The Blister

The Magazine for the Sydney Striders Running Club | Established 1980
December 2023 | Issue 140

The History of SSRC, The Run Beyond Project - Thats a Wrap!, Coast to Kosci, Run for the Voice, Strider Features ...and more!

Sydney Striders

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi all,

A warm welcome to edition 140 of The Blister.

I would like to thank all contributors for bringing us a high quality edition. Jessica and Belinda have compiled some articles of interest over the 12 months.

It is amazing reading some of the articles and seeing the diversity of our members and the achievements. One of note is David Criniti being awarded the Athletics Australia Peter Norman Humanitarian Award for his great work with the Run Beyond (See more on page 9). Sydney Striders have supported this great cause since inception and it is truly inspiring to see how our community support changes lives.

We look forward to seeing you at a race or training event soon.

Happy running!

Lynn Herisson
President

Striders Strong

By Charles Corville

A reflection of Sydney Striders Running Club. The following was the speech given by Charles Corville at the 42.2 party in 2022.

My Striders Journey

It started in 1967 when I joined the running club of Johannesburg's largest University, the University of the Witwatersrand, to run cross country. In 1968, at 19 years of age, I began my running journey when I ran my first long distance event, a 56km ultra road race between Pretoria and Johannesburg. I had not even run a 42k standard marathon. This event was followed by another 21 marathons and ultramarathons (7 of which were the 89k Comrades Marathon) over the next 9 years in South Africa providing me with race experience I could impart in Australia in later years.

Within three years the small student club of less than 100 members had become the number one long distance running club not only in South Africa, but arguably in the world when in 1971 three of our members finished 1st, 2nd and 4th in the then world's leading ultramarathon, the famous 56k London to Brighton. Our club went on to produce the first two student winners of the Comrades Marathon Dave Levick in 1973 and the greatest Comrades winner of all time, Bruce Fordyce, with 9 victories between 1981 and 1990.

As president in the 70's I was involved in the club's successful journey at the time of the explosion of road running and high quality race organisation in South Africa, years ahead of that in Australia. This too provided me with transferable organisational skills when I arrived in Sydney in 1978. We were even ahead of the running revolution associated with American Jim Fixx's Complete Book of Running in 1977.

I also organised a runner's black arm band protest seeking official recognition of not only blacks, but also women competing in the Comrades Marathon where they were officially excluded. This confrontation with authorities unexpectedly stood me in good stead for later, locking horns with the NSW AAA as I started to get Striders on the running map.

After my university graduation and a European campervan tour, Maureen and I lived in London for 9 months. Being disillusioned with Apartheid and following the Soweto riots, we applied from London to emigrate to Canada, NZ, USA or Australia. Our country selection was to be based on the most efficient immigration department.

We would accept the country that was first to accept our application. Surprisingly Australian bureaucracy came out on top. There could have been a new runners life for me with say Rotarua Runners, Toronto Trotters or even Seattle Shufflers. That's how close it came to their being no Sydney Striders.

In 1980 Maureen and I arrived Australia for the first time having backpacked across the USA and Asia. I had a job offer but knew no one in Australia. We phoned an indirect work contact from Sydney airport who suggested we stay with him and his family in Lindfield until we found our own accommodation. Had he lived in Sutherland, today there may have been a running club Sutherland Striders.

It was time to contribute my running passion and experienced race and club organisational skills to the Sydney road running environment. I knew what a successful club and road running scene looked like. But what I found, to my dismay, was that there were no specialised marathon running clubs and the standard of most road race organisation was very poor. I decided to form a specialist marathon club to have members to train with and to eventually showcase to Sydney how to organise a quality road race, by runners for runners, and lead by example. Sounds casual. It was. But certainly not egotistical.

The 1980 AAA NSW State Marathon in particular was a very poor event. Hardly a drink station or distance sign. At the finish the AAA hierarchy was entertaining the Greek mayor of the town of Marathon in a marquee, serving chilled drinks and canapes by waiters dressed in black & white, while there were no drinks or food, not even water at the finish for those tired dehydrated runners completing the marathon. I was incensed.

With fire in my belly, dormant since the black armband protest 5 years earlier, I took the NSW AAA head on and complained to them about all the shortcomings of their race, yet offering practical effective solutions. All this was to no avail as they no doubt wondered who this unknown and whingeing South African upstart was.

The Striders Journey

On 30 June 1980, ten interested runners had picked up my personal flyers on the formation of a new running club handed out by me at races at the Lindfield NOSH and Manly. We met in our lounge at our unit in Artarmon and the rest is history – the Sydney Striders journey had commenced. Alan Cole, here this evening, was one of the 10. He went on to develop the Turramurra Trotters into a recognised force catering for nurturing runners in the City to Surf.

But other runners who did not attend the first meeting soon joined later in 1980.Tonight in attendance we have 3 of the 4 of these subsequent 1980 members who are still current members. Sue Hill, Brian Colwell, Ivan Freys. Geoff Cox sent his apologies from Canberra.

Sue became our female representative on the committee to go forth and recruit females. In 1980 we were the pace setters on sporting gender equality!. Pity it took so long for other sports to follow our example. Brian produced the early maps, was the second STaR manager and secretary. Over the months our administrative infrastructure evolved and runners joined through word of mouth. Sydney Striders journey was well under way but what was missing was a show piece road race.

The Sydney Striders Half Marathon in Lane Cove River Park came to fruition in 1982 when 341 runners participated in a new road race experience. A year later we won the national award for the best organised Australian distance road race from the Australian Road Runners Association. Over the next 13 years we attracted the best half marathoners from the east coast, including Olympians and Commonwealth Games athletes. Our numbers peaked at 1,522 runners in 1985. We had finally set a high benchmark to show race directors how a quality value for money race should be organised.

Michael Beisty, runner and journalist, is also here tonight. He recently wrote a great article on the history of our Half Marathons and in particular the 1984 race in which he competed. Please check out the online publication “Runners Tribe”.

After 3 years it was time to pass the baton on to a new President and allow them to continue the Striders journey.

The Presidents Journey

14 presidents succeeded me bringing new strategies, ideas and professionalism as they joined the Striders journey always keeping us one step ahead of the running “pack”.

