

Osaka Marathon 2017 – Scott “Malibu” Stacey

I decided to enter Osaka Marathon once I knew that the family intended to be in Japan at the time of the race for an extended period of time. I was debating between a couple of the ‘bigger’ Japanese marathons given these would also bring a great experience. I got into Osaka through the lottery system. The race has 30,000 + runners and so has one of the biggest marathon fields in the world.

The training

I had planned to undertake a similar approach to my previous marathon in Nagano. That was to do a block of interval work (i.e. Tuesday/Thursday sessions each week) followed by a block of marathon specific work (one big session and a hard long run per week). My interval work this time was predominately Miler sessions rather than anything too fancy or considered. I was pleasantly surprised at how these sessions went given I was coming off a break from running and hard training due to suffering a bit of bit burnt out mid year. I was able to PB in sessions without needing to bury myself in the session.

The biggest gap I felt I had in my program was how to handle and progress the long runs. Given my uncertainty here I reached out to Julian Spence for some advice given he follows a similar training philosophy to me. He gave me some specific guidance on progressing the long runs over the program and also gave the tick of approval for the marathon specific sessions I had put in there. In terms of the long runs Julian recommended alternating between an “uptempo” long run at 95% of target marathon pace (around 4:12/km) and a normal long run with 15min kick downs at the end, where the kick down need not reach marathon pace. The duration of each type of long run also increased each week. He also recommended that rather than my initial plan to jog some of Melbourne Marathon that I do it as a progressive with the aim of averaging 95% of MP overall. In addition to ad hoc advice from Julian, Bevo was also a source of some very valuable advice throughout particularly at times when things went wrong. Thanks to both for the advice. It’s fantastic that us ordinary runners can call on the experience of those significantly closer to the pointy end for our own pursuits. Aside from the notable absence of grid girls, getting this advice from this calibre of runner is akin to having a supercar driver give you driving lessons (Kipchoge would be an F1 driver in this scenario FYI).

As with my last campaign I had no weekly volume of KMs planned as I just run if I feel I should and am able to with an aim to run every day. Overall my mileage was lower this campaign relative to my previous one. I would have preferred more mileage but “life” intervened far too frequently with running this campaign (work and household things). While my biggest week was 132k, it was generally in the range of between 100k to 120k.

I got through 4 weeks of this interval work and was starting to get excited about how fast I could run for the marathon given how I was tracking. Then, however, as is typical, Maliflu struck the day before Burnley Half Marathon. Both my daughter and wife had it and it was inevitable to reach me I guess. However, in this instance it was a very bad case of the flu and had me completely bed ridden – the worst flu I’ve ever had; same for the wife. I lost about 4kg just in that week alone and had 6 days of no running. Fearing my campaign would be over if I didn’t get through my uptempo long run on the weekend I somehow dragged myself out of bed and did 32km at an average pace of 4:09/km, incorporating Sri Chinmoy half. I had to stop once or twice but got through it; even during the race component. Whether this was a good idea or not I don’t know but I felt I would never be able to build to the planned uptempo long run in Melbourne Marathon if I didn’t do the preparatory work

first. I suspect I was able to get through this based on my previous fitness but basically tapped out my fitness after that run. I'm still unsure if I would do it again in hindsight.

The next couple of weeks were horrible. I really struggled even through slow easy runs. My planned 35k the following week saw me get dropped by the Milers at Eaglemont and then having to take walk breaks every 500m or so of the final kms just to make it back to the car – pure hell for a run that would have been a breeze a couple of weeks earlier. No 15min kick down was happening that week! A similar scenario for the next uptempo long run where I got through 34k but with lots of stopping to get me to the end – it looked good on paper but the reality was quite different. This little period really impacted on my motivation for the marathon. From this point I was really just ticking the boxes in this campaign and I no longer had any excitement about what I could achieve given I had lost so much; noting I never lost hope of a strong PB.

It ended up about 3 weeks between “sessions” due to that flu with only the long runs in there to suggest any marathon training was going on. At this point in terms of the plan I had progressed beyond the interval work intended to get me faster and into the marathon specific work. While I felt I really needed more of this interval work I also knew I would compromise my ability to get through the large marathon specific sessions if I didn't start it as planned. The first session of 4 x 4km didn't go that well in the sense I only got through three of the reps, but it was still a really solid workout so I couldn't complain too much. I attempted the same session the following week rather than the previously planned Bevo Badness as there was no chance I was in sufficient shape for that workout. This time with the company of 700 and Smurf, although again dropped after the first rep, I was able to get through it. But it was a much harder slog than I would have liked given the pace I was going. I really felt I had lost a lot of fitness from that flu at this point and was getting pretty down on myself and how this campaign would go.

