

Ten Blistering Years.



Sydney Striders

1980 - 1990

Ten Blistering Years.

Some Club History,
extracts from ten years of the 'Blister',
the magazine of The Sydney Striders,
and some dubious humour.

Commemorating
the Tenth Anniversary
of the founding
of The Sydney Striders Road Runners Club.
1980-1990

CHAPTER ONE: SOME HISTORY Ten Years Ago Striders - The beginning Some Recollections The Committee A Lady Leaves the Striders Winners of the Maris Continuing Achievement President's Report Blood, Sweat and Tears Ten Years of Marathoning in Australia The Striders Hall - a brief history Ultra Beginnings Striders 10k Time Trial Sydney Striders 10k Series The Hot Seat Five Pictures of Sydney Striders The title of the 'Blister' "A day of big 60s..."	61 63 65 67 69 71 73 75 77 79 81 83 85 87 89 91 93 95 97 99 101 103 105 107 109 111 113 115 117 119 121 123 125 127 129 131 133 135 137 139 141 143 145 147 149 151 153 155 157 159 161 163 165 167 169 171 173 175 177 179 181 183 185 187 189 191 193 195 197 199 201 203 205 207 209 211 213 215 217 219 221 223 225 227 229 231 233 235 237 239 241 243 245 247 249 251 253 255 257 259 261 263 265 267 269 271 273 275 277 279 281 283 285 287 289 291 293 295 297 299 301 303 305 307 309 311 313 315 317 319 321 323 325 327 329 331 333 335 337 339 341 343 345 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Introduction.

THE FOURTH LINE OF THE INTRODUCTION to the first 'Blister' contained these words:

"... Sydney Striders must be a club that caters for all its members".

The issue was dated July 1980.

Now, ten years later, we Striders can all marvel at the foresight of Charles Coville and his cohorts who set the Club on a course that has not deviated to this day.

A reading of the second issue reveals the first use of the term "STaR" and, by then, 49 different runners had attended the nine STaRs held in the three months since the founding of the Club. Of all Strider activities over the years, there is no doubt that STaRs have been at the very core of the reasons for permanence and for growth of the Club.

Another and very vital ingredient of the Striders, has been the 'Blister'.

With the importance of the 'Blister' in mind, the publication committee thought that the Striders Tenth Anniversary year could be marked by a special publication which captured the feeling of the Striders, as expressed through the pages of past 'Blisters'.

Better historians than the publication committee could compile a wonderful ten year history of the growth of distance running in Australia, based on the contents of our magazine. They could also chart the successful progression of literally hundreds of runners, who far exceeded the dreams which they may have entertained, before embarking on serious running as a sport and a pastime.

This book then, is a combination of a little history, articles which show what interested Striders during the ten years, some of the Club milestones and, not least, some glimpses of Strider humour....

All in all, a slice of the Striders during the first ten years.

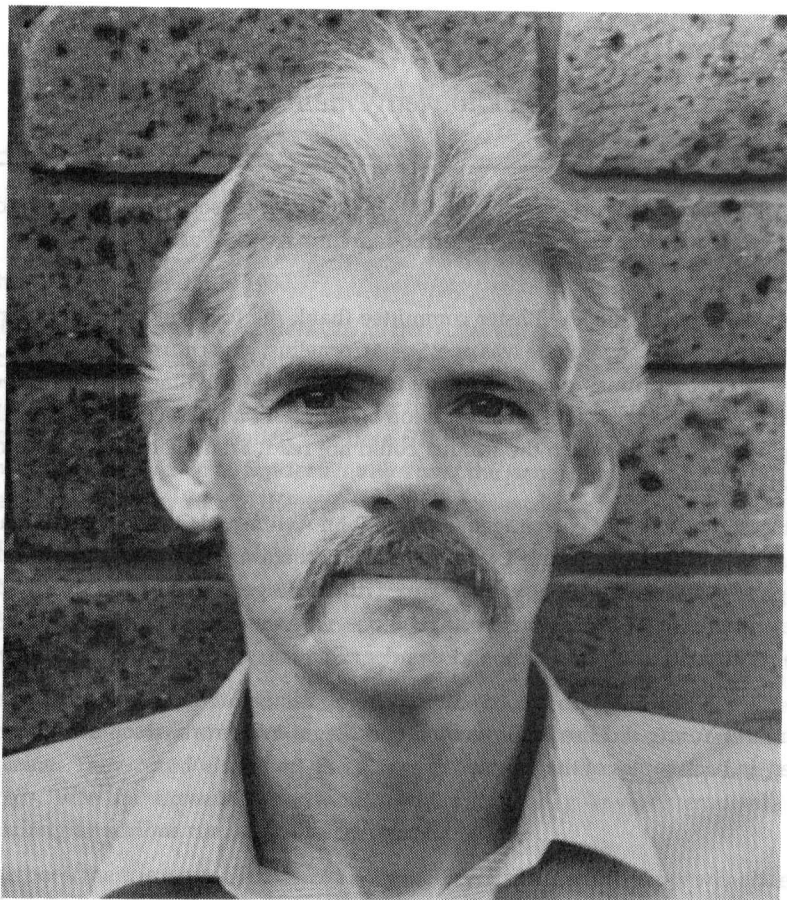
Acknowledgements.

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN LONG DELAYED, which is the fault of only myself. However, behind the scenes there were associates who provided information, articles, guidance and encouragement.

