

Melbourne Marathon 2019

This marathon will stick in my memory forever, even though I have a hard time remembering the end! I learnt a lot from the race, I also learnt that while we chase the magical time goal that's in our head, it's all about the journey of getting there and the great camaraderie in the Melbourne running scene.

Lead-up

I'd been a tiny bit broken since my previous decent marathon crack at London in April 2017 when I managed to crack sub 2:40. I decided that I just wanted to be as consistent as possible, and I started getting this in 2018. Post London I struggled with form and fitness until 5Ms at Smurf's farm in Neerim early March 2018, and somehow came out the other end in one piece. While it was a bloody tough bugger, getting the win with Malibu, Gazza and the late ring-in Dave Sutherland, certainly made up for it! It was also the first time in 4 attempts that I've managed not to get lost (one wasn't my fault!), even though I tried very hard in the last stage with Smurf saving me from another Bermuda triangle.

My next race was Puffing Billy at the end of April. I still wasn't in peak shape, which meant that after a very average start, I was always chasing damn Billy. I am pathetic at downhill and the first section is a steep downhill, so I felt like I needed to battle every man, woman and child to get back on track. I got stopped twice at the crossing, but somehow managed to get in front of Billy at the end, with Fitter and I doing mad dashes at the end to do so.

I then attempted a parkrun @ Albert Park the week before the AV10K, running a 17:00, which was frustrating for being 1 second too slow. However, I followed that up with a 34:52 in the 10k, which was my first PB at any race distance since London Marathon. On both occasions I got out-kicked by Fitter, so I was getting sick of seeing his arms and legs thrashing around in front of me.

Melbourne Campaign

In the 10 week prior to my 2-week taper, I ran every day. In fact from 10 June until 11 October I ran every day, which was far and away the most consistency I've had in the 11 years of running. I did 1,334km in the 10 weeks, including a core of easy runs and hill sprints.

Prior to Burnley Half, my aim was to make sure that my training was focused more on speed, with shorter interval sessions and tempos sessions on the Tues/Thurs.

I managed to run another pb at Burnley finishing in 76:26, which was pleasing as I'd been battling a cold prior to the run. I also managed to just finish just in front of Fitter, it was good to finally knock him off in a race after the early season smackings. I also finished in front a guy called Ant Rickards, I had seen him

around the traps, but didn't know him personally. I noticed he went out like a frog in a sock at the start, but was running on the spot at the end and I managed to track him down in the last km. I thought this bloke is an all or nothing guy when it comes to running. Anyway, I would soon find out there's plenty more than this to Mr Rickards.

Post Burley I transferred to longer mid-week sessions and then incorporated closer to marathon pace in the long run on the weekend. I did similar sessions to the London Campaign like 3 x 5km, 4 x 5km & the Bevo Badness, which gave me confidence that I was probably slightly ahead of where I was tracking when I did London, and with the rings of #subduff in the air, I felt like a 2:37 was within reach. I also practiced the Maurtens 320 carb drink (giving 80g of carbs p/500ml) & wearing the most expensive shoes I bought since I paid \$260 in 2009 for the bricks known as Asics Kayanos. Not too bad this inflation thing, as the Nike Zoom Flyknit only cost \$230, which also included a fancy carbon plate in the sole.

Race day

I felt as fit as a fiddle come race day, with a good solid taper and a vast selection of rice puddings to keep the carb stores stock up in the 3 days leading up to the marathon. The normal daily checks of BOM showed that the Melbourne weather gods weren't going to be kind with the weather come race day. With a top of 27 degrees and wind gusts of over 40km p/hr, the predicted times were ever so slightly adjusted in my head. Prior to this I was thinking that setting out at a pace of 3:43 should be achievable, but revised this to 3:45 before the start.

The weather wasn't too bad at the start, with only 13 degrees and light winds, but the sun was out and you knew what was coming. I had been training with Cropduster on the longer sessions, so I thought Woolies and him would be in the general vicinity during the race. I probably went a tiny bit too fast in the first K and couldn't see the Duster, but quickly settled into a rhythm, and got through the first 5km in 18:43. I was running with Woolies at this time, but it wasn't too long before he pushed on and picked up the pace. I decided it wasn't time to pick up any pace, I thought if I felt good in the back half hopefully I could kicked down and negative split.

I ended up settling into another decent group, which included Andre Waring pacing a mate for ½ way, a Jack Rayner look-a-like, with both the tash and Western Athletics singlet, and Mark Guiguis. Mark was finding it highly amusing when I passed the drink hand-overs, the Milers support were going nuts, mainly Bella screaming 'BERMUDA' at the top of her very loud lungs. He even said 'what are you the Mayor of Bayside' as we ran through Elwood. That gave me a massive psychological boost as pushed on through. I probably was leading this pack too much at times, which probably wasn't the wisest decision, tuck in and let others do the work!

I was sticking to just the pop-top every 7km, and while the carbs were getting well and truly stocked up with the Maurtens, I wasn't getting in an extra fluid in-between stops. The disappointing thing is I made a point to the people that I coach to make sure they stayed well hydrated in-between the Miler drink stations every 7km, but unfortunately my decision making for myself wasn't the same. I also wasn't wearing a hat or visor, which might have helped protect me from the elements.

