, Liam Delany and his friend Rachel. Some great speakers on the day, hosted by the legendary Steve 'Mona' Moneghetti and Jesinta Campbell (not a legendary runner but looks mighty fine in a pair of running tights), interviews with some of the greatest Aussie marathons of past and present in Rob 'Deeks' de Castella, Michael Shelley, Lisa Ondieki, Lisa Weightman, Lee Troop and Pat Carroll and some celebrity marathoners in Daniel MacPherson and Marathon Man. Picked up some great insights on the day but a few that I would recall on a number of occasions during Sunday's marathon are worth mentioning:

- Troopy was talking about his 2008 Olympic marathon and how he was very close to pulling out during the race when it all got too hard but then he recalled that the Aussie team had a pact that if you stepped off during a marathon when wearing the Australian uniform, you agreed to remove the singlet and leave it on the side of the road as you didn't deserve to wear it. He realised if he did take it off, he'd probably never be able to run for Australia again and as a result, pushed on to finish, ran a terrible time, but probably learnt more from the bad experience of that race than he's learnt from running any of his successful marathons.
- I think it was Mona that said when the going starts getting tough in the latter stages of the run, and you know it's going to, just keep putting one foot in front of the other, one foot in front of the other – essentially reminding us to focus on the immediate short term goals because if you focus on how far you've got to go and how much it's hurting, you're thinking too far ahead and it's going to be so much harder to finish.
- One of the things that Deeks mentioned on a couple of occasions that I heard him speak over the weekend was that marathoners are a strange breed because running a marathon is one of the very few things that we would consciously do in life that we go into knowing that it is going to inflict serious pain and anguish over an extended period of time, and yet we do it anyway.

After the lunch, a few of us headed over to the casino to catch up with House and Stolzy and watch the footy for a couple of hours. Soft drinks and waters were the drink of the day, the beers could wait until Sunday afternoon. Bacchus and House decided to head to the poker table for a couple of hours so Hally and I headed back to the car at the convention centre, I dropped Hally back at his accommodation in Surfers and then headed back to Mount Nathan.

Got home about 5:30 pm and started getting everything prepared for the morning. Ensured the trusty Garmin 405 watch was fully charged, packed my backpack of clothes for the after race celebrations, pinned the race number on the trusty red MMM singlet and laid out all the gear ready for the morning. Was starting to get a bit nervous at this stage and must have checked everything multiple times to ensure I hadn't forgotten anything. Trevor cooked me up a massive batch of pasta and we watched Essendon destroy the Dogs. I hit the sack about 9:30 pm and slept really well.



Race morning

The alarm went off at 4:00 am. Straight out of bed, feeling refreshed and well rested. Downed my usual pre race breakfast, a tip I picked up from reading what Mona has for breakfast before a race, 3 slices of toast with jam and a cup of tea. Also threw down two Panadol's, another of my pre race traditions, I figure any pain relief assistance I can get is a bonus.

I then spent some time putting some preventative bandaging on my feet and toes in the spots where I usually blister up. It was then time to get into the race gear - red Nike Miler's singlet, black light weight Nike shorts, ASICS Kayano socks (love them) and my favourite racing flats, the Adidas Adios. The third marathon in three years and my third pair of Adios, this year in



fluorescent green (absolutely love these runners). Put some warm clothes on as although it's the Gold Coast, the early mornings are still bloody cold.

We left for Southport about 5:15 am, Trevor doing the driving so I could stretch out and relax and prepare mentally. At that time of the morning the traffic was negligible. As we got closer to the start line, I thought the traffic would get a bit worse but it was pretty light. We looked for some on street parking but the spots were all taken up by the half marathoners who were just about to start. We headed around to the Australia Fair shopping centre which was directly across the road from the start area and finally found a spot on about level 4 just after 6:00 am. Had a good view from the car park out over the start area and the last stragglers from the half were just passing through the start line.

One hour and 20 to fill. First stop...toilet. We lucked across a public toilet that only had three people in the queue. Managed to drop half a kilo.