In no particular order the Blister committee thank the following: Nobby Young, a great whip-cracker if ever there was one; Steve Cornelius, who churned out several long articles of uncompromising accuracy only to find that the deadline has kept receding ever since; Bill Flanagan, for his contribution on the Half Marathon, Tina Campbell, for typing several articles which the scanner could not read, Brian Tailford for printing to the usual tight deadline.

Not least, I had a lot of encouragement from John Ayliffe and Owen Denmeade as co-producers of this book. To those who have found themselves in print again after the passage of years, we trust that you can cope with old experiences being unearthed, for the benefit of newer Striders and for anyone else, who someday may want to look back at the Striders through this book and wonder what sort of genie Charles Coville and Dave Blackall let out of the bottle.

Margaret Young did the proof-reading and diagnosed errors which have lain long hidden in back copies of the 'Blister'.



Charles Coville

"It would be impossible to overstate Charles Coville's contribution to the Club in those early years. In many things, he *was* the Club. Without him, the Club simply would not exist today". DAVE BLACKHALL, 1990.

CHAPTER ONE: SOME HISTORY.

"... Sydney Striders must be a club that caters for all its members..."

THIS CHAPTER HAS BEEN ORGANISED TO GIVE A GENERAL VIEW of some of the historical events of the Club over the ten years, starting with the beginnings as described by Charles Coville, who, with Dave Blackall, could reasonably be described as a founder.

There will no doubt be disputes amongst older members as to what is 'historical' and what is not. To side-step this issue, the following contributions focus on those activities for which the Striders can claim to have had enduring success, or to have had a significant impact on many members, for example, the growth of interest in ultras and in the 10k series.

The Presidents of the Striders are a rare breed. There have only been four in the Club's ten year history and they have all left their mark. Our Presidents have all been working ones and they are recognised in a contribution by the current President, Nobby Young. Because of his extreme self-effacement, the true contribution of Nobby will have to wait until a later commemorative book.

The Comrades Marathon, run each year between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, holds a special fascination for all serious distance athletes. A race with a very long history and one which has produced a large number of really legendary ultra-runners, the Comrades is one of the undercurrents of Striders culture. This is clearly due to the influence of South Africans in the formation of the Club and their continuing strong presence in the Club today. The Striders' affinity with the Comrades over the years is recognised by the inclusion of a 'Blister' article written by Charles Coville in 1983.

We all like to bask in the reflected glory of a fellow runner and the annual Outstanding Achievement Award is the Striders expression of this enjoyment. To mark the outstanding achievement of each year, the then annual outstanding award was re-named in April 1984, the Maria Gemenis-Cruickshank Outstanding Achievement Award, in honour of a much respected Strider who died tragically the

year before. The tribute to Maria, written in 1983 by Phil Caldwell and Charles Coville, is included in this chapter.

Lastly, we have included an article written by Phil Garvin in 1986. The running career of Phil has almost exactly paralleled the explosion of marathon running which commenced in the late seventies and his first interest was kindled in a way which all runners will recognise. We include Phil Garvin's article because he has been a consistently excellent runner with the Striders and, until a New Turk comes along, he remains our Fastest Marathon Strider.■

Ten Years Ago.

NOBBY YOUNG (1990).

TEN YEARS AGO IT ALL STARTED. Charles Coville and a band of hardy fitness types decided to form a long distance running club, and the "Sydney Striders Marathon and Road Runners Club" came into existence. The name is shorter now as we took out the Marathon bit as we thought it might deter some prospective members from joining the ranks. We tend to run more short distance events than in the early days, especially since the inception of the 10k Handicap Series. Committee meetings are a lot shorter since Phillip Caldwell and Steve Cornelius developed other interests. Finally, the present Club President is definitely shorter than the original, Charles Coville. What can I say? The club is surely shrinking!!

Sue Hill, Jim Donovan, Brian Colwell, Dave Blackhall and Geoff Cox are the remaining "Founding Fathers" who have kept continuous membership. In the case of Sue, it should be "Founding Mother" but it would take a braver man than I to suggest it. Only Charles Coville competes in the 10K Handicap Series. Could it be, that unlike soldiers, age has wearied the rest of them? All have left their mark on Sydney Striders, and some are still active in the promotion of the club.

Steve Cornelius served for a term as President about six years ago. He taught us how to have a back-up plan for the backup plan, and kept using the word "pedantic". At the time I thought he was just another Pommy Nutter but, having organized a race or two, I now appreciate his abilities. He is, I might add, still a Pommy Nutter. For a time he worked at two jobs, decided it was too much, and gave BOTH away. When he ran short of funds, and his dear wife Sally refused to keep him in a manner he felt appropriate for a gentleman of his standing, he took on TWO jobs again.

Steve was followed by Carol Luddington, mainly to show that we are not a sexist organization and we will let anyone do a lot of hard work. Carol brought into the position

an incredible memory. She still phones me from time to time, mainly to find out how Harvey Blue is. That confuses me, but what worries me is when her husband, also a former member known as Head-Butt Herb, calls to ask after Irwin Light.

What a passing parade of characters we have had in the club. Kar Wong, who during an incredible number of marathons within a short period of time, never looked further forward than the at road one metre in front of his worn out running shoes. Kar often became lost on runs. Come to think of it, Kar also often became lost in the car park. He left us to take up a position in South Africa, not the sort of thing I would be keen to do if my name was Kar Wong. But he is irrepressible, and will do just fine anywhere.