Our greatest success stories include:

- Introduction of Life Memberships
- Competing in NSW AAA cross country and track events
- Kevin O’Kane’s MTG, nurturing novices to completing their first marathon
- Striders taking over the management of the 6 Foot Track 46k ultra in the Blue Mountains. Darren Crisp is our current race director
- Providing the most volunteers from a running club to the 2000 Olympic Marathon races.
- Tony Wong and Caroline Yarnell’s development of club juniors over 15 years. Our main stars have been Nicola Hogg (Australian Junior Champion twice at 800m and 1500m), Josh Phillips and Kieren Tall (Australian Junior Men’s Team at the 2017 World Cross Country Championship at Uganda).
- Quality and legendary guest speakers at our annual awards dinner included Bryce Courtenay, Robert de Castella, Steve Monaghetti, Pat Carroll, Sonia O’Sullivan, Bruce Fordyce and of course the late Kerryn McCann, winner of our open Half Marathon in 1990.

No volunteers, no Striders. Volunteers have contributed incredible passion and selfless dedication to keeping the vision alive. So many to thank, but thank you, thank you, thank you.

Your Striders Journey

My vision was to create a professionally organised running club catering for all levels of runners, fast and slow, from all walks of life, across all genders, setting the highest standards of administration and offerings as well as race organisation excellence.

This infrastructure would allow members to embark on their PB (Personal Best) journey from short distances to the ultramarathons to achieve something they had not achieved before; be it a new distance or an improved time. Members have diversified into in track, cross country, adventure racing, trail running, rogaining, orienteering and triathlons.

The club needed to be a trend setter, always looking to the future by having their finger on the pulse in the running environment by identifying new trends and opportunities to consistently be one step ahead of the "pack" and leading once again by example. This was important for the growth of the club and catering for all runners and their different interests and abilities.

You personally will have had a journey of making new like-minded lifetime friends and even partners e.g. Tony Fattorini, 6ft Track winner in 2007 & 2013, met Amanda Underwood at Striders, now married. I am sure that the family members of Striders too have enjoyed the journey of their loved ones as much as their runner have.

I will like to end off on a very personal note. Most importantly this journey for all of us would never have happened without the support, patience and input of Maureen, my wife of 49 years. Maureen and I sat down at the small kitchen table in 1980 in our Broughton Road, Artarmon unit and came up with green and white, a bold font on the front and back of the singlet, the STaR anacronym, a sleek cheetah and the names Blister, Stitch and Sydney Striders.

Maureen could have discouraged my Striders obsession. Yet she showed the ultimate support. For the first few years, Maureen typed hand written Blister articles and sewed the club running shorts and singlets, even while pregnant. A number of you from the 80's would have run in Maureen's hand-made gear.

The green and white would allow us to be uniquely identified as one of a kind when competing and to solicit "Go Striders" from competitors and spectators alike.

"Go Striders" for another 40 years.

#Go Strider!

Photo credit: Bushy Parkrun event report #927

Greg Carroll

Bushy Parkrun event #927 saw Strider, Greg Carroll find himself featured in their event report. Greg was in England earlier this year to run the London Marathon! You can read the event report here.

Ultra-Trail Kosciuszko by UTMB

Photo credit: Simon Maxwell

Congratulations to those Striders who completed the 100, 50 or 27km Ultra Trail Kosciuszko including Simon Maxwell, Kay Furguson, Lesley Mason, Pierre - Yves Souesme, Deborah Andersson and Morena Burn.

A special shout out to Pierre - Yves Souesme who came 11th overall and completed the 100km in 12:46:20!

David Criniti

In October, the Athletics Australia awarded the 2023 Peter Norman Humanitarian Award to David in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the community through his not-for-profit organisation, The Run Beyond Project.
Presented each year on Peter Norman Day by Athletics Australia, the Award honours the famed Australian sprinter, widely known for his legacy as an athlete and advocate for human rights. Congratulations, David!
Read the full story here

Photo credit: Athletics NSW as linked on this page

Coast to Kosci 2022

By Zed Zlotnick

Photo(1&2) credit: Zed Zlotnick

Driving back from Jindabyne the day after, my wife, Joanne, asked me "Is this the pinnacle of your life?"

I had to think carefully here, what with birth of children, legal commitment to spouses, and the like coming into the mix.

I answered "Well of course there are several pinnacles, one can have many pinnacles, and pinnacles for different things. Lots of pinnacles in one's life."

"A little too many pinnacles in that sentence", I heard her mumble.

It is obviously right up there right now. I felt a strange clarity of thought that I haven't quite worked out yet, but hopefully time will throw up other insights. Otherwise, what a waste of time.

The immediate most satisfying outcome is that my fundraising campaign, that was the idea of Joanne and a friend, raised close to $8,000.

The overwhelming generosity of over 100

Photo above: At the summit, I was smiling inside, promise... (photo left - start of race) Credit to Zed Zlotnick.

people who donated, mates, family, strangers, colleagues, ex-colleagues, some people doing it tough themselves, was a huge accountability motivator.

There were a few dark moments. Like at about 200km or so, at a place called Dainer's Gap, when I was cramping so badly that I thought this is the end of my race. I was galvanised by my accountability to the donors for the trust they put in me.

I simply did not want to be the person responsible for that massive collective sigh of disappointment if I didn't finish.

My madcap pursuit has been made so much more meaningful in the world rather than just another medal to be

stashed in the shoe box and to be tossed away by my family with some relief after I die.

Running on the face of it is a solitary pursuit. It is, if all you had to do was just run from one place to another, but it is so much more than that.

Last year I had the privilege to crew for Jane Trumper on her tenth journey across the Bundian Way, the indigenous name for what we call Coast to Kosci. And this confirmed for me that running is a team sport. At any level it relies on race directors, organisation, logistics, volunteers, aid stations, first aid, moral supporters, coaches, massive patience and indulgence from family, and friends.

The ethos of the people who put on the Coast to Kosciusko Ultramarathon is: HUMILITY, RESILIENCE and COMMUNITY.

Photo below: The medal is quite small, but the Akubra is pretty sick merch. Photo credit Zed Zlotnick

If these people were entrusted to run the country like they organise a race we'd all be in a much better place.

The entire event is steeped in mindfulness and respect and care.

So in 2021, after crewing for Jane, witnessing the race up close, watching the determination of the participants over 46 hours of mad roads and hills, and seeing in action all the values that co-race director, Greg Wallace, wanted the event to represent: the need to respect and hold in awe the ancient history of the trail, to commit to supporting others, to commit to supporting the communities through which we run, and to summon strength to break through pain because we have the privilege of ability to participate, I knew with absolute certainty that I wanted to run this damn thing.