Walked around the race zone for a while and scoped it out then headed over to the baggage drop area to check things out. Bacchus called to see where I was, he said he'd be dropping his bags off shortly so we agreed to meet at the start line.

I felt the urge to drop another half kilo but the queue's at all of the toilets around the race area were massive, so we headed over to Australia Fair and found an inside public toilet with a very small queue of two, lucked out again. Good to get that one out of the way and off the mind. There's nothing worse than standing at the start line and feeling the urge to purge.

Got back to the bag drop off area with 20 minutes to race time so quickly stripped down and dropped the bag off (all a very streamlined and uncrowded process), farewelled Trevor and headed to the start zone. Heading over to the start zone I saw a few guys having a final nervous wee in a nearby garden bed so I decided to squeeze one out. I then flew up to the start area and looked for a way through the crowd and fence into the preferred start area. As I was looking for way through, one of the volunteers saw my preferred start sticker and quickly called me through the fence with a 'You can come through this way!'. A great feeling to get some special service. I ran a couple of quick run throughs up the front of the field dodging Ethiopians and Kenyans and then wound my way through the elite's at the front, a quick good luck to Jay Philpotts and then spotted Bacchus in the preferred start zone just behind the elite's. How good was this? The preferred start area was not packed at all, probably only 40 of us in there and plenty of room to move around. Less than 10 minutes to race time now and Deeks gave a bit of a rev up speech to the crowd of runners from the raised box next to our start area. The wheelchair marathoners are sent on their way at 7:15 and it's almost time. One final good luck and high five handshake with my umbilical brother Bacchus and it's time to get the race face on and get into the zone.

The Race

It's time to go. The gun goes off dead on 7:20 am and we're off. Although I'm up the front end of the field, it still takes maybe a few hundred meters to get into a good rhythm with the many runners all taking off at different paces. I start winding my way through the field to get up to the pace I needed to and also tried to keep an eye out for Trevor who was aiming to get a spot on the fence about 50 metres up from the start line, but didn't see him.

About half a km down the road I ran up alongside Robyn Millard who'd scored an elite start. A quick chat to her and she advised she was going for a time of 2:50 so I wished her luck and pushed on ahead.

I settled into my planned race pace pretty quickly and the first km

The field thinned out pretty quickly after the first km and I found myself running with a small group doing a similar pace so decided to stick with them for a while. The first 5 km were fairly uneventful and as was expected, it felt very easy and enjoyable. The garmin auto km splits were ticking over just slightly ahead of the official km markers so I decided to check my wrist band splits for a 2:39 against the elapsed time through the actual km markers. I was consistently within a few seconds each km and went through

5km just marginally behind target at 18:54 (with the target 5km splits being 18:50). Some stunning running sights already along here as we are literally running along the street next to the foreshore, and already there's great support along both sides of the street, something that was literally to continue for the full 42.2 km length of the course.

The first drink table was just after the 5km marker and I was hoping that my decorated sauce bottle was on the right table and easy to locate and pick up on the run past. Sure enough, spotted it from a fair way out and was able to manoeuvre myself in behind the other runners and grab the bottle by the white stick that was stuck to the side without breaking stride. Ripped the stick off, popped the top and drank away, Gatorade in this one. Probably not in need of a great amount of fluid at this stage but with the sun already starting to rise, getting plenty of fluid on board early was going to be crucial to ward off the dehydration later in the race. I continued to sip on the drink for the next 4 kms.

Went through the main beach at Surfers and the support here was a bit thicker with the early morning crowds sitting outdoors at the coffee shops.

Through 6 km and I found that I'd been running next to the same guy for the last couple of km so remembering what one of the marathoners had said at the carbo lunch (Mona??) - try and find someone that's running your pace, introduce yourself and agree to work with each other - we found out we were both trying to go sub 2:40 for the first time and agreed to stick together and help each other out for as long as possible (Number 108, Wayne Bulloch, BULLY on his race number). Exchanged pleasantries (recent marathon times etc). We ended up running together through 25 km.