I will resist the temptation to mention any of the current batch of characters, as I inevitably pay a penalty if I do so. If I say something nice it will be taken as a send-up, and if I take a shot at anyone, it will be just like any STaR run. Other members have a habit of getting square with me for my comments, usually on an uphill section after the 15K mark on a Sunday morning, when I'm most vulnerable.

Our form of running must be one of the most social of sports, as it permits a couple of hours of contact with an interesting group of people. Try that in a swimming pool or on a sports ground and it just isn't on. In the former, one could get very waterlogged, or even drown in an extreme case. Alan Phillips informed me that he is a member in spite of the fact that he isn't very keen on running. It is mixing with the people involved that he enjoys. As we move into our second decade, maybe there is a little bit of Alan Phillips in many of us.■

Striders - The beginning.

CHARLES COVILLE

BLISTER 23, APRIL 1985.

I WAS BOUGHT UP ON THE CONCEPT that the only way one could train for a marathon was to run long on the weekend in the company of fellow runners.

So when I arrived in Australia back in 1978, I sought a club that would offer me the appropriate training and comradeship.

Since no such club existed in and around the Artarmon area I was confronted with two options: I could either infiltrate an existing club in another area and exert the necessary influence, or I could start a club from scratch.

I didn't believe that an existing club would take too kindly to some "Jaapie" ultra marathoner telling them how they ought to be training for marathons. The easier way out

was to establish a new club.

How to put the concept into practice?

At the time I was training with a small group of enthusiasts including Dave Blackhall (of Westline fame). It was agreed that a meeting should be called to launch the club and that our unit in Artarmon be selected as the venue.

Leaflets expounding the virtues of the new club were distributed at Nosh, Harbord Diggers 14k and the famous 1980 State Marathon.

Eight enthusiastic marathoners fronted up for the inaugural meeting. A committee was elected - Striders had come of age.

Striders Trivia:

- * The name was carefully selected to include the name Sydney. The alliteration of S's too was considered essential, since the name had to be easily remembered without being gimmicky or corny.

- * Since the marathon concept was fairly new, the title 'marathon' was necessary as many runners equated clubs with track running.

- * The name Joggers was considered inappropriate as that would categorise the club.

- * We had no idea of what areas we would cover, nor to what level of athlete we would appeal, so a general name was considered appropriate.

- * The colours were decided upon after a review of all club colours in NSW. Green was the least adopted colour.

- * As we had an identification problem, it seemed appropriate to screen the name on both the front and back of the singlet.

- * The title of the 'Blister' was decided upon because I believed a blister to be the most common 'problem' affecting runners. I certainly got them all the time.

- * Sunday Training Runs was too much of a mouthful. 'STaRs' was more practical.

- * During my first ever run through Lane Cove Park I visualised the setting as a logical venue for a road race (then a marathon).

- * There were more marathons in Sydney in 1980 than there were half marathons. A half marathon seemed obvious.

The club has certainly come a long way since June 1980. 200 STaRs and 300 members later I reflect back to those early days when all wanted was a group of fellow runners to train with. Keep on Striding. ■

Some Reminiscences...

A LETTER TO BILL FLANAGAN FROM DAVE BLACKHALL

5TH JULY 1990.

I WAS DISAPPOINTED NOT TO BE ABLE TO BE WITH YOU FOR THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY celebrations. Unfortunately, business comes first. The occasion however, prompted me to offer you a few thoughts which may be appropriate to the occasion.

The formation of the Sydney Striders was motivated primarily by a desire to create a supportive running environment for average (in my case, very average), non-elite runners. I think as a Club, it should always remain true to those principles, and indeed, my perception is that it does.

It would be impossible to overstate Charles Coville's contribution to the Club in those early years. In many things, he *was* the Club. Without him, the Club simply would not exist today. In all things, Charles had a precise sense of what was right and proper, and a pretty firm idea of the image and substance that should constitute the Club.

Shortly after the Club's formation, I was travelling on business in the United States. I realised that a happy coincidence of schedules would permit me to run the 1980 New York Marathon. Without any sanction from the Club Committee, I devised my own running colours and participated in the event. Whilst the green and white colour scheme was well established, we had not evolved to the stylised script or the 'leaping leopard' motif. When the then Chairman saw the photographic evidence of no. 2035 crossing the finish line in the rather make-shift Sydney Striders colours, an immediate program was put in place to devise the running gear we all use today.

In the early days, the STaRs were somewhat less well organised than today. There was one famous run where Blackhall and Liebmann led the entire STaR off the map and into uncharted parts of Kuringai National Park for over five and half hours. These were also the years when the cross country was run from the grounds of the Sanitarium Hospital, in Fox Valley Road, through the bush, to Browns Waterhole and back. The organisational nadir occurred when two groups of runners, both competing in the Sydney Striders Cross Country, passed each other going in opposite directions up a bush track. Thereafter, I think Chairman Coville suggested I stick to financial matters.

But these were the early years and today's Club is a much more professionally run, vital and dynamic organisation. Some how, I still miss the old days, although I know that's just pure nostalgia. Please pass on my congratulations and best wishes to the Club Committee.

The Comrades Marathon.

CHARLES COVILLE (7 TIMES FINISHER).

BLISTER 16, MAY 1983.

Since sports boycotts were implemented against South Africa, the general awareness of the outside world of sport within South Africa has diminished.

Rebel touring sports teams do capture newspaper headlines, but the ongoing internal sports events receive little publicity. Yet, in the Eastern provinces of Natal, a road race of unbelievable proportions has been quietly growing in leaps and bounds while most of the world's running fraternity have been none the wiser.

