

Adelaide Race Report – 27 May 2018

Why have I done this to myself? Again! How do I get out of this? How can I end this? These are the questions foremost in my mind as I enter the last third of the Adelaide Marathon. As I contemplate the thought of how good it would be to 'pull a hammy' and be able to put me out of my misery I remember that I actually trained for this and in a lot of those training sessions I hurt and got through it. I also realised that although I might not be going to achieve my target time I am still going to run a pretty big pb and a significant improvement on my time for the Melbourne Marathon 7 months earlier.

So how did I get here? My journey started in February 2017, when after 12 to 18 months of interrupted training, with ever decreasing weekly mileage and increasing weight gain, I realised that something had to be done. My first goal was to gain an understanding of just how bad things had become. I had been running about 40 kms a week with no runs quicker than 4:45 min/km, so knowing that I wanted to be able to run to a standard that I had previously been able to where 4 min kms were no bother to me at all. I set a session of 2 x 7 min with 2 min rest between as a starting point to build on at a goal pace of 4min/km. Realising that I could only maintain 4:10 to 4:15 for a session such as this was shocking, but I built on this for the rest of the year and managed to get myself in good enough shape to give a MM 2017 a go, with the goal of getting around and then building to have a better crack in 2018. So, I did that in 3:23, with my largest kms in the weeks prior being 76!

So the Adelaide journey began in November 2017. Armed with extra incentive and good advice from the end of season MMM dinner I had a goal of getting to the end of December by continuing to build upon my training from MM and having a weekly long run of 28 kms or 2 hours. In January I kicked off the year with the 28 km 2 bays race which started another 6-week block where I was training to be in a position to start the Adelaide training block in mid Feb. Seeking the services of Bevo he advised that I should be targeting 80kms a week with the long run being about 2 hrs, which I was able to do.

Teaming up with Mark 'Busta' Symes and James 'Stringer' Howe, the 12-week Adelaide program began. At the start of this I was clearly the weakest of the 3 but it also provided me with great incentive to try and keep them both in eyesight! To summarise the program my weekly kms including taper were as follows – 97, 76, 100, 100, 103, 105, 98, 102, 102, 103, 94, 85, 80. Looking at the program before I started I had my doubts I could hold up, considering I had only run up to or over 100 kms in a week, twice. But to my surprise the training went well without any real issues, the long runs were all between 32 and 38 kms, and I really enjoyed running with the miler team again, feeling fitter and finally being able to keep up! Throughout the training I was able to complete all the targeted sessions to the goals and improve my fitness so that a goal of 2:55 was realistic. I must say that late summer and autumn must be the best time of year to train for a marathon, we had incredible weather.

Leading in to the race, although I was confident I couldn't have done much more in my training the doubts about my target time started to grow. In the last week and a half the legs just weren't feeling it, but I had done the work, most of which I didn't think I could do, so I thought give it a go and see how it ends up. I had imagined that by the time we got to race day in late May, the weather in Adelaide would be much colder than what we had trained, this was one of the advantages I thought of when choosing Adelaide. But unfortunately, Adelaide had one of its warmest ever May nights which lead into race morning with a temp of 22deg at 7am for the start of the race.

Race plan was pretty straight forward, run with Stringer for as long as I could at 4:10. This essentially went to plan for 24 kms, to that stage things had been easy enough without being totally comfortable. At about 18 kms my quads felt tight and I dropped off Stringer by a good 20-30 meters for about a 1km but I worked through this and caught up with him and slotted into the little 5 person pack that had formed enhanced by KJ who was in Adelaide to visit her daughter. The course was 2 winding laps of the River Torrens so all I was thinking about on lap one was just starting lap 2 and going from there. Lap two started and as I ran past 24 km I actually grew in confidence even though I was feeling a bit uncomfortable, then Stringer dropped off. I was really surprised as I had expected him to be the one leaving me behind. I pushed on and kept pace for a few more kms but things became really tough at 30 kms and the goals of the race that I had set out to achieve started to slip away. I desperately wanted to stop, but out of nowhere KJ appeared and got me going again helping me maintain a pace that was slower but somewhat sustainable. But again the dreaded leg cramps happened with the hamstrings totally seizing up which really cost me and has been a common theme in each of my marathons. With the help of KJ and Mitho out on the course helping me with extra water, motivation and constant banter to take my mind off things I managed to get through the last 10 kms and the constant leg cramping to finish in what was a 10 minute PB and 18 minutes quicker than what I had done 7 months ago!

What is it about the marathon that keeps us coming back for more? And why am I going to go through this all again? I suppose there aren't many things around that are so accessible as what running is and with such a challenge that the marathon provides! But no matter what happens on race day the main driver is the friendships that are built and the joy of being a part of the running community and more importantly a part of two great running clubs in the Melbourne Midday Milers and Athletics Waverley.

Thanks to Bevo for your guidance and advice and to everyone for your support throughout this journey. A big shout out also goes to my wife and family for their support. This would have all been much more difficult without you all.

Now the next challenge awaits!