Just before the 7 km marker we did a quick right turn then left turn and were running along Old Burleigh Rd with houses on each side. This gave some nice shade. Once again the support along here was great with all of the holiday makers coming out of their apartments to watch the spectacle. Not much further down the road it was with great surprise that I heard a very loud 'Go Shane' from the left of the road and looked up to see the Graham family from the Berwick Tennis Club, my youngest son plays in the same team as their son. They looked as surprised to see me as I was to see them as I didn't know they were holidaying on the Gold Coast, and I found out later that they had no idea that I was running in the marathon. I gave them a salute as I ran past and yelled out that it was great to see them. As I continued on my way, I was hoping that they'd be there on my return trip, as this would give me something to focus on if the going started to get tough before I got back there.

A fairly uneventful section through to the 10 km marker as it still felt very easy at this stage. Through 10km in 37:45, just 4 seconds behind schedule and a 5 km split of 18:50, right on the money. The next drink station was just up ahead and again my sauce bottle was front and centre and no problems grabbing the stick on the way past. Tore the stick off and this one had an energy gel taped to the side, so ripped it off, tore the top off with my teeth and squeezed the gel into my mouth and washed it down with the water that was in this bottle. Held onto the bottle and kept sipping from it for the next few kms.

At some stage through this section Ben Toomey ran past along the sidewalk with some mates and we gave each other a quick shout out. Good to see another familiar face at random.

Between 10 km and 15 km we did a couple of direction changes, one of them down onto the Gold Coast Hwy for a few hundred metres and then back up one of the few slight inclines on the entire course. Still feeling reasonably good at this stage and went through 15 km in 56:35, still only 4 seconds behind the required target and another 18:50 5 km split.

Saw some of the lead group coming through here. Missed the lead pack as the route on the way back takes a slightly different turn back onto the Gold Coast Hwy so must have just missed them. A quick 'Go Jay' as he ran past.

Just after the 15km marker I just happened to glance to the left and on this massive screen on the side of the road I saw a massive photo of me and my mum with a message 'Go you good thing' emblazoned across the screen. I'd read that via the 'Run with Me' Facebook functionality that they'd set up, it would synch with the 15 km and 30 km times and display a message from family and friends at the appropriate time. Well it sure worked at the 15 km mark and it was only by blind luck that I managed to see it. Not sure if there were any others displayed as I was so focussed on the run at that stage.

Grabbed my next drink at the 15 km drink table, more Gatorade. Could see the turnaround in the distance (it was about 15.75 km mark) and soon saw Bacchus coming back the other way, a few hundred metres ahead of me and looking strong.

Got to the turnaround point and there was a massive crowd there, very loud and supportive. It was good to turn around and start the trip back the way we'd come and for the first time get to see the masses of people coming behind. Started seeing the Milers come through as I went through the 16 km and 17 km marks and gave a supportive shout out to all of them as they did in return. Saw Mona pacing the 3 hour group and gave him a 'Go Mona' as I ran past and got some support back from him too – great stuff. There was literally thousands of people behind us and we continued passing them for I reckon the next 10 km.

Just after the 17 km mark, there was a left turn and a small downhill section that took us back onto the Gold Coast Hwy. As usually happens down a hill, we picked the pace up a bit and when we'd been running along the flat section for a while BULLY commented that we'd picked the pace up and probably should back it off a bit.

Everything was going to plan through 5km, 10km, 15km and 20km. I had my required splits on my wrist and was always within a few seconds of the required times. The official splits show 18:54, 18:50, 18:50 and 18:55, so pretty good pacing.



I had a guy to run with who was also looking for sub 2:40 so we were helping each other through to this point. Problem was, it was already starting to pinch a bit, not too much but when I went through half way in 79:42, reasonably on time still, I was starting to feel the pinch and there wasn't much capacity for a positive split before sub 2:40 was out of the picture. Based on how I felt at this point, I already knew it was going to be hard to get the time.