The following two weeks, however, were the best of the campaign with a great workout followed by doing Melbourne Marathon as a progressive (and in a time of 2:58) and topped off with a session PB for the Bevo Badness the following weekend. That's pretty much where the good sessions ended. I got through one rep of my planned 4 x 5km the next week (too exhausted from work and digging up my back garden every evening) and I failed to finish my 38k hills run as severe ITBS stopped me at 34k. It didn't feel like ITBS knee initially so I was pretty worried about it as I literally couldn't run for more than a 20 meters and it came on so suddenly. However, post run I could find a spot on the ITB that referred to the sore knee area and I was confident it was just ITB. Some great massage from the folks at Melbourne Sports Med Centre, including a brutal session from Leon, and I was back and able to bash out a great 38k @ 95% the following weekend with only a few days off running. That uptempo restored some confidence because it felt so comfortable.

The one aspect of my campaign that I regret is doing my final big session too close to that 38k uptempo run. I had planned initially to do it on the Wednesday but the temptation of being able to get a massive session done on a public holiday (the Tuesday Melbourne Cup Day) was too high. I knew in my warm up I wasn't quite on that day but pushed on regardless. In the end I didn't complete the session which was a shame because it was my final key session and was meant to give me confidence for the race. But again, a very solid hit out noting also it was a bit windy that day. The planned session was 30min, 4 x 5min, 30min. I only got through 20min of the final tempo before calling it, noting in the back of my mind I didn't want to destroy myself three weeks out from my race. I feel if I wanted to I could have dug really deep and I probably could have finished off the session at target pace, or close to it, but I think that would have done more harm than good three or so weeks out from the race.

The fact that I wasn't able to hit my marathon pace in my week 1 of taper session (15min 4 x 2min, 15min) actually had me worried a bit about how I was going. Although hot and windy that day I felt I should have been able to hit target pace two weeks out from my race. Hitting target pace should be a breeze at this point irrespective of the conditions.

The remainder of the taper was a bit impacted by the unexpected snow in my wife's hometown in Noshiro Japan. The conditions for my final long run a week out were so horrible I had to can it 14km in and didn't do the 15min tempo as planned. I did get one final 2 x 10min session done the week of the race. It felt OK without being amazing, was very windy and cold though.

Given how the training went I was genuinely unsure of how I would run. I felt a time between 2:47 and 2:52 was the likely range and mentioned as much to Rog over coffee at the start of my taper. While there may have been a bit of sandbagging involved to dispel some of the outrageous claims of my fitness (I'm looking at you Ben Briggs) I knew I was not in the shape I could have been if the interruption didn't occur. However, I also knew that I was probably in similar or slightly better shape than I was before my previous marathon. So all up I guess you can't complain too much about that (although that didn't stop me complaining excessively!)

Pre Race

Pre-race prep was finalised with a long day at Universal Studies Japan with the kids followed by collecting the race bib at the expo. Not ideal preparation 2 days out from a marathon but the family has to come first. I was a bit too tired by the time I got to the expo to really enjoy it unfortunately. As indicated above, up to this point I wasn't feeling particularly pumped for the race and the care factor was much lower than usual for a marathon. I was hoping that being at the expo would fire me up but unfortunately because I was so tired it didn't and I pretty much just raced through it.

The day before the race I felt very tired and other than getting some lunch and dinner I basically stayed in my hotel room. I was actually worried by how tired I was. JC and Anna had wanted to catch up for dinner but I felt it was better that I just stay in my room and relax as much as I could.

While I had planned not to post a pre-race pic on Facebook I really felt I needed to fire up for the race so put something up. The encouragement from friends was very welcome and did help to motivate me and ensure I couldn't hide from my result the next day.

On race day I took a short train ride with thousands of other runners to the start line and walked to the baggage area, then there is a 20min walk back to the start line area. With lots of runners around this doesn't feel too bad. At the start line I sit on the ground to save the legs and the guy next to me starts talking to me. Turns out he is an English teacher. It was good to be able to spend that final 40min before the race having a chat to someone rather than sitting on my own.

The race

I had a very straightforward race plan. It wasn't a plan to run a particular pace so much as a plan on how to execute my run; noting obviously I had to have some idea of what pace was sensible at the start. The plan was to run smart to about 23km (which means holding back), run to feel after this point and then dig deep when the need presented itself – hopefully later rather than earlier. This plan also reflected that the majority of the hills and undulations, other than a big one at 37k, were in those first 23km or so.

Even though I was in the front starting block the start was fairly crowded, as you would expect for such a large marathon, however I knew that the race cannot be won at this point but certainly can

be lost so I just went with the flow and didn't try to push through the crowd too much. After 1km I was on pace. I knew also JC and Anna would be near the start area so I kept an eye out for them and was fortunate enough to catch them. The Milers top is pretty easy to spot!

In the first 5-10km I wouldn't say I felt amazing and I was a bit worried about how I would feel at the end of the marathon given how I felt at this point. I was worried that I was just still quite tired given how I felt the day before. The first 5km also has a Tan like hill (similar duration and grade) so that might have impacted on how I felt perhaps.