By the time we reached the 30k mark, I had just run the six 5km splits between 18:43-18:48, so you could say I was dialled into the pace. I can remember thinking that it's getting a bit tougher with the weather heating up and the wind really blowing, but with only 12km to go, the main thought was just to push on.

Now you can always tell what kind of race people are going to have at Melbourne when you run under the pedestrian bridge heading into St Kilda. We had a decent group into that stage but then the carnage started to unfold. Reviewing people that were in the group post race showed there were blow-ups of epic proportion. Just before Fitzroy St I managed to pass Woolies and he certainly looked like the weather and the faster pace had gotten the best of him. I pushed up St Kilda road with Mark and a just a couple of other guys close by.

By the time we reach St Kilda Road, the wind was out in all its glory, a nice hot strong headwind, right into your face. This was when the challenge was really on with 7-9km to go, the whole body and mind telling you to stop, but you know that you don't have too long to go. Chris Rancie appeared on a city rental bike at this time, with some encouragement, which helped me drop my fastest 5km split of 18:41.

I was still feeling pretty strong when I headed up the dreaded hill towards Government House Drive, trying to stick close to Mark. Unfortunately it seemed that by the time I crested the hill, I was totally shot. While I was smiling at all the other drink hand-overs with Bella, this was too much effort at 35km, and I could hardly get any more fluid into my body at this stage.

I didn't really lose a great deal of time in the next 5km split, running 19:00, but everything was a struggle. I managed to pass Ant Rickards going down the hill back on St Kilda Rd but it was just survival mode at this stage. I struggling along until I reach Brunton Ave, just before we entered the G. This is when the struggle was real and running in a straight line was now impossible. I ended up crashing into a couple of metal barriers but lucky for me I somehow stayed upright and didn't end up like Callum Hawkins at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games with a DNF.

Who knows, maybe I would have, but lucky for me the guy I'd passed a few Ks ago came up and grabbed my hand as we entered the G and held it as we ran the last few hundred metres together. This is where things got a bit hazy, as the next thing I can really remember is being in the medic area in the bowels of the MCG. I also forgot about the hand of Ant very quickly.

I felt pretty shattered, but the biggest shock was looking down at my feet, they'd look like they done 10 rounds with Mike Tyson, black & blue. I was also shattered looking down at the watch and seeing the time, definitely wasn't what I was expected 2:41:48 after all that work. Anyway after the IV perked me up, I wanted to get out there quick smart as it wasn't a pretty slight in there with all the vomiting and the like. Plus I was pretty keen to have a couple of beers and see how the rest of the Milers had gone.

When I finally caught up with the Milers at the Precinct, it seemed like conditions were brutal for all and sundry. There was only a couple of pbs, and most people were well below their best. People were also trying to check on the official times (especially Dug who's gun time indicated he run a 3:00:01), and this is when I was having a major heart flutter as the Melbourne website indicated a 'DNS' against my name. I was having a hard time remembering finishing the thing, but I could definitely remember starting! I had never DNF'd in a race before, and certainly didn't want my first to be in my 10th Melbourne Marathon with a Spartan Singlet on the line. Anyway, after piecing my fragile brain together, I managed to remember the helping hand from Ant, and shortly after his was at the pub, whereby he confirmed that I indeed finished, because we crossed the together hand-in-hand. The highlight was actually seeing 2:59:58 net time on the Melbourne Marathon website for Dug, the crowd went wild!

While running a 2:37 certainly would have been nice @ Melbourne, I think I will remember this (well most of it) more than most other running experiences when I look back. I came 38th overall, 3rd in my AG, and became a Spartan; got to be happy with that. Now Ant didn't have to help me, and I'm not sure how many others would have in that situation, but this just shows what a top bloke he is. What a Champ!

That 2:37 will have to wait. Onto Berlin with a head-to-head battle Royale with Duff in September, followed by Tokyo in 2020. All I can say is bring on the cold quick running weather!

Happy times



Tougher times



Toughest times



	Split	Race Time	Pos	Div	Gen	Speed/Pace
3 OF 712 AG						
5k	0:18:40	0:18:40	54	6	52	16.67 / 03:44
10k	0:19:12	0:37:53	56	6	54	15.79 / 03:50
15k	0:18:45	0:56:38	52	6	51	16.67 / 03:45
20k	0:18:57	1:15:36	55	6	54	16.67 / 03:47
21k	0:04:08	1:19:44	59	6	58	16.50 / 03:45
25k	0:14:26	1:34:11	47	5	46	16.71 / 03:42
30k	0:19:45	1:53:56	44	3	43	15.79 / 03:57
36k	0:22:23	2:16:20	37	3	36	16.64 / 03:40
40k	0:15:50	2:32:10	35	3	34	15.60 / 04:03
42.2k	0:09:37	2:41:48	38	3	37	14.67 / 04:22

Result	Time	Pos	Div	Gen
<u>1ST HALF</u>	1:19:44	71	8	70
<u>2ND HALF</u>	1:21:56	31	3	30