That's where things get tricky. Not every schmuck who has run a marathon gets one of the lucky 50 places on offer each year. As with any event like this there are qualifying criteria.

They are rightly rigorous. It is not a trivial distance, the terrain is challenging, there is some serious elevation, and the weather is unpredictable.

The event website is sprinkled with words like 'over-subscribed' and 'massive interest'. To be one of the chosen few is not easy. By the end of the year the certainty that I wanted to enter had weakened and I accepted that I would go back as crew or volunteer in 2022, because if nothing else it is one of the coolest places to be over that weekend.

Then one Sunday in July after finishing a fairly modest distance in a track ultra, one where there are no qualifying criteria, just rock up and see how many laps of an oval you can do in 48 hours, a certain Simone Hayes who I had met in Jindabyne in 2021, said to me, “See you at Coast to Kosci.”

I scoffed and said “I will never qualify.”

She said “Mate, throw your hat in the ring, you never know.”

And that sent me back to the website, where I stumbled across the words “directors’ discretion” and “persuade us so we can’t say no.”

The next few days I spent desperately trying to come up with sufficient motivation to persuade the Race Directors that a below average back of the packer, with a little bit of pedigree and grit might be worth a punt.

I wrote an essay that accompanied the formal application and as I pressed send I imagined Mick Campbell, an aussie scotsman with the biggest heart and a sharp wit, saying to his co-race director, Greg “Look at this wee fella, Zlotnick. He seems to think this is a creative writing competition, not a serious athletic endeavour.”

I shat myself a few weeks later when I got the call “We are pleased to invite you.”

Suddenly it was on.

And so began the fine tuning of my haphazard run/walk routine to be ready to stand on the beach at Twofold Bay in December.

Background photo credit: Zed Zlotnick

It turns out I was ready to toe the line and, as it transpired 3 turns of the 24-hour clock later, to scrape home a finish.

First thanks go to Simone Hayes who I asked to coach me. She is one of the most formidable women I have met.

She scares me in a nice way.

She has superb running pedigree, as a participant and as a volunteer in the running community. She is actually just a superb human being.

Having Simone introduce some science and balance and rigour and discipline into what passed for my previous training was a real eye-opener.

She was a quiet and subtly strict motivator.

A man-manager and psychologist par excellence.

She has an eye for detail and monitored me carefully, adapting my training as I responded to the two weekly programme she would send me.

I looked forward to her Monday emails to see what surprises she had in store for me for the next block.

She taught me to trust the process in the physical training; and at the same time she got right into my head to allay doubt and uncertainty and utterly believe that I can do this.

Absurd as this may sound, she made the hard training fun.

I left the start line repeating Simone’s

mantra to me over and over "Patience, accept the discomfort, all day pace." It worked.

Then a big shout out to the other Simone, the Bordin version. My crew chief who without hesitation (maybe there was a little) jumped in and accepted my invitation to help.

Simone B is a member of the BUMS marathon crew, a semi-formal-hodge-podge collection of mates who like to run a bit and raise some money for charity at the same time. We've been doing this for years and like the Sydney Swans we have a 'no-dickheads rule'. This was an easy pool to look into for help. Simone is also an accomplished runner, much better than me, and that was important.

Like Simone H, Simone B can also be scary.

She is a savvy motivator and when I was losing sight of Simone H's admonition to accept the discomfort and wanting to give up, she leaned in and whispered to me: "The only reason you'll quit this race is if you are lying in a pool of blood."

I knew she meant that it would be her actions that would result in the pool-of-blood scenario. Seemed easier to carry on than deal with another motivational tit-bit from Simone B.

She also very generously allowed me two naps of 5 minutes and 6 minutes respectively. And carved steps in the snow-turned-to-ice drifts we had to traverse to summit Mt Kosciusko.

If not for her, I would not have finished. Simple.

My other two crew members, unsurprisingly, also are BUMS members.

Ben Munro, quietly spoken, consistent marathoner, never panics. He tucked in behind me for over 66km, in some shitty cold weather and some heat and some grim times. On virtually no sleep. Gently nudging me along without having to say anything. Although he did say "Just keep moving mate" quite a lot. Good advice as it turns out.

And then Lindsay Hamilton, another Aussie Scot, BUMS member, a vet, also unhesitatingly accepted the invitation. Lindsay is a good runner, like age group winner good.

She was relentlessly merry even in the darkest hours. She buoyed me along up some massive climbs, rammed horse size salt tablets in my mouth every 40 minutes and shoved Tim Tams and Lindt Balls into my mouth with medical precision. I guess if your runner is becoming a sook, treat him like a horse. Special thanks to Lindsay who also had to juggle tricky work commitments to get to join us.

No thanks for the dry calf massage at Dainer's Gap.

Photo below: Simone Bordin, Ben Munro, Lindsay Hamilton & Thommo & Small. Photo credit to Zed Zlotnick.

My crew looked after me with grace, patience, and humour. Surround yourself with people who are better than you, it works. There's a whole bunch of people who inspired me and supported me and put faith in me.

Jane Trumper and Greg Thomson, especially on course. Jane with the "stop your fucking whinging and keep moving" approach, and Thommo more with the gentle rubbing of the back she'll be right mate approach. Both nurses, go figure.

Greg Finlay, not just the Lindt man (he supplies boxes of chocs to everyone), a great companion on long walks when I was injured and who planted the seed to try and give this race a crack when we crewed last year. I hope I can return the favour one day.

Kevin "Brick" Heaton, Coast to Kosci legend for advice and guidance and politely saying: "There are no stupid questions."

Lisa Mintz, an Unreasonable East 200 Miler finisher, who provided so much encouragement and support in the days before the race. But more importantly providing constant reassurance to Joanne that I would be ok.

Phil Kennedy, old football mate, Comrades companion, and solid citizen, thanks for backing me.

That brings family. At the prize-giving, Greg Wallace made special mention of them waiting in the cold at Charlotte Pass in the wee hours of Sunday.

Pretty cool to emerge from a dark Summit Path to a finish line to see my family and their partners waiting behind the finish line. Thanks for believing in this old boomer, you make me feel cool. My sisters, for their support across the ocean.

Finally, my wife, Joanne. My number one supporter. Marketing manager of the fundraiser. The one who pushes me to see the bigger picture and to seek meaning in the world from the things that you do… "It's not just about you Zed."

Thank you for squashing that anxiety about me dying on a mountain and backing me to do this. This from someone who unhesitatingly will open water swim in some freezing Dutch North Sea shipping lane, and risk blue bottles and maybe sharks in her daily swims. We each have our own madness, I guess.

Wilfred Lax, an old running mate of mine who said of my stupid hip "Doctors are not always right."

You were right.

Ellis Janks, physio magician, who healed me, guided me, taught me to stretch, and quietly said, in his own way "This is possible."

Finally, finally. Greg, Mick, Julie, Hannah, Nathan and all the volunteers of team Coast to Kosci who made this one of the most memorable weekends of my life. Thank you for taking a punt on this smoky, I am so glad I repaid the faith.

30in30

By John Kaparelis

I enjoy being a volunteer with the Sydney Striders, and I love pacing to help other runners to achieve their marathon goal finishing times. In September 2022, I participated in the magnetic 30 in 30. It was Australia's first 30 Marathons in 30 Days, 1,265.85 kilometers in Townsville, Queensland from 1st September to 30th September 2022.

I can describe the event as *"A great learning experience, both a personal challenge and a fundraiser for Cerebral Palsy Education Centre (CPEC) which provides world leading programs to help children, young adults and families. I am also a member of the Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club (CPEC) and this is one of the main charities they support too. I was proud to wear my Sydney Striders running singlet, it created a lot of interest from local Townsville residents wanting to know more about the club. All 30 marathons went well. The finishing times were within minutes of each other".*

Apart from the scenic run along the Strand with the beach views, the most pleasurable part of the 30 Marathons in 30 Days was that I consumed 1,265 marshmallows, this is 1 marshmallow for every kilometer of the full 1,265km.

Photo below credit to John Kaparelis.

Date	Marathon Number	Time
30/9/2022	#30	4:43:13
29/9/2022	#29	4:47:56
28/9/2022	#28	4:51:57
27/9/2022	#27	4:55:10
26/9/2022	#26	4:51:04
25/9/2022	#25	4:56:28
24/9/2022	#24	4:56:20
23/9/2022	#23	4:55:01
22/9/2022	#22	4:55:35
21/9/2022	#21	4:54:31
20/9/2022	#20	4:56:46
19/9/2022	#19	4:53:58
18/9/2022	#18	4:53:27
17/9/2022	#17	4:55:15
16/9/2022	#16	4:56:01
15/9/2022	#15	4:56:39
14/9/2022	#14	4:56:14
13/9/2022	#13	4:54:02
12/9/2022	#12	4:57:25
11/9/2022	#11	4:53:48
10/9/2022	#10	4:57:19
9/9/2022	#9	5:05:31
8/9/2022	#8	4:55:39
7/9/2022	#7	4:50:24
6/9/2022	#6	4:52:20
5/9/2022	#5	4:54:54
4/9/2022	#4	4:52:23
3/9/2022	#3	4:53:44
2/9/2022	#2	4:53:25
1/9/2022	#1	4:50:06

Run for the Voice

By David Beenie

It all started with a Facebook message from Tanya Carroll.

Pat Farmer was looking for runners to help in a relay across the top end from Broome to Townsville. There was the Broome to Darwin leg or the Darwin to Townsville legs on offer. Given my UTMB race was coming up I chose the first section. I only had 10 days to prepare for the 1,800 km journey into the unknown.

I was sent a short list of things to bring by Pat's wife, Tania. As usual I overpacked and included items such as a rain jacket, thermal tops, gloves that in the end weren't needed. The flight to Broome was via Perth were I met Jackson and Ming, 2 of the other team members. Ming is part of Pat's media crew but as I found out later a very accomplished runner. Jackson is a PT and former NRL up and comer who had to quit after some serious concussions.

We arrived in Broome to be collected by Josh Cordoba another former NRL player who had stints at Parramatta, Cronulla and the London Broncos. It was a short drive to local residence which happened to be Senator Pat Dodson's Broome residence, we were hosted by his grandson, Snowy who had prepared dinner that included a stir fry of Barramundi he had caught earlier in the day. Pat arrived for dinner and we sat around an open fire where Pat explained the significance of The Voice referendum and his involvement to set up his 'Run for the Voice' 14,400km run around Australia to help promote the Yes campaign.

Photo Credit: David Beenie

He showed us the message stick that the relay runners would carry from Broome to Townsville to fast track his top end journey. Our tents were set up and it was off to bed as we had a 4:30am wake up call.

From Broome it was 13 days of 4:30 am starts, long hot days in the sun with the most stunning outback scenery along the way. Every day started with Pat running the first 5km before handing off the message stick to either Jackson or myself to run the next stint.

I had a new Hoka Challengers to get me started and ran a very respectable sub 25 minute 5km leg on my first carry. It would be my only sub 25 minute leg of the 2 weeks! As the sun rose and with each carrying the message stick it became evident of the enormity of this challenge both physically and mentally.

As the temperature rose into the 30's I started to question my place in the squad and that old imposter syndrome crept in. After all, I was on a team with Australia's greatest ultra runner, Pat Farmer, a 29 year old former NRL player, a 24 year old young gun and one of Australia's best soft sand marathon runners. To add to this, I'm a trail runner and every step I was to take was on Australia's National Highway.

My thoughts of sitting around a campfire discussing the day's events and plans for the next day were quickly extinguished with Pat advising we'd be off and running again at 4:30am. It was quick dinner prepared by Pat's sister Annette and off to the tent for 7pm shut eye. Whilst not an avid or regular camper, tent life quickly became bearable and sleeping underneath the stars was enjoyable.

Pat's dedication to The Voice referendum was paramount, this was not a run to break records but raise awareness. With no government funding, Pat was also raising funds on the Run to keep his 6 month journey alive. Whether it was the local community radio station, the ABC TV crew following along, the Footy Show or a live cross to Sky News, Pat somehow kept a positive attitude throughout the long 15 hour days. Whilst Nedd Brockmann had polarised the running community with his 3,500km run across the continent, Pat was running the same distance per day to cover 14,400km over 6 months.

To help me keep on track, each day I considered the relay run as my job, I was a contractor that needed to carry the message stick every hour or so for 5km and pass to the next contractor to play his part in getting a little further down the road. At the end of each day the group of contractors had traveled between 120km and 160km towards the final destination.

On the second day I decided it was best to 'run to feel' rather than keep up an unsustainable pace, my heart rate was hitting 160 bpm and I just couldn't sustain that high level. It was amazing to find that running at a slightly slower pace my heart rate dropped into the 130 range and each 5km leg seemed effortless (until temps reached over 30 degrees). Keeping up a steady pace was easy given the straight, flat road we were running on.

Background photo Credit: David Beenie

The next 12 days were like Groundhog Day.

No rest for the team to fast track Pat across the top end to get him to Uluru before the Referendum vote.

Every day was mapped out in advance to fit in media commitments and town hall meeting with local indigenous communities.

Having not previously run in these conditions it was the cars, caravans and trucks that were the main concerns. Road trains carrying fuel and goods seemed to be 70-80 metres long, whilst they would pass in seconds you could feel their slipstream for 30 seconds immediately slowing my running pace and having to again build up momentum.

Before I knew it we were on the outskirts of Darwin and running the last 5km to the convention centre with Chief Minister Natasha Fyles, herself a regular Park Runner.

It was time to pack up and return to Sydney after 2 weeks of a life changing experience. I did catch up with Pat again as he ran through Sydney but by that time it had become evident that his Run for the Voice was in vein. The tide had turned and it was looking like the No campaign was going to get over the line. There were a number of take aways for me from running with Pat. Firstly, if you believe strongly enough in a cause then don't let anything get in your way to follow your convictions. Secondly, that your body can adapt to most types of conditions and that it becomes more a mind over matter when taking on multi day events. Finally, Pat Farmer is a champion runner and more importantly a champion person.

Thank you Sydney Striders for the opportunity to spend 2 wonderful weeks with Pat Farmer, it was a privilege and honour to play a small part in the 'Run for the Voice'.

Photo Credit: David Beenie

Comrades Marathon

By Chris Truscott

Disclaimer: The following article appears in the Rejoov Runners blog and appears verbatim here in the interests of wider readership.

You can read the entire article here.

I have been a member of Sydney Striders for going on 30yrs. Many newer members would have no idea who I am but there was a time I was a very active member. Alongside brother Pete, we attended every STaR and we were both on the committee for a while. My role was the social stuff and the awards dinners. At these awards nights, we would invite a guest speaker to attend and one year, some founding members suggested they could get Bruce Fordyce to accept. Not really knowing who that was, I was certainly guided by their advice about a man that had become synonymous with an event called the Comrades Marathon in South Africa.

It didn't take too long to study up about this 'marathon'. First thing that jumped out was that it wasn't a marathon but rather an ultra marathon and it exceeded twice the distance of the regular marathon. In the months leading up to the awards night I came to understand the many overarching facts about the event. Starting and finishing between the two cities of Pietermaritzburg and Durban, changing each year which way you ran it. One was an UP run and the other obviously DOWN. And so by the time I met Bruce, ate dinner with him and watched as he took to the stage to commence his talk, I pretty much had what I thought was a great understanding about this event....

Photo credit: to Chris Truscott as per linked article on this page

I sit here a week later gazing out over Amakhala Game Reserve on the East Cape still reflecting on my new understanding of the Comrades marathon. Sure, this has been a bucket list race for me since hearing of Bruce's epic feats of conquering the event throughout the entirety of the 80's (did I mention that he won it nine times - eight of those consecutively).

Of course I knew the essentials. Roughly 88/89 or 90km depending on exact start / finish locations, a few uphills on the way down but ultimately quicker right? It's downhill.
And sitting here, I am roughly 20yrs down the track and have realised my dream of completing the Comrades marathon finally. What transpires next is an account of my day out last week and my new understanding of this iconic South African event.

Logistically, it's just too hard. So far away, where to stay, how to get around, we'll get mugged for sure, what happens with our 11yr old Jaden as Greta and I run this thing. Is it worth the effort? These were real thoughts and conversations. Luckily we were encouraged to contact Lance, the owner of a company called Runcation who are the experts in all things associated with SA running events and travel logistics. Our previous thoughts and concerns evaporated in the months leading into our trip as Lance assured us of the planning, and so as the alarm sounded at 1:45am on Sunday morning the 11th June, the three of us jumped out of bed ready to meet Lance, our good Rejoov mate Nadya Caminer, and the other Runcation crew downstairs for our 2:30am departure to Pietermaritzburg. And low & behold, who should we bump into in the foyer but none other than Bruce Fordyce. I casually strode up to him and announced that I was a Sydney Strider and it was his fault that I was standing here. He was generous with his time and after a few pics, we set off.

Lance made sure we were there in time that's for sure. We drove the 88km and pulled up without delay into a servo 500m down the road from the start banner and the place looked rather quiet. I suppose being there 2hrs in advance will do that but we had coffee, a toilet and a warm van to wait out the 5-6 degree clear conditions. Jaden was busily messaging his mates back in Sydney and well prepared for a big day ahead watching Mum & Dad do their thing. And so the time came to make the short walk up to our starting areas where we bumped into fellow locals Pat McNamara (Patty Mac), Kirsten Coggins and Charles Buxton. The vibe in the A group area was quite relaxed until right up to 15-20mins before the 5.30am starting time when everything suddenly became real and the countdown was on.
There is a traditional set of sounds and songs that occur before Comrades commences. The South African National Anthem is played then a very inspiring African song called Shosholoza which was fantastic to hear with the crowd chanting along. But then the PA system unfortunately starting cracking up so Chariots of Fire was hit and miss, the 2 x Rooster crowing tradition was stagnant but the starting canon unmistakable - we were off!

My personal lead up to this event was quite straight forward and consistent. Weekly mileage of between 90 - 120km, a few 50-60km long runs building in some hills around Centennial Park but otherwise, training as usual. I was told repeatedly that the Comrades down is brutal on the quads, tough on the legs, it disables most who go out too fast, be careful, watch out, don't be too confident and so on and so on. In fact of all my years of running, my expectations leading into an event have never been more managed than with this one. Even as I touched down, and spending the first week with both Lance & also Nadya from Rejoov who was running her back to back, the pre race hype and strategy continued. By race day I wasn't sure whether I was totally psyched up or out! Luckily a casual 5km Parkrun out front of our hotel in Durban the day before with just 1200 others helped get me even more geared up for it.

My plan was originally 4:40 pace but because of all the conversations and course study I had done, I revised this to 4:50's. The goal was to enjoy most if not all of it and finish well. A sub 7hr 30min and silver medal would be a bonus if I was on for it. Oh, and to make sure that I took out line honours in the Truscott household - becoming harder these days with the longer events. Unfortunately Greta ate something dodgy early in the week which played havoc right up to the race and as such she had to contend with loading up to have enough energy & fluids whilst still taking antibiotics even on race day.

What I didn't realise was that she had decided or was caught up in the B back starting pace, to head out at a faster per km clip than me. So when I pulled off for a wee at roughly 8km, she snuck by - both of us oblivious to one another. She was now in front as the first tiny signs of daylight broke. Patty Mac soon slipped ahead of me also. I was quite proud of myself with the restraint I was showing. 4:50's, that's it. I do that, I break 7:30. Simple. Eat, drink and cruise along. Problem was, I was too hydrated and had to stop again for a wee.
I ran with gloves on, arm sleeve warmers & thermal top careful not to throw them away after hearing that the big downhill at Polly Shorts tends to end with a chilly section. This downhill went for quite a while and the first thing that was starting to strike me was that these hills really were quite a lot more pronounced gradient wise than people had made out from my many many attempts to find out pre race. Even the first few kms included a steady 1.5km climb similar to our own Paddo Hill in Centennial Park.
The sun arrived and started slowly warming my upper body (my legs are always ok) as I continued to look around and soak up the atmosphere that was gradually building alongside us with locals making their way out of their homes.

Hard to believe that 20,000 line up for this 88km run but it's mind-boggling to see the level of support and almost cult-like status this run has on the population both local and across the country.
Not a single South African is oblivious to Comrades.

I wanted to give Jaden and Lance the heads up ahead of the first 'seconding' support station (our very own area and one of three en route). Jaden's face came up on my phone and I was immediately relieved, happy and excited to see him and a lot more confident that everything was going to be ok and he was in good hands. "I'll be there in 4-5km bud". Lance then chimed in that Greta was 400m ahead of me. Too many people ahead to spot her but I was certain that it was a tracker mistake. She's way back surely.
Nope. She was in front but It was also then that she decided to have her own pit stop and I ran past not seeing her in a complete reversal of what had occurred just 90mins earlier. Through the 29.5km station giving Jaden a hug to the bewildered faces of those wondering how Greta and I were avoiding each other so easily. We never once discussed running it together. We like our own independence with events and this experience was certainly going to be unique to us both.

"See ya bud. Say hi to mum if she turns up". And I was off again and past the highest point of the course at Umlaas Rd where it flattens out a bit across Camperdown, Cato Ridge & Harrison flats, before we hit the second of the 'Big 5 hills' - Inchanga, a 3km climb of similar gradient to our own Loch Ave in Centennial Park. We then started descending into Drummond and the halfway mark. I was still very mindful of preserving my quads for later in the run so I continued to take this very easy and it was great to be feeling so good through the crucial halfway mark that signifies distance left being shorter than distance covered (yep it's an obvious observation I know but one I have always looked forward to in these ultras).

I was fortunate to join a small pack of locals from the Pirates running club in J'Berg who were aiming for a silver medal after several previous attempts and as such were very helpful in explaining the course ahead, in plain language. Yep of course they asked if I needed a small piece of yellow sandpaper to help me get to the finish but as the laughter died down, advised me to keep exercising the same restraint for a little while longer. The main guy who broke off the front, Mark, had just run a 2:50 marathon and was of similar age so I was happy to cruise along with him snapping pics & videos along the way. Believe me, there's times when a 7km training run around Malabar feels hard. So to have a day like this unfolding was almost divine intervention. But I was not counting those chickens just yet as I have always sunk into a bad energy deficit / hole in pretty much all my ultras over 50km. I was still nervous about this even as I passed that same mark feeling great. I am certainly now a massive advocate of munching away on small baked or roasted potatoes. These were available the whole way and it just worked. I had practiced in my longer runs so the stomach was fine and along with the Tailwind and aid station hydration, I was in control.

Those 6km from Drummond are broken into three hills, the third being Botha's Hill and the next seconding station which was good timing. We passed Arthur's Seat & the wall that houses thousands of participant names who have and are still running every year. We then passed the very loud and supportive Kernsey College which gave me a further uplift. I was super impressed with the community support so far and thought about our own Sydney marathon vying for major status. If we had this support along the route, it would be a foregone conclusion to be awarded the major tag.
Onwards I ran, with 10km of mostly uninterrupted downhill running into Pinetown. I was still averaging around 4:45-4:50 so even at 60km after showing so much restraint, I still held back from kicking it down.

Down through Hillcrest, Kloof and the much talked about steep 3km Fields downhill into Pinetown. Only two more climbs to come (apparently). First of these is Cowies Hill. Can't remember how far this was. I was so used to running up by then I didn't really care anymore that we were running a DOWN year. Next was the 45th cutting uphill after which signalled we had less than 10km to go. By this stage, I had already started to wind the pace up. Approx 16km out I decided to start my fast finish gradually bringing the pace down to mid 4:30's as a start and as I saw the 10k to go sign, I wondered if I could run a sub 40min (yep I know how I sound but stuff it, I've had so many shockers, I need to boast a little about this one). The last 10km are not overly aesthetically appealing with a lot of it on a freeway but it didn't matter, I counted down the kms and at the 5km to go marker, I spotted Patty Mac in the distance.

His bright yellow Australia singlet and long locks flapping in the freeway breeze was unmistakable. It was all I needed to close this run out so I took flight and bowled down the wide concrete expanse after him but also I just wanted a beer. And of course there were still uphills right to the end. A sharp incline onto said freeway, a longer gradual rise soon after and even with 2km to go there was another. That bloke back at the 45th cutting that said "this is it mate - no more hills" was clearly smoking the good stuff. But nothing was going to hold me back now I had sight of Kingsmead cricket stadium and complete confidence in the closing few kms.

I felt like my last km was done in 3:30 but it was just on 4min pace, nonetheless I cantered into the stadium after catching and pulling away just enough from Pat with approx 2km to go. The atmosphere inside was just as I imagined and actually as per the remainder of the 88km, electric. Lance had Jaden ready and waiting on the inside fence for me to high 5 which sealed the amazing experience and just 200m around the grass later, I crossed in 7:05:19 and a silver medal. I was elated to achieved the two main objectives. Run well and cross under 7:30hr if the first was happening. Nailed both and so now the celebrations could begin.

Jaden was there to greet me the little champion. He really does lift to a new level with these long days of supporting us and for that, he could ask me to buy him anything for the rest of the trip. I had time for a quick physio rub, grabbed a beer and headed to the same spot on the fence just in time for us to see Greta also streaming around the finish lap. She had absolutely smashed it considering the stomach bug that took her out all week. 7hrs 44mins with that to deal with was incredible and from my perspective, the run of the day from our camp. Tough to award when you have Patty Mac on debut at 7:06, Nadya who completed her back to back with an unbelievable 2hr PB over last year of 9:09, then Kirsten and Charles also nailing their debut. We also had a few more in our group who were making there way through thereafter. Hein in just on 10hrs and Dave, Michael and Lee who were not far after that. It was now certainly party time all round. No one was disappointed and I think Lance now had a new appreciation for us newbies from just across the 'other ditch'. We came in prepared and executed accordingly. Definitely not to say if I am ever to go back, I would treat the race with any less respect. It is the respect that gets you to the end in one piece and it's the training, determination and a little bit of luck coupled with seamless organisation and logistics supporting you that will get you a PB there.

And so there you have it. We drank a few beers in the sun, we celebrated the next day with a long lunch, we parted ways with mates for the next exciting destinations on our Sth African itinerary and yes we wore our newly acquired medals all day the next day.

Would I recommend that you do Comrades? It depends on where you're at with your running journey and what elements haven't been achieved yet. In the world of ultra running, it certainly is a pinnacle event to tick off and beyond that, if you really want to be picked up, swept along and dumped at the finish by the most amazing human tidal wave of support to be experienced, then start the planning now.
I may just be there with you.....

Chris and Greta Truscott provide coaching for runners seeking to fulfil goals on the road, track, trail and cross country. Details at: https://rejoovrunners.com.au/

2023 - That's a wrap

By David Criniti

Each time I commence a Run Beyond update for the Striders, it's usually...frustratingly late for the editors who'd asked for it weeks (if not more) earlier...but also, with a heart filled with gratitude.

I'm going to try and justify the lateness with the excuse that we're coming off the biggest weekend in Run Beyond's history as I write, which involved a massive 5 interstate school excursions - unforgettable experiences for all our students, which is what we aim to achieve. We're working with kids who lack opportunities, and unforgettable is definitely what we're aiming for.

Two of those five schools were new schools to the program. South Grafton High School and Woolgoolga High School made the trip north to Queensland for the GC50's 12km event on Saturday, Dec 2. Despite the late afternoon start time at 4:45pm, the students set off with the mercury still well over 30degrees, which added to the difficulty but also their sense of pride and accomplishment. As one of the South Grafton girls noted, "having resilience gets you anywhere."

These are, of course, the learnings for which we strive. The idea behind Run Beyond is to give these students the platform for achievement of significant goals in order to build their confidence to continue to set and achieve goals beyond the finish line and beyond the field of running. Comments such as the above, and, from another South Grafton student, "I've learnt to have confidence in myself and to have faith in myself," speak volumes about our impact.

As of course do the comments of teachers. Sarah Blackman, who headed the South Grafton cohort, exclaimed "Having just facilitated this program (at) South Grafton High School I have seen the awesome impact it has on young people in need and it holds a special place in my heart.

It really was an unforgettable experience. Thank you for welcoming us into the project and I look forward to doing it all again next year!"

This is of course a sentiment commonly heard, and similar comments come through from teachers all the time, including those involved from the other interstate excursions that weekend. While South Grafton and Woolgoolga headed north, students and teachers from Nambucca Heads, Northlakes High School on the central coast, and Gulgong High School, made the journey south to the On Track Night's Community 5k in Victoria.

This was a bonus reward trip for some of our star graduates, funded by our friends at On running. A hastily organised event, On approached us in early November, offering the opportunity for graduates from these three schools to attend. To have had teachers reorganising schedules in order to give up an additional weekend involving being away from their families and giving their own time, speaks further to the impact they're witnessing the program having on their students.

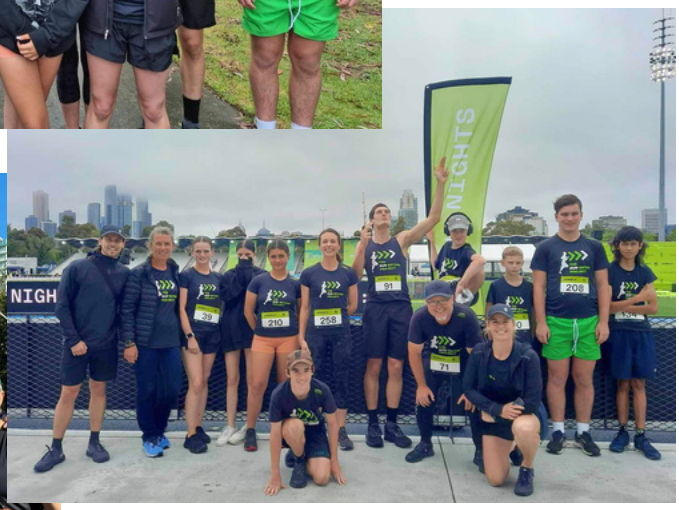
In total, we saw cohorts from 14 schools, as well as our supporter school *, Killarney Heights High School, graduate this year, bringing up our 340th graduate since the program's inception.

This is why, each time I write an article for the Blister, it's with that heart filled with gratitude. The Striders' support for Run Beyond has been integral to our existence. Without it, we would not have been able to finance our first cohort's trip to the Cadbury Hobart half marathon in 2016, and we would not have had a foundation from which to grow.

We're offering life-changing opportunities to some of our most marginalised young people from a growing number of schools from Vincentia to Darwin, and it would not have been possible without the support of our wonderful Striders community.

In 2024, we've got our 2023 cohorts asking to line up again, as well as a range from schools on our waitlist from western Sydney to a variety of rural areas throughout NSW and beyond. Thank you again, Striders for providing opportunities for these kids to belong, to taste achievement, to be provided an avenue for the building of confidence. And thank you for enriching our community by allowing a more diverse range of young faces to grace our start lines.

Photo credit (1,2 &3) on this page: to David Criniti



Why do we run?

By Kelsey Grant

I've often asked myself. At 5am on Sunday morning. Why do we run? I'm not fast. I'm at the back of the 20km pack. Why am I here?

We run for heading past Sydney Harbour and seeing the sun rise. For the stress release. For the time alone. For the feeling of being alive for another week. This last year has been incredibly tough for me.

I've had CoVid twice and both times, it's knocked me out for months of inability to run. Just no ability to take in enough air to run.

I've had multiple injuries recently. My achilles tendon, glute medius and ankle joint. These tendon injuries, they don't heal quickly. After a few steroid injections and many physio visits, here I am, once again hoping to rejoin the 10km group once my body can do it.

Why do we run...? We all need something. I run to feel alive for another week. This is my before/after photo. I'm sharing the story because the resilience is the hard part.

Good luck to you all.

Photo credit: to Kelsey Grant

My story is one of persistence, failure and injury. Why do we run?

HIIT Factor

By Dale Thompson

Why You Should Incorporate High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) Into Your Running Program As You Age.

I am sure that you have seen great improvements in performance by those runners who regularly engage in High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT). This is the type of training, in various iterations, offered by the Striders groups such as the TuesBay and ThursBay with Evnike Yardley and Monika Kiraly, Centennial Park Runners with Shaun Atchison, Tough Thursday with Gilbert Gaddi (and coaches) and Lane Cove with Dale's Demons.

HIIT is an exercise of high intensity where your heart rate is raised to a high level for a set distance followed by a short rest, and then a repeat of the exercise. HIIT can be running at high, relative speed followed by short resting recovery and repeat, or even body weight exercises such as rapid burpees followed by short rests and repeat. The choice of exercise mode profoundly affects the training adaptations. In experiments the HIIT running groups have shown significantly increased aerobic capacity, whereas the jump groups significantly increased leg strength. This underlines the importance of exercise modality in physical performance adaptations. (1)

As runners, our choice to do running HIIT has been shown to significantly increase our aerobic capacity. HIIT leads to better adaptation to high performance because of the repeated exposure to higher oxygen consumption and eccentric loading exercise. (2) This type of running training has been shown to have speed benefits in all runners from elite marathon runners such as Kipchoge to our own Strider, Max Wood.

In some instances the recovery section of HIIT is active such as a 60% effort jog recovery to increase the stress on the body, whereas in other session the recovery is passive. The use of passive recovery allows a higher volume of high-intensity work intervals to be accumulated, while active recovery may be recommended to maximize physiological stress during moderate-volume HIIT (3)

As we age there is an inevitable decrease in our VO2max which has direct impact on the speeds able to be produced. HIIT training has been shown to offer excellent benefits which reduce the decline in VO2max as we age. VO2max, which is what limits our maximal effort, running speed and endurance, is very receptive to HIIT. There are various measures of VO2max (4) which vary in their accuracy, but there is an absolute limit to each person's VO2max BUT we can train to run at a high percentage of this through HIIT. The especially positive effect of HIIT is that it reduces the age related decline in VO2max which has been shown to be as much as 46% per decade without regular training.

Not only is running training as a lifelong activity associated with reduction in the decline of VO2max, but the volume and intensity of this training has a direct relationship to the degree of decline. (5)

The matter of how frequently you should undertake HIIT may depend on where you are in your training cycle and how close you are to your racing event. Weekly HIIT sessions have been shown to increase running speeds, but more intensive sessions of up to 4 per week have had strong positive effects over less frequent sessions. (6) This would mean that rather than stay with a regular weekly HIIT session, you would change these to 4 HIIT sessions but reduce the volume. Thus, a session of 10 x 1k with 1 minute rest (which is the typical session at Dale's Demons) could become 2 sessions of 5 x 1k and as day 1 and 4 with shorter HIIT session such as 8 x 400m with 1 minute rest for day 2 and 200m, 200m 600m 600m with I minute rest x 3 for day 4. These work outs would be broken up by longer, and less intensive runs.

The process of HIIT is also an efficient use of time and distance. Focussing the intensity of training has been shown to result in improved performance with 17% less time in training. (7)

We are often lured into the idea that we can exchange one discipline of HIIT for another such as cycling in replacement of running but studies have shown that higher VO2 max values are achieved in running due to greater active muscle mass and mode specific adaptations in running which are not so with cycling.(8) A combination of running sessions, including one to two HIIT sessions per week plus more sessions with moderate- and low-intensity CT, is generally recommended to improve performance in recreational runners in a healthy manner. (9)

Extras we can add to our training regimes

As an adjunct to our running, we are often lured into performing various stretching regimes with the inducement that this will prevent injuries and/or improve our running efficiency. The evidence for injury prevention through stretching is equivocal at best and '... stretching protocols showed no effect either on physiological and metabolic responses or on running performance, following a few minutes of stretching exercises within the warm-up..' Ion various studies. 'In particular, the time to exhaustion at the power output corresponding to VO2max, which is considered to be a key factor in determining running performance is not significantly prolonged, and not significantly increased by pre-exercise stretching, confirming the ineffectiveness of short-duration pre-exercise stretching in improving running performance. (10)

In another study where a general jogging warm up was compared to a warm-up with dynamic stretches and results demonstrated that general warm up plus dynamic exercise intervention impaired immediate endurance performance of running.(11) Warm up prior to racing can be separated by a long wait as we wait to be corralled into starting positions. In these circumstances there is some evidence that a moderate intensity of warm up is optimal in the case of distances under 10k (12) but there is limited information for warm ups and longer runs.

On the other hand, stretching has been shown to improve our range of movement and plyometric stretching such as deep jumps have been shown to have a positive effect on running efficiency.

Strength training through weighted resistance a high intensity method can increase cardiovascular endurance and physiological function with a significant increase in muscle strength and is a very useful addition to a training program. (13). These programs emphasise a series of exercises which target different muscle groups They require a repetition of 8 maximal weight efforts where a ninth repletion is not possible and then return to this exercise twice in a session after targeting other muscle groups.These weight programs can form part of a HIIT program and can be included into a general gym session. Weight sessions are particularly important as we age and are subject to reduced muscle mass. A well trained exercise physiologist or physiotherapist should be consulted to tailor a weight program to specific needs and body structures.

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