Up to about 15km I just telling myself to slow down and keep it feeling like a "jogging" effort. I seemed to be able to do this well while also hitting target pace. If I had run to "feel" during this period I believe I would have been running too fast.

At about 15km I was able to join a decent sized pack. I wasn't entirely sure if the pace felt right but I also knew there was some benefit of being in the pack so went with it. While it wasn't a windy day we did get the wind tunnels you feel in a big city plus it helps to focus on something else rather than yourself. Turns out the pack was going bang on my target pace so I hung with it until it broke up around 24km.

From 24km to about 32km I just ran at what felt like marathon effort without much focus on the watch at all (in fact other than for pressing my lap button for 5km splits I hardly gave any attention to the watch from about 10km). My split between 25km and 30km was the fastest (19:48), which also reflects that it was the flattest part of the course. I knew at 30km this was a good day and that I had never felt this comfortable this late into a marathon. Unless disaster struck I knew I was on for sub 2:50.

After 30km I started to feel I was at least running a marathon for the first time rather than a long uptempo run, but still feeling OK. At 32km I unexpectedly saw the wife and kids as they were not intending to come out to the course, this gave me a real boost when I needed it. I also had JC and Anna on the bike for parts between 30k and 35km. Around this part of the course the scenery is very boring as you're essentially running under an overpass and the crowd support is not significant either, so great timing for that support. Their support also ensured that I kept the foot on the pedal rather than taking the soft option. It was probably around 35k where I really was starting to work in the marathon and I could no longer pretend I was doing it easy as I had been able to say prior to 30k. However, I also knew that this effort was not harder than the final rep of a Bevo Badness session, so I still felt quite confident of getting home well.

At 37km there is a prick of a hill, while not super long it is quite steep. From 35km I was essentially preparing myself for this. First by ensuring that I didn't lose a stack of time before the hill and so keeping my effort solid (noting I would lose time going up it) but also ensuring I didn't burn so much energy that I would be destroyed by the hill noting there was still a fair distance to go after it. When I hit the hill I just tried to ensure I didn't 'push' going up it and just maintained as consistent effort as I could. This was essentially to avoid being completely cooked by the hill. The other side was just as steep down but you're in recovery mode a bit at this point and so can't take full advantage – I think you always lose more than you gain. It took me probably 800m to 1km to talk myself into pushing again and to maintain the effort/pace. Now was the time to really start fighting in this race. I was really happy to see the 40km split was still close to 20min (20:04) despite the hill at 37k.

After 40km it was just about using whatever was left in the tank. A short rise just after 40km knocked me around more than I felt it would and it took a bit to fight on from there. However, it turns out the final 2.2km was the fastest pace for the race coming in at 3:52/km. The last 1km had

quite a few turns and we were in what felt like an industrial/commercial area so it wasn't possible to get a good idea of where the finish line was but I knew I had to keep pushing. I knew I didn't want to get to the end regretting my effort and I also knew that all my effort at this point would count towards valuable seconds off my time. Plus the pain would end sooner if I got the finish line quicker!

Ultimately I crossed the line in 2:48:06, a PB of almost six and half minutes. Main initial emotion was relief but then very happy with that outcome. Official splits are posted below.

The wash up

Obviously I am very pleased with the result. To get a sub 2:50 and sub 4min kms marathon is very satisfying. I don't think I could have executed the race much better than I did; which for me is actually far more satisfying than the time achieved.

I think how strong I remained to the end gives me confidence that the marathon specific training I do works despite it being a lonely way to train at times. What was missing for me was the work to get faster before the marathon specific phase; but it wouldn't be right if Maliflu didn't play some part in a marathon for me! My view is that with some more strength and speed work I will be able to run faster and then also draw on the endurance I have established over this past year. Plus I'm still relatively new to running so hopefully there is still some low hanging fruit to be picked. Only time will tell though.

In the meantime, having spent the last year and half pretty much in marathon training mode (and being a purist about it) I feel it's time to sort out some of my other PBs (if only to stop other Milers annoying me about how soft they are). While I am genuinely not that fussed with PBs, other than for the marathon, sorting these out should also help me be faster before I get stuck into my next marathon campaign, which hopefully will be at the end of 2018.

Race Splits

Distance	Split Time	Cumulative Time	Pace	Notes
5km	00:19:51 (00:20:10)	00:19:51	388	-
10km	00:39:55 (00:40:14)	00:20:04	419	-
15km	00:59:48 (01:00:07)	00:19:53	406	👤
20km	01:19:46 (01:20:05)	00:19:58	395	-
25km	01:39:40 (01:39:59)	00:19:54	361	👤
30km	01:59:28 (01:59:47)	00:19:48	315	-
35km	02:19:30 (02:19:49)	00:20:02	284	👤
40km	02:39:34 (02:39:53)	00:20:04	231	-
フィニッシュ	02:48:06 (02:48:25)	00:08:32	218	👤 左 👤 右

Stacey Sidney Scottさん
を応援しよう!

ホーム ランナーリスト 応援場所設定