Every year on Republic Day (31st May), a 90k road race, the Comrades Marathon, is held alternatively between the coastal port of Durban and the sleepy inland provincial capital of Pietermaritzburg. While the distance may impress you, you will be even more amazed by the course profile and the size of the field.

In 1983, there were 6636 entrants, 5867 starters and a staggering 5322 finishers within the eleven hour limit. That represents an official finishing rate of 91%.

South Africa is without doubt the ultra-marathon capital of the world. The reasons are not hard to find. The Comrades Marathon is steeped in tradition and, since expulsion from international competition, including the Olympic Games, leading South African road runners have converted an obscure distance which would not appeal to your marathon superstars in any other country.

The Comrades Marathon has become the ultimate ambition of most runners. The event is one of the annual sporting highlights where the winner becomes a household name.

The history of the event goes back to 1921. Vic Clapham, an engine driver, had read about a Stock Exchange Walk from London to Brighton. As the distance was only a few miles less than that between his home town of Pietermaritzburg and Durban he asked the ex-soldiers association, the "Comrades of the Great War", to allow him to organise a race between the two towns under the name of the Comrades Marathon.

Sixteen of the thirty-four starters completed the inaugural 54 mile dirt road race, won by W. Rowan in 8h 59m. From that year, the race never looked back.

Over the years, many super athletes have left their mark on the Comrades.

Arthur Newton held both the 'up' and 'down' Comrades records, the London to Brighton record, the world 50 mile and 100 mile records, as well as the world 24 hour record. He ran nine Comrades and won six of them between 1922 and 1927.

Newton's mantle was taken over by Hardy Ballington who won five of his seven Comrades during the 1930's.

The only unbeaten multiple winner and, at forty-six, it's oldest winner, was Wally

Hayward. In 1930 he won at the age of twenty-one. He won again twenty-one years later at his second attempt as well as in 1951, 1953 and 1954.

Jackie Meckler won five Comrades in the early sixties and held almost as many world endurance records as Newton.

During the middle 1970's, Alan Robb established himself as the ultra superstar, with four victories.

It was in 1981 that Bruce Fordyce won his first Comrades, in the record time of 5h37m22s and gave warning that that he was to dominate the early 1980's. He followed up his 'up' victory with a 5h34m22s for his 'down' run in 1982.

However, the way Bruce won this year's event was more stunning than his hat-trick of victories. The 27 year old Wits University runner established himself as perhaps the greatest Comrades winner of all time by not only winning by fifteen minutes from a star-studded field, but also by breaking the course record by an incredible nine minutes and only missing the 'down' record, traditionally ten minutes apart, by a mere 57 seconds.

In simple terms, that represents a 2h 35m marathon back to back plus an additional 8k's (over a course that can only be described as difficult). His 1982 London to Brighton victory proved that he is a 'horse for all courses'.

The 58th Comrades also set records for the supplies required on race day (marathon organisers please note).

The thirty-eight refreshment stations were sufficiently well stocked to cater for all runners needs. Outside assistance and cars on the often narrow and winding road are prohibited. The stations consumed 300,000 plastic bottles, 30 tonnes of ice, 83,000 sponges, 180kg of petroleum jelly, 60,000 soft drinks and 250,000 litres of water.

Add to this the army of personnel on the course which included 1750 refreshment station helpers, 240 marshalls, 165 traffic police, 175 first aid nurses and 18 doctors and you have a race of enormous proportions.

Race personality is 74 year old Liekge Boule, who was not only the oldest competitor this year, but has completed a record 39 runs.

The first ten runners receive golds medals. These hotly contested awards require a performance of under six hours. The three hour marathon converts to a seven and a half hour Comrades. 1983 saw 572 silver medallists within seven and a half hours. Finishers under eleven hours receive bronze medals.

Without doubt the cruellest feature of the race is it's conclusion. As the eleven hour time limit is reached, a gun is fired to conclude the race. Each year, athletes on the track, metres from the finishing line, hear the dreaded shot telling them that it's too late. No medal, no certificate, no listing in the results book.

After eleven hours on the road, it's all over with nothing to show officially.

The Comrades is without doubt one of the world's toughest races. The distance, time constraints and hills make any of the finishers worthy of being a true Comrade. ■

A Lady Leaves the Stage.

PHIL CALDWELL AND CHARLES COVILLE.

BLISTER 14, 1883.

HAVE YOU EVER BRAVED THE EARLY HOURS to skirt the beaches, craggy cliffs and Port Hacking foreshore that encircle Cronulla, south of Sydney or, escaped the "maddening" crowd of pounding feet that invades Sydney's Botanical Gardens each lunchtime and, instead, tackled the challenging hills out to Rose Bay and back? If so, then you have no doubt had cause to envy the easy running style and likely experienced the charm and wit of Maria Gemenis-Cruickshank.

Maria only took up marathon running in her late 30's. This did not seem to disfavour her performances, for within just eighteen months she had established herself as one of the leading female marathoners in N.S.W.

Immaculately attired in all white, including peak cap, Maria breezed home comfortably in the 1981 Gillawarna Marathon in 3.05.57, her inaugural marathon.

For Maria, that initial introduction had been an enjoyable confidence booster. I vividly recall her referring to her low mileage and not encountering any "wall", leaving me with the impression that a new local star had emerged on the Sydney marathon scene.