Through 25 km and the field was really starting to thin out and it was about this point that I dropped my running partner. I jumped on a pack with a couple of Japanese runners and a husband/wife couple working well together and ran with them through to the 30 km drink station. It was through this 5km that the going got way too tough and I pretty much knew that sub 2:40 was gone. The km pace hadn't dropped significantly but 3:46's were now becoming 3:48's/3:49's and I felt like I had no drive through the hips.



My first drink station mishap occurred at the station just after the 30km mark, the plastic sticks I had stuck to my bottles to make them stand out were also useful to grab the drinks as I ran past, and for the first time at the 30km table, the stick came off as I grabbed it and left the bottle behind. I had to stop and the volunteer at the table passed me the bottle, who then blocked the path of the husband/wife team, I think they were a bit pissed off to. It was at this point that I lost momentum and also dropped off

my pack of Japanese and husband/wife and they too quickly opened up a gap on me that I couldn't get back. I was in no man's land.

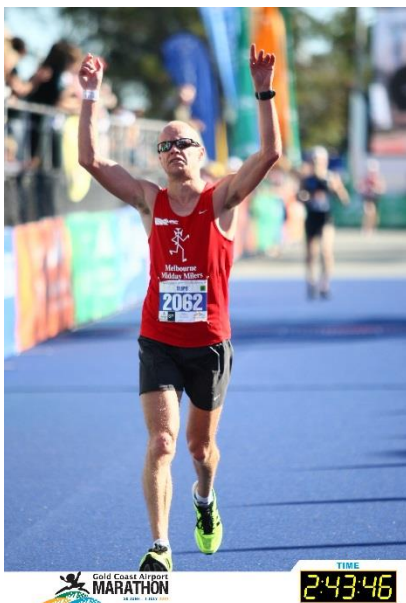


At this point of the run, there is a serious mind f@#k that occurs as firstly you run past the start/finish line and start heading out over 5km to the North before turning for home, and secondly you have to climb over a bridge that has a steepish incline. The regular shade that the buildings and trees of Surfers had been offering was no longer available and the sun and humidity was really starting to bite this pale White Kenyan. For the first time ever in a race, I was grabbing bottles of water and pouring them over my head and body to cool down.

30km through to 35km was a long lonely painful brutal beatch of a section. My previous pack was probably 100m ahead by now and no one was catching me from behind. It was through this section that the km pace went above 4:00's and stayed there. I seriously had nothing more to give at this point. I pretty much told myself that it was now survival mode, just finishing was going to be a win and I was fairly sure that everyone else was feeling the same way. I started passing the leading Aussies coming back the other way and they all looked to be doing it tough as well. I was also fairly sure that I was still inside the top 50 as I started getting a feel for the number of runners coming back the other way.

It was through about 34 km that I saw a red singlet in the distance that I thought could well have been Bacchus and it wasn't as far ahead as it should have been. By 35km I was sure it was him and just on the 36 km mark I'd caught him and with a brief look over his shoulder, Bacchus gave me a low 5 as I ran past. A quick exchange of pleasantries was all we could muster, Bacchus seemed to be barely shuffling and he mumbled that he was struggling to maintain 5:00's. By the final turnaround just before 37 km I'd already opened up a fair gap.

The last 5km from here could have gone horribly worse. Somehow, although it felt like I was only shuffling, I was still holding low 4's and I started to pick off a few runners through this section too. The final km was a long stretch of straight road where you could see the entrance to the finish area in the distance but it never seemed to get any closer. The crowd really got thick and loud along this section and I could pick up by the way they were cheering that there must have been a couple of runners behind me that were closing the gap. The normal Slips kick was not available, closed for business.



Entering the finishing area, there's a few turns to get around and the crowd was thick and loud through here. A great feeling, probably would have been a greater feeling if I was feeling greater at this point. Just around the first corner, an overhead bridge displayed 270 metres to the finish line but there were more corners to turn and I really wanted to see the finish line at this point. It was at this final corner that two runners passed me, my lack of kick cost me a spot inside the top 40 but the mere fact that I'd made it to the finish was enough for me.

The final finish chute was fantastic, just like you want it to be, a cauldron like effect, just marathon runners, and if you've run fast enough, you're finishing at the thin end of the field and the commentator has time to call out your name. I was actually so rapt to have finished that I managed to raise both arms in the air in

jubilant as I crossed the finish line and stopped the watch at 2:43:46.

The slowest of my most recent three marathons but without a doubt THE HARDEST FREAKING THING I HAVE EVER DONE. I have never experienced that level of pain and exhaustion for such an extended period of time. What makes me most elated is that I was able to dig to depths never before experienced just to keep going and keep putting one foot in front of the other and still record a time that although it was not what I set out to achieve, was still pretty good.

I hung around at the finish line and was extremely impressed to see Robyn Millard, the Milers newest female member, cross the finish line with a 2:46. Brilliant debut and she was absolutely elated. We had a congratulatory hug and then waited for Bacchus who came through about 15 seconds later. The man looked like he'd been to hell and back just to get to the finish line, I'm sure we all did.



A quick chat to AL on the phone about an hour later as we headed to the free bus back to Surfers and he confirmed that I'd won my 45-49 age group (Male), and finished 41st. That'll do me and put the time in perspective. A nice trophy and ASICS bag should be heading my way in the mail. I was chicked by a 49 yo female, Sally Gibbs, 2:41:12, a kiwi, who according to an article I just read, only started running when she was 45.

In summary,

- an absolutely cracking weekend with some ripping blokes who I spend a lot of my time running with. They'll all have their own tales of glory and woe, and their own recollections of the day and night that was the 2012 Gold Coast marathon.
- an absolutely ball breaking brutality of a run. I won't fully blame the conditions for the result but the full sun and QLD humidity certainly played a part in my post 25 km demise.

- The course is stunning. Unfortunately running it at the pace I was and in the pain I was, I didn't get a chance to enjoy the view.
- I don't know if I'll run the Gold Coast full again unless they move the start to 6:00 am. The half however looks like a really fast course and does hold some attraction for me.
- If I achieved the sub 2:40, I was thinking of having a good break from marathons. Unfortunately the dream now lives on. I'm looking for a fast, flat, cool climate, marathon to chase the dream now.
- Well done to all Milers, even if you didn't get your time, there is absolutely no doubt that you all put it on the line on Sunday and battled a significant amount of demons and the fact that there were no DNF's proves you've all got balls of steel (apologies to Robyn).
- Some great post race celebrations were had at Waxy's and Melba's. I only managed to knock off two pints before I'd had enough of the beer and then managed to work my way through a firkin-load of scotch and cokes between 1:00 pm and 12:30 am. Plenty of pool and dancing, but disappointing we couldn't find our way to a karaoke bar

Slips

"The marathon's about being in contention over the last 10K. That's when it's about what you have in your core. You have run all the strength, all the superficial fitness out of yourself, and it really comes down to what's left inside you. To be able to draw deep and pull something out of yourself is one of the most tremendous things about the marathon."
Rob de Castella

The Numbers

Split Point	Split Time	S/Rank	Race Time	R/Rank	Activity	Dist.	Pace	Speed
5KM	00:18:54	69	00:18:54	69	RUN	5.00	03:46	15.86
10KM	00:18:50	54	00:37:45	63	RUN	5.00	03:46	15.92
15KM	00:18:50	47	00:56:35	59	RUN	5.00	03:46	15.93
20KM	00:18:55	41	01:15:31	59	RUN	5.00	03:47	15.86
25KM	00:19:00	38	01:34:31	50	RUN	5.00	03:48	15.78
30KM	00:19:18	34	01:53:50	40	RUN	5.00	03:51	15.54
35KM	00:20:16	53	02:14:06	39	RUN	5.00	04:03	14.80
40KM	00:20:41	52	02:34:48	34	RUN	5.00	04:08	14.50
Finish	00:08:58	64	02:43:46	41	RUN	2.20	04:04	14.72
Half Way		49	01:19:42	59	RUN	21.10		-15.06
Finish	01:24:04	64	02:43:46	41	RUN	21.10	03:59	15.06