

Whispy's Melbourne Marathon Journey and Result

My journey to Melbourne 2017 has a bit of history attached to before it even began...

I left Melbourne in 2007 and spent the last 10 years in the wilds of Brisbane, Mongolia and finally Scotland before returning to Australia in June. I was determined to run in Melbourne as a part of my return. In addition to my return; it was my 10th marathon, I figured I have been competitively running for 40 years (40th MLB marathon) and I was in a new age group (55+).

Having been sidelined by injury for 4 weeks was not a great start and I figured I was about 3-4 weeks behind in my training. I figured with some base training and the MMM's support I should be able to make it through. A less than auspicious half in Burnley at 1.25.50 was a good indicator of my form.

So on the day, I made it to the preferred start about 5 mins before the start, not great but enough to say Hi to everyone. As I haven't been around for a while, most current Milers didn't know me but with the red vest, all are welcomed which was great. It looked like to be a perfect day.

Due to the preferred start I was ahead of the 3 hour pace group by about 1-2 mins so I considered to slow down and wait for them but figured they would catch me eventually. Little did I know how true that would be...

The first 5 kms went through at 4.08 pace which I was not too worried about as I wanted build up a bit of buffer under the 4.15 pace to keep on about 3 hrs. I got to see my Miler "handler" Gary O'Dwyer in Albert Park at 7 km which was great to see. The 10 km point went through at a 4.13 pace so I had settled back into a more reasonable pace. Seeing Gary again at 14 km and getting a goo was a good break and I started looking forward to the MMM drink stops. Along the way there was a lot of support from Milers on the sidelines as well as on the road when they started the return loops at Port Melbourne and Glenhuntly. It gave a great opportunity to see how the other Milers in the field were doing. I pondered the fact that over the years the Milers have changed from a group of hairy early to middle aged men (except for Katie) to now include a good number of women which is a significant improvement!

At the half I was feeling great at 1.28 with a consistent 4.13 min/km average pace. However, by 30 kms I could feel that I was starting to tire and my pace started to consistently slow. Running up St. Kilda Road was a chore especially going around the half marathoners which was only slightly improved from when I ran the MLB marathon in 2011. Despite the help from Gary and some Milers on bikes it was tough going. At 35km, I didn't care that the goo Gary gave me was somebody else's. Turning towards the Tan and the wheels were really coming off and my focus went from sub 3 to finishing and not stopping. Having survived going under St. Kilda road it was the long run up the Tan which was a bit cruel. At some point which I don't actually remember, the 3 hr pacer group literally swept past me shouting encouragement that unfortunately fell on deaf ears. Eventually I staggered into the G to finish. The finish video told the tale, a guy staggering across the line, stopping his watch, nearly falling over and being surrounded by 5 marshals who promptly took me to the medical tent. After a little rest I was good as new. One word was "carnage".

The last 2 kms I went from 250th place in the male category to 285th and my pace was at 5.29 min/km. Final time 3.02.50, 4th in the age group at least.

So despite having 40 years' experience in running, I learned that you can't run a marathon without putting the miles in. It wasn't exactly a learning, I had just "forgotten". Oh well, next year...

Thanks to Gary and all the milers who supported me along the way. A great experience. Its great to be back...!

If anyone is interested my marathons were:

Mombasa, Kenya 1993

Brussels, Belgium 1994

(small gap of 16 yrs. until Slips and a few others convinced me to run a marathon)

Sydney 2010

Melbourne 2011

Istanbul 2012

South Gobi Desert, Mongolia 2013

Berlin 2013

Belfast 2015

London 2016