Maria launched herself into the 1982 season with a strong second to Jenny Walker over the demanding Yomix Half Marathon course. The Avon Women's Marathon followed and it was here that Maria discovered that "wall". Inexperience saw her sharing the pace setting in trying conditions and posting a half-way time well under the three hour marathon mark. She managed to "hang-in" however, and finished a creditable 89th in 3.07.19.

Joining Sydney Striders in June 1982, Maria continued to perform well in local runs, sharing the leading female spotlight on many occasions with experienced Sue Hill, a fellow Strider.

Between August and September, Maria completed three marathons. At the Superfast Gold Coast Marathon her time of 3.03.31 was the second fastest for a female. Ultimate success soon followed with two impressive victories in the Cities Marathon - 3.02.20 (PB), and the Tiger Pulsar Marathon - 3.07.09.

Besides her marathon achievements, the Cronulla librarian turned her talents to race management, assuming the role of Sponsorship Manager for the 1983 Yomix Half Marathon.

It seemed inevitable that 1983 was to be the year of the sub 3.

Tragically, however, her athletic career was short lived. Following neurosurgery in December, Maria lapsed into a coma on Christmas Day and passed away six weeks later.

Maria had not only indelibly etched her mark on the Sydney marathon scene, but leaves many fond memories with those of us who knew her personally. ■

Winners of the Maria Gemenis-Cruickshank Outstanding Achievement Award.

1989

GRAHAM FIRKIN

Finisher 1989 Westfield Sydney-Melbourne Run.

1988

GRAHAM FIRKIN

First Strider to to run 200k in 24 hours;
ran 292k in attempt on Westfield Sydney-Melbourne,
to record longest distance ever run by a Strider.

1987

MATHEW KALEY

Fastest Under-20 marathoner in Australia 1987,
13 minute improvement in PB.

1986

PHIL GARVIN

Club record marathon 2.21.56, Bathurst July 1986.

1985

NOBBY YOUNG

For performances ranging from half marathons to 24 hours.

1984

BRENDA HAMILL

For all round performance from 7k to 80k.

1983

KEITH CANARD

For running six sub-2.40 marathons in one season.

1982

(Inaugural Award)

NEIL PLEVY

For 20-minute improvement in sub-three hour time.

The Award was donated in 1982 by John Cruickshank, husband of Maria and consists of the last Trophy won by Maria (1982 Cities Marathon).

President's Report, Splinters And Striders.

BY STEVE CORNELIUS

BLISTER 21, 1984.

THIS IS THE LAST BLISTER OF 1984, so it seems appropriate now to stand back and look at the club's development during the past 4 years: The kind of people who are now members, and the sort of running they are doing. Since the beginning in 1980, our main concern has of course been the marathon: it's even part of the club's name. One of the main purposes of the club has been to help its members to run the "Classic Distance" for the first time, or run it faster, or more comfortably, or more sensibly. And the fascination of the 42.2km race, the length of which is a historical accident but which couldn't have been a more fiendish test of our endurance if it had been deliberately planned, will, I'm sure, remain with us.

But in 1983 and 1984, there seems to have been a healthy trend towards diversification, with many members accepting new challenges, and some even drifting away from the marathon itself. It's a chicken-and-egg exercise to ask whether the club has spawned the splinter-groups or whether the groups are deciding the future form of the club. But if you believe that devotion to a single goal produces an unbalanced and obsessive society, the

"extracurricular" activities of some of our Fruit-Cake Fringe-Groups must benefit the huge pool of running experience the Striders now collectively own.

Some of the "fringers" have been with us all along, of course. The orienteers are a case in point, the Sue Hills and Ian Millars of this world, NEVER EVER lost on a STaR run, but the dreamy look in their eyes suggesting that they're with us in the flesh and somewhere else in spirit.

And there have always been the Closet Ultra-Distance Freaks, especially among the Striders' considerable South African enclave. Many of these worthies have tackled the formidable Comrades 90km race, but whisper this fact only to their closest buddies as if disclosing that they have AIDS. Now the New Wave of non-South-African Ultra Freaks are coming out of the closet and into the streets, led by the unstoppable Nobby Young (will somebody PLEASE take the key out of his back?). Six Striders entered the Sydney-to-Wollongong 50-miler this year, and I'd be surprised if ten didn't front up in 1985.

The Hashers, too, maintain a bleary-eyed presence among Striders, surreptitiously supping on cold KB's from brown-paper bags after STaRs while the rest of us are drowning ourselves in the Real Thing and the Man's drink. But the biggest growth in 1984 has been among the triathletes. What can you say about the "Sydney Tri-ers"? They put us all to shame by arriving at STaRs on bikes (hell, at six on Sunday morning it takes me all my time to turn the key in the car ignition, let alone pedal 20km before running a STaR), and their conversation on the run is all gear ratios and hypothermia and turn around times and lycra jock-straps. Have you tried to find a straight running event recently on the running calendar? They've all been cancelled in favour of triathlons! For those of us who can't swim and/or can't afford a bike, triathlons are a perpetually closed book, but the Alex Hamills and Harry Turners among us keep blasting away. Russell Black (the first Strider to complete the Hawaii Ironman event) sure has a lot to answer for!

But it's not all endurance. Some of our members are finding that they particularly excel at shorter distances like 10km. Scott Lawrence, for example, has taken this penchant for shorter distances to surreal lengths, and apparently can now put in a pretty creditable 800 metres!

