

Touching the Void on Sunday

The Short story:

3:26.40. Very happy. Sore legs all day Sunday.

The Long story:

What a great day I had on Sunday, when I completed my first ever marathon! I felt strong for much of the 42kms and finished with a better time than expected. I was so happy and so proud of myself once I crossed the finish line, what a rush! Even today, 2 days after the event, I still feel on a high, perhaps the endorphins still kicking around! Having never run that distance previously I felt anxiety all week leading in wondering whether I could complete the event in good spirits. I guess it is not every day that one sets out on a 3 1/2 hr run!! What a great stroll I had on Sunday morning touring around the suburbs of Melbourne.

The day started somewhat on the wrong foot, definitely not as I had planned. I created my own problems as I left of the house way too late, then had problems finding a car parking spot, then waited forever in the bathroom queue before the race, etc... All-in-all, I was late for everything, so much so that when I got to the starting line, everyone had already left! Everyone had gone! When I set out, the race announcer actually mentioned on the loudspeaker "Hey runner #674 (me), the pack left 5mins ago so there are 5,999 runners ahead of you, good luck!"... Thanks for that buddy!! ;-)

So the plan was to run 5min/km for the first 20km, then see how I feel. My optimistic target was 3h30min, with anything under as gravy. (Some of you will know how easy it is to get carried away in such events and go hard too early. I know I have done that in training runs; hitting the wall is painful.) Now back to the run...

For the first 10km I settled into my pace and was hitting each km markers on 5min/km like clockwork. All systems green; ITBs fine, no splints, no cramps, feeling good. Having started at the back of the pack it got tricky at times as I had to weave my way around slower pacing runners but not too bad.

The next stretch from 10 to 20km is mostly along Beach Rd, through Port Melbourne, Middle Park, and St Kilda. We hit big cross winds there but I was still able to keep my pace and ran under the 20km banner exactly on 1h40min, bang on target. At that point and also throughout the race I was very aware of the need to keep hydrated and also get some food so to avoid hitting the wall later in the course. With that in mind I made a point to stop for water pretty much at every drinks station and had Gu gels every 10km, that worked well for me on the day. I started to feel my quads around the 20km point but overall still feeling good. It's now time to act on the plan, time to pick it up a notch...

The 20 to 30km was to Elwood and back and was my fastest split, completed in 48mins (4min48s/km). The weather in that interval was probably the worst it got all day, with horizontal rain around Elwood and still those strong cross wind, not ideal. Conditions tested everyone's resolve I think... Probably the best advice I had received prior to the run came from my run mentor Kevin, who reinforced many times how important it would be to keep in control during the run, and not spend nervous energy stressing about aches and pains, the distance, the day, etc.. I ran with that thought and took deep breaths, to calm the nerves down. That worked so well for me. At 30kms my legs are talking to me (quads, hammies, and calves), and in my head I keep hammering that most of the distance is behind me...



From 30km to the finish line was quite tricky, but also sooo very exhilarating. For me, it was along St Kilda Rd around the 33-34km mark where the mental game begun, along with the heavy physical strain. Churning my legs got more laborious, the km markers seem to space out longer in-between, so did drinks station, etc... On my watch I was still clocking under 5min/km but hanging on by a thread, just. From the mid-30kms mark I became aware that I could finish ahead of my objective, if only I keep on the pace and not crash... The support from spectators and volunteers along the course helps so much, and for me the real morale booster came when I spotted my 2 biggest fans -!!Ellie and Isla!!- by the side of the road at the 37km mark (and again at the 40km marker), cheering/screaming at the top of their voice "Go-Go-Go", "Go Daddy, Go Daddy!!" I got emotional there and I pushed myself to the finish line, I so didn't want to disappoint my crew! Their support made a huge difference. Spotting the finish line was amazing, then I finished the marathon.

Re-living the moment gives me goose bumps. :-)

As I write this message 2 days after my legs are still very sore but I am still smiling. I am debating whether to turn this into an annual event but no need to make a decision just yet. At the moment it is all about carb reload with beers and eating whatever I want, in the quantities I like! I have enjoyed the training, perhaps time to put another event on the calendar... Anyone keen for a run? :-)



Shoes: Asics Kayano

OFFICIAL TIME		Overall Rank	Category Rank	Gender Rank			
	03:31:26	1051	560	918			
		from 4956 Finishers	from 2010 Finishers	from 3619 Finishers			
NET TIME		Overall Rank	Category Rank	Gender Rank			
	03:26:40	872	478	769			
		HIDE SPLITS					
SPLIT				ACCUMULATIVE			
LOCATION	TIME	DISTANCE	SPEED/PACE	RACE TIME	OVERALL	DIVISION	GENDER
10k	00:55:41	10.0km	10.78 / 5:34	00:00:00	2703	1313	2244
20k	00:48:51	10.0km	12.28 / 4:53	00:00:00	2063	1063	1772
30k	00:48:00	10.0km	12.50 / 4:48	00:00:00	1608	842	1405
40k	00:48:11	10.0km	12.45 / 4:49	00:00:00	1085	583	953
42k	00:10:41	2.2km	12.36 / 4:51	00:00:00	1051	560	918