

Melbourne Marathon 2017

Ewen "Smurf" Vowels

Road To aka The Presidential Campaign

Averaged around 50km a week for the 20 weeks leading into Sunday (take out the breaks due to injury/illness) and it looks a little healthier.

Weight never got below 80kg and with carbo loading I was 84kg at the start.

Best block of training was 6 weeks at ~70km per week with average long run of 32.4km during that block.

Most of my long runs were at the farm with El Presidente - which made it a memorable and enjoyable campaign.

Best race of the season was Burnley Half - 77:46

Main Goals:

#1 Finish without breaking down, not a given with the foot issue

#2 Try to run my second fastest marathon which would have to be a 2:4X

#3 Stretch goal Tokyo 2019 qualifier - probably a bit beyond me at this point

Race Day - A Tale of Two Halves aka the 42km Regressive

Dozer's final advice to me the night before was "Make sensible choices" - too late for that mate, I'm running a marathon in the morning.

Up at 4am for breakfast, on the bike to ride to the G at 5:50 - ride past people queuing to get into a nightclub at 6am - I think my choice of running a marathon was more sensible than theirs!

Bumped into a few Milers at the G, dropped the bag off and jogged down to the preferred start area. Great contingent of nervous Milers milling around, anxiously awaiting the start gun. Find House, Slips, Licka, Hally and 700 who are looking to run 2:48-2:50 - wish them luck. Soon enough we're off and racing in perfect conditions - the weather gods had cooperated and it was cool and calm.

My splits in the first few KM are way all over the shop since the trees and the buildings seem to be messing with the GPS (watch said 3:34, but body said I wasn't going that fast) so I just try to run smoothly and use the official markers to check my time. First 5km is over in a flash and it turns out I was going too fast. Foot is feeling great so I try to relax and let the faster runners push ahead rather than try to run in their pack. Hear some crazy person on a bike screaming "Go Smurf - woo hoo!" at me but can't work out who it was at the time. The mystery will be solved soon enough when Bella pops up again and cheers like her life depended on it. Bella was certainly the loudest supporter on the course - couldn't miss her and it made me smile everytime she yelled at me!

House must think he's chopped liver as his green Spartan top means he's effectively invisible as we run past Milers who say "Go Smurf" and he gets donuts!

See Hoju at the top of Fitzroy St, still feeling good and bump into Stodds who runs with me for a few hundred meters. We have a quick chat and I get ready to pass the first Miler drink station at Albert Park Lake. Nice boost to morale seeing all the Miler volunteers awaiting their runners - as usual it's

expert drink service from Dozer and the first of the many gels for the day gets forced down. Bit further on I see Grunter and Stevie near the city end of Albert Park.

Bevo pops up to say hi just before the 10km banner, I check my split versus the official 10k and see that I'm still travelling a bit faster than I wanted - I'm actually on PB pace at this point so I just try to relax a bit and settle into a comfortable but slightly slower rhythm. The foot is thankfully feeling fine still and the heart rate is nice and low.

"Make sensible choices" said Dozer - well I probably should have taken his advice. In the back of my mind the stretch target of 2:45 (Tokyo 2019 qualifier) was eating away at me so around this point I decided to commit to trying to get it. It would take everything I had but it was now or never - I wasn't going to be able to make up the time later on that's for sure.

Pit Lane came and went with good support from the Milers and as I turned back towards Fitzroy St I was able to see the rest of the Milers who were running towards me.

Back down Fitzroy St I saw Katie - looking a little worse for wear I might add as I knew she'd been out on a Hen's night the day before and a bit further on I see the Miler Crew. Another faultless drink handover from Dozer and since the sun is starting to sting a little I ask for my hat at the next handover. Out on to Beaconsfield Parade the runners have started to thin out and while there's a few packs around I'm mostly running solo. I'm slowly catching a new Miler "Woodsy" and bridge the gap just before the third drinks handover. I ask him to run with me but he sensibly says he's going to run at his pace. Have a few tougher moments during this 5km section but thankfully it passes and the pace seems a bit easier.

Grab my hat at the third drink handover and continue to press on towards the half way point. Dozer tells me I'm the first Miler on the road - not sure how long that will last though. Back to the bottom of Fitzroy St I see Rach and my mum which gives me a nice boost and settle in with a Kiwi who asks "How many people in your club? Everyone knows you!" A big surge of Miler pride helps to take a bit of the discomfort away.

Part of running a marathon is breaking down the task into manageable sections. I know that PM will be near the turnaround at 25km so I focus on getting there to say hi. See Matt Clark and Coalminer on the way to the turn around. Sure enough PM is there - looking like he's enjoying himself not running as he waits for Heidi to get there.

Past the turnaround is another good chance to see and cheer on the Milers behind me. 700 is still next in line and House - who is looking remarkably fresh and appears to be reeling in 700 pretty quickly. Licka isn't far behind and looks great. Hally and Slips are next and after that is a steady stream of Milers all doing their best - some stand outs are Mark Symes and Simon Tu who are running in lockstep well ahead of the 3 hour bus.

It is certainly getting tougher heading back to Fitzroy St. Next target mentally is the drinks handover - concentrating on getting there, then worry about the next section. Stacey has a sponge to cool my head off with then back into the plod for home.

Pass the family for the last time and head up Fitzroy St - watch beeps and it's the first 4 minute KM split of the day. It's going to be a long way home from here. At 33 km the inevitable happens and

House flies past me looking very strong. His comment was "It hurts" as he shot past, but it didn't look like it was slowing him down at all. I can relate to the hurting part - left hip flexor started to seize up at 30km, left quad was starting to complain loudly and the glutes on both sides were pretty tight.

Along St Kilda Rd my left foot (the bad one) has slowly gone a bit numb but at least it's not sore however as I start to head up to the Tan it gives out a few times but thankfully this is a short lived problem. Final drinks handover is up Birdwood and it's turning into a real struggle at this point. Stacey attacks me again with a sponge and Dozer - who may be fired as my drinks carrier for this - has two drink options for me, neither of which was the bottle and gel with 35km written on it! I need a kick so ask for the caffeine gel and he runs back and catches up on the bike to get me sorted. 4:30 split up the hill with Hutz at the top to capture the pain - I'm doing some mental calculations and if I can't get back to 4 min/km I'm going to miss the 2:48:48 mark. Finally reach Domain Rd and the last hurdle of Sir Dallas Brooks Drive awaits - I know if I can hang in there until then it's all downhill from there.



Finally onto the downhill and I give it everything I can - splits are back down to around 4 minutes and Racer then Dozer give me a last cheer to help get me home. I get the drinks volunteers to throw water at me to wake me up - it seems to help and the gel has kicked in too. Knowing that the finish is close I find a bit extra to block out the pain and keep running as hard as I can. Take the final turn and run up on to the G and "sprint" to the line.

I have a huge sense relief as I cross the line in 2:48:27. Once I get my breath back I turn around and have the pleasure of watching a steady stream of elated Milers cross the line. Poor PB is going to be busy!

Aftermath

I rolled the dice and tried to push myself to hit a stretch goal. It obviously didn't work out, I faded badly and I lost a lot of time in the back end. In the past I probably would have been disappointed but I'm really proud that I gave it a shot and I learnt a few more valuable lessons along the way. It was my second biggest positive split but also my second fastest marathon - the fire still burns and I think I can still get a PB in the next couple of years.

Post-race it was great to catch up with the Milers. So many amazing stories - I'll leave it to them to share. I finally got to meet my childhood hero Deeks and we got a picture with him that is going straight to the poolroom!



Thanks

Miler support crew was sensational. The number of people on course cheering us on was very impressive. Many of the runners commented to me about how lucky we were to be looked after so well. Thanks to all of you who came down to cheer as well!

Slips for making the effort to drive down to the farm for all those long runs. It made a big difference having a great mate to chat to as we pounded our way up and down the hills at Neerim.

Dozer and Stacey for drinks, sponges and motivation!

Mrs Smurf for putting up with me during a long and busy year.

Splits

| Dist | Split | Race Time | Pos | Div | Gen | Speed/Pace | TOD |
|-------|---------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|--------------|---------|
| 5k | 0:18:52 | 0:18:52 | 62 | 13 | 58 | 15.90 / 3:46 | 7:18:54 |
| 10k | 0:19:26 | 0:38:18 | 64 | 13 | 60 | 15.44 / 3:53 | 7:38:20 |
| 15k | 0:19:22 | 0:57:41 | 65 | 14 | 60 | 15.49 / 3:52 | 7:57:43 |
| 20k | 0:19:44 | 1:17:26 | 71 | 15 | 66 | 15.20 / 3:57 | 8:17:28 |
| 21k | 0:03:42 | 1:21:08 | 66 | 15 | 61 | 16.22 / 3:42 | 8:21:10 |
| 25k | 0:15:34 | 1:36:43 | 65 | 15 | 60 | 15.42 / 3:54 | 8:36:45 |
| 30k | 0:20:14 | 1:56:58 | 68 | 15 | 62 | 14.83 / 4:03 | 8:57:00 |
| 35k | 0:20:58 | 2:17:56 | 66 | 16 | 60 | 14.31 / 4:12 | 9:17:58 |
| 40k | 0:21:38 | 2:39:34 | 71 | 17 | 65 | 13.87 / 4:20 | 9:39:36 |
| 42.2k | 0:08:49 | 2:48:24 | 72 | 16 | 66 | 14.97 / 4:00 | 9:48:26 |

Training

| | Week Ending | Weekly KM | Long Run | Races | Notes |
|----|-------------|-----------|----------|------------------------------|-------------|
| 20 | 15-Oct-17 | 54.4 | 42.195 | Melbourne Marathon 2:48:24 | |
| 19 | 8-Oct-17 | 53.3 | 21.1 | | Foot injury |
| 18 | 1-Oct-17 | 19.7 | | | Foot injury |
| 17 | 24-Sep-17 | 25.9 | | MMM Tan Handicap 13:11 | Foot injury |
| 16 | 17-Sep-17 | 79.8 | | 32 AV Relay 10:45 for 3.18km | |
| 15 | 10-Sep-17 | 67.1 | | 29.3 AV Half 77:46 | |
| 14 | 3-Sep-17 | 73.8 | | 35 Winter Tan 13:35 | |
| 13 | 27-Aug-17 | 80.6 | | 35 Killer Loop 19:56 | |
| 12 | 20-Aug-17 | 64.1 | | 33 | |
| 11 | 13-Aug-17 | 37.8 | | 30 | |
| 10 | 6-Aug-17 | 34 | | 25.2 Devil Bend Half 1:26:20 | |
| 9 | 30-Jul-17 | 45.3 | | AV15k - 57:51 | Sick again |
| 8 | 23-Jul-17 | 13 | | | |
| 7 | 16-Jul-17 | 14.9 | | AV10k - 36:23 | |
| 6 | 9-Jul-17 | 33.9 | | | Flu |
| 5 | 2-Jul-17 | 66.4 | | Parkrun 17:19 | |
| 4 | 25-Jun-17 | 66.3 | 26.4 | | |
| 3 | 18-Jun-17 | 42.7 | | AV10k XCR -38:36 | |
| 2 | 11-Jun-17 | 80.1 | 20 | | |
| 1 | 4-Jun-17 | 71.4 | 23.3 | | |
| | Average | 51.225 | | | |