In addition, Striders seem to be rediscovering the middle-distances, particularly half-marathons. Brendan Foster, in "Running" magazine recently, commented that in Britain "the whirlwind romance with the marathon is giving way to something more compatible with the training, lives and aspirations of ordinary running folk". The same magazines fixture section is crammed with half-marathons and 10-milers. We are witnessing the same phenomenon in Australia too. Of 43 Striders who ran Gillawarna, 25 selected the half-marathon, and only 18 stalwarts ran the 42.2km distance. Three years ago this would have been unthinkable. Nowadays, many actually PREFER the shorter distance. And to

further emphasise the point, Bill Flanagan and I were surprised when the recent Blister readers' survey showed a marginally GREATER interest in a half-marathon ladder than in the marathon ladder itself!

It has been said that Sydney Striders must be the only marathon club in the world never to have organised a marathon! It's quite possible we never will. More people are queuing up every year to enter our open National Panasonic Half-Marathon, and at present we see no reason to change a winning formula. Its success is a credit to the people who got it going in 1982.

How does all of the above affect our Sunday morning STaR runs, which are still the bread and butter activity of the club? In my opinion, it hardly affects them at all, and (apart from the possible addition of some 15km options on the maps) I certainly wouldn't at this stage be recommending any major changes to their format. I feel that the emergence of the various special-interest groups and the increase in shorter-distance running should be seen not as a watering-down of the original marathon club concept but rather as a natural trend in the development of the running movement as a whole. Triathletes, Ultra-Freaks, Orienteers, Half-marathoners, even 800 metre speedsters and other cliques, still see STaRs as valuable training. They are great if you want to train for marathons, and I'm sure many Striders will still continue to do that in future. But that's not their only appeal, and once again the founders of the club must take credit for being far sighted enough to dream up such a flexible training format.

Beside being great training, STaRs are also social events which reminds me that I wanted to write a few quick words about "CSR". Has he finally, you're wondering, gone round the twist? What on earth could sugar refineries have to do with Striders? Nothing at all, because CSR stands for Closer Social Relations with other running clubs.

In recent weeks we have seen a bit of interaction between Striders, Wests and the Marathon Clinic. Ten Striders enjoyed the Clinic's spectacular "pipeline" run at Heathcote, and members of both clubs attended our Cabarita STaR. There is also some overlap in membership between the three clubs, with many Striders finding Wests' Saturday 10km and the Clinic's 21/25/30km road-races very valuable this is a trend which all three clubs are keen to encourage. For too long we have huddled in our corners, only meeting other clubs at races. In future, there will probably be closer collaboration on fixtures.

The most pleasing feature of the running movement, as a Strider commented after Cabarita, is that runners in general are such nice people. Unlike some other sports, nobody in running wants to cripple you as an integral part of the game. Nobody suggests, as Rodney Marsh recently did, that the best way to deal with the opposition is to "try and crack a few skulls". Nobody has to modify the fundamentals of the game, as recently happened in schools rugby, to prevent participants getting broken necks. (Incidentally,

can someone explain to me why it's necessary to have sixteen blokes down in a scrum if they're not going to be allowed to push? Wasn't that the whole point of it?).

The secret of running's success is that, even outside your own club, THERE IS NO OPPOSITION. We're all just runners, doing a bit for our health and personal esteem, and getting to see some of Sydney's most scenic suburbs and bush-tracks while we do it. We'll try to do our bit by increasing the number of alternative runs on the Striders' Calendar, so if you're not already doing so, get a bit of CSR soon and meet new people. See you on the run. ■

Blood, Sweat and Tears.

Ten Years of Marathoning in Retrospect.

BY PHIL GARVIN

BLISTER 40, 1986.

DECEMBER 1ST 1978 COULD BE REGARDED AS RATHER A SIGNIFICANT DAY IN MY LIFE although at the time I did not realise it. I had just returned from an extensive trip overseas during which I over indulged in the gastronomic delights of Europe and thus was complaining that I was overweight when a colleague of mine, Mike Kennedy, causally remarked that a marathon was to be held in Canberra the following April and that by training for it may be a good way of solving my problem. Little did either of us appreciate the impact this remark was to have on my life!

I must admit that possibly one of the attractions to the particular event in question, the Nike International, was the date on which it was scheduled, 1 April 1979. I considered that April Fool's Day was an appropriate day to launch and most likely abandon a career in marathons. I announced to my family my intentions, which were met with a mixture of concern and scepticism and commenced my training program.

At that time popular marathoning was very much in its infancy as the majority of such races were only entered by elite athletes with championship and Olympic or Commonwealth Games aspirations. Thus my training program was somewhat of a venture into the unknown. As my aim was to finish the marathon, if possible, rather than race it I considered the best preparation would be to concentrate on building up the time I was on training runs. My body would then be prepared for four hours or more on the road.

Finally raceday arrived and to the relief of all competitors it dawned to a beat of steady rain. At least the chances of hyperthermia would be minimised. Even while standing on

the start line I was not convinced that I would be capable of completing the marathon as images of elite athletes such as Dolandro, Pietrie and Jim Peters came before me. However I set myself a goal of going as far as possible before hitting the dreaded wall and made up my mind that if I achieved a time of three and a half hours, I would be more than satisfied. To my elation I managed to finish in two hours forty-nine minutes and thus was completely hooked with marathoning.

As circumstances transpired, my next marathon was to be the 1980 Nike. In an effort to improve my time I revised my training program to concentrate on distance rather than just time. Thankfully the strategy worked as I managed to record a ten minute PB and qualify for the Australian Championships.

The real highlight of the year was to lie on roads far away for I was fortuitously given the chance to run the New York City Marathon. This experience could only be described as unbelievable - sixteen thousand runners and two million spectators providing a kaleidoscope of colours and a cacophony of sound. Inspired by this atmosphere I was able to lower my PB by six minutes and had the experience of for the first time ever receiving a medal for sport when a finishers medal was placed around my neck.

1981 was in contrast somewhat quieter although for the first time I made the epic trek from Frankston to Melbourne during October.

By 1982 the travel bug had again bitten me and I headed once more to the US, this time to challenge Boston's Heartbreak Hill while in October, inspired by Deek's epic run in the Commonwealth Games, I achieved another PB in the Big M.

1983 saw me overseas yet again, this time to the streets of London with the number of participants and spectators similar to those of New York. By the time I had returned home the first Sydney to Melbourne Classic had been run and the new folk hero was Cliff Young. Meanwhile plans were well underway for the first Wang Marathon which was to incorporate the Australian Marathon Championship - at last it seemed possible that Sydney would be staging a marathon that had the potential to attract world class runners and mass participation.

1984 - Olympic Year and due mainly to the superb efforts of Rob De Castella over the past few years, the marathon boom in Australia was at its peak. In April all eyes were turned to Canberra for the Olympic Trial. Despite the magnificent organisational efforts of Dave Cundy and his team the weather did not co-operate with a howling gale frustrating the aspirations of many hopefuls. Despite this, the race for me was a personal triumph with a PB of two hours twenty-six minutes, earning for me selection in the ACT Team for the Australian Championships. The latter part of the year saw me once again in New York, this time combating unseasonable heat and humidity, before using the Honolulu Marathon as a "warm down".

By 1985 the running boom had started to wane. In most events the number of entrants was down from previous years as, for many, new challenges such as tri-athlons presented themselves. My personal highlight came in October when, in the Big M, I broke the two hours twenty-five barrier for the first time.

In any career there has to be a vintage year and for me 1986 has been it. In January of that year little did I contemplate that by December I would have had the good fortune to win the ACT Marathon Championship, be a member of the gold medal winning ACT team in the Australian Championship, set a PB of two hours twenty-one at Bathurst and achieve the ultimate of selection to represent Australia in an overseas marathon at Penang, Malaysia where, in oppressive conditions, I placed fourth overall in two hours thirty minutes.

After the heights of 1986, 1987 was more subdued although personally I managed my highest placing, third, in the Nike Canberra Marathon and to win for the second time the Mid-West Credit Union Marathon in Bathurst. An interesting highlight was a personal "battle" between Paul Rake and myself. On a number of occasions we had been training partners and during the year both competed in four marathons. In three of these we were placed in consecutive positions, Paul having the two:one advantage, while in our respective fourth events we both won. A disappointment of the year was the continuing decline in interest in marathoning leading to the abandonment of the staging of the Australian Championship in Sydney.

To mark the Bicentennial Year I once again headed to London and followed this up by the Gold Coast Marathon, which incorporated the relocated Australian Marathon Championship, and later the Budget Melbourne Marathon. An interesting feature of these races was that in London and Melbourne I ran exactly the same time - two hours thirty minutes thirty seconds.

And so ten years of my marathoning career have passed. During this time it has been a case of blood, sweat and tears certainly a lot of sweat, a bit of blood and even a few tears - although from the positive side the ecstasies have far outweighed the agonies. As I said in the beginning, little did either Michael Kennedy or myself realise the profound effect his chance remark on that December day in 1978 was to have on me.

In reviewing these ten years it would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to the enormous encouragement and support I have received. This has come from numerous sources but in particular my family, members of the ACT running fraternity, especially ACT Veterans' Athletic Club and Canberra City Harriers, and Sydney Striders. Without such support very little would have been possible. ■

The Striders Half - a Brief History.

BILL FLANAGAN (1990).

JUST THREE MONTHS AFTER THE FORMATION OF SYDNEY STRIDERS the idea of staging a major race was pursued.

Originally March 1981 was envisaged as the date to stage the inaugural event however the lack of a major sponsor hampered preparations. If a race of a high standard was to be staged it was better to hold off for a year.

With an extra year to prepare and the support of Yomix and Westline Ford the Striders half was first staged on 21st March 1982.

Numbered amongst the pioneering 341 finishers were first up winners Bill Raymond and Jenny Walker.

The course used for the premier staging of the Half started on the northern side of the park in Killara. For logistical reasons the start/finish venue was moved for the second year to the present venue in North Ryde.

The Lane Cove River Park remained the main focus of the course as it is one of the events main attractions.

Judging by the massive increase in entries for 1983 the Striders were on a winner. Such was the interest in the event that 300 entries were rejected, in line with an agreement with the park trust and an over-riding objective of the club to maintain the event as a serious road race for all levels of runners, rather than a fun run.

The standard of the runners at the head of the field was exceptional as evidenced by the massive cuts made to the course records. Andrew Lloyd and Moria Main led the charge into a new era.

Olympic year saw the race staged four weeks before the Marathon Trial in Canberra. Many runners including the winners Garry Hand and Moira Main were using the race as a final hit-out before the trial. Both course records were savaged.

Everyone seemed to be in form (looking back it is at about this time that distance running in New South Wales was at its peak in popularity. Marathoning was the rage and fields everywhere hit record levels 12 age group records were set in 14 categories.

1985 and the race went international (and national). The winner (Krueger) was West German and only two of the top sixteen were NSW residents. It was little different in the

women's race with New Zealander Raewyn O'Donnell leading home country woman Heather Matthews. Moira Main was the first local in fifth place.

An interesting name popped up in 10th place in the women's section, Tani Ruckle running her first race. A fine career had been launched.

It was another alien who led the charge in 1986. Kiwi Olympian Derek Froude engaged in a classic tussle with Quentin Morley before emerging victorious.

The two year old women's record was crushed by 50 seconds by Tani Ruckle improving 10 minutes on her debut the previous year.

The race in 1987 proved to be the perfect form guide for the Australian Marathon with the triumphant Danny Boltz and Tani Ruckle going on to annex their first national titles some 10 weeks later. Tani thus joined Moira Main as the only two time winners of the event.

The men flew (see table) and Boltz drew away from Andrew Garnham at 11k before going on to break Krueger's record by 19 seconds.

Boltz became a two time winner in the rain-affected slower race of 1988. With water gushing over the weir the alternate wet weather course was used. The humid conditions slowed times, although Elizabeth Rose set a fast pace to win her first race over the distance. Coming straight off a track season that saw her claim the state 800, 1,500 & 3,000m titles. Rose made an impressive road debut.

Steve Poulton improved on his 3rd of 1988 to claim the 1989 title despite being over a minute behind at the weir.

Finishing 5 minutes ahead of her nearest rival Tani Ruckle chopped 34 seconds off her course record.

The Course Record Pace:

	5K	10K	HALF	15K	20K	FINISH
D. Boltz (1987)	14.38	30.04	31.40	45.00	1.00.5	1.03.58
T. Ruckle (1989)	17.28	35.40	37.53.21		1.11.57	1.15.47

In its eight year history there have been some memorable occurrences. Those which readily spring to mind include:

* Danny Boltz and Andrew Gornham passing 10km in 30.04 in 1987, Boltz kept the heat on passing 20km in 1.00.52 and finishing in a course record 1.03.58.

* Tani Ruckle in the same year breaking her course record by 14 seconds despite being

six minutes ahead of the runner-up.

* The three-fold increase in entries in 1983 which should have severely tested the Striders organising capabilities but went off without a hiccup.

* Quentin Morley twice losing the lead as he approached the Caravan Park at 19km (1986,1989).

* Fourteen runners finishing under the 1.10 standard in 1984,1985.

* John Gilmour (WA) running 1.21.31 as a 65 year old in 1985.

* The continuing support of the Westline Automotive Group who has been with us for the entire nine years.

"The nearly Man".

Quentin Morley has been a great supporter of the Striders Half over the years. His record set out below highlights the quality of his performances and how close he has come to being race champion. If anyone is due for a win Quentin is:

1984 3rd	1.06.12	1987	DNS
1985 4th	1.05.56	1988 2nd	1.05.57
1986 2nd	1.05.52	1989 2nd	1.06.30

Nothing but the Facts and Figures.

Finishers*	Female Finishers	*Finishers under 1 hr 10 mins	Finishers under 1 hr 30 mins
1982 341	42	0	114
1983 938	102	10	344
1984 1394	128	14	486
1985 1497	140	14	474
1986 1214	110	7	391
1987 990	105	9	334
1988 887	88	8	248
1989 832	115	4	182

*(under time limit 2.15).

Ultra Beginnings.

STEVE CORNELIUS (1990).

IF BLISTER EDITOR ROGER RIGBY THOUGHT HE WAS TALKING TO "THE BLOKE WHO STARTED IT ALL" when he phoned to ask me for an article on ultramarathons for this 10th anniversary edition, he was sadly mistaken. The member who must take most of the blame for getting the Striders' Ultra Clique off the ground is DEREK WHITE, the first Strider to run the Sydney-to-Wollongong 50-miler.

Derek's article "The Way Is Long To The Gong - My Super-Stagger", in Blister No.12, expresses all the pain and anguish felt by successive generations of Striders Ultra-Freaks, and if we had read between the lines we all might have given the ultra game the big flick. But we're a stubborn mob, not greatly given to accepting advice, whether directly proffered or not.

Despite the fact that the Club President in those days, Charlie Coville, was a veteran of no less than 7 Comrades Marathons, and that the membership list included a number of other South Africans, Derek's 13-hour epic in 1982 is the first recorded race of greater than 42.2 km by a Strider.

Charles himself always claimed that the South African running scene's emphasis on ultras had hindered his development as a marathoner, and seemed glad, on arriving in Australia, to have got rid of the "ultra monkey" from his back. He strongly advised members such as myself, who went to him for advice, to avoid anything longer than a standard marathon. Needless to say, the words of wisdom fell on deaf ears.

However, it wasn't until 6 editions later, in Blister No. 18, that I was able to report the successful completion of the 1983 Wollongong-to-Sydney (they alternated directions in those days) by three more Striders: Dave Williams, Laurie King and myself. Here I have to admit some blame. This inter-city 50-miler had first caught my attention some years previously, before I had even run a marathon, appealing to me as something "wild and wacky" that I might one day aim at. It would surely be a very special feeling, I reasoned, to run up George Street to the Town Hall, knowing that you had propelled your body ON FOOT from another city more than 50 miles away.

Dave and Laurie were initially not too keen, but foolishly allowed themselves to be swayed by my silver-tongued forecasts of their feelings at the finish. Some quite remarkable training-runs then eventuated, notably a 66km Palm-Beach-to-Cronulla crawl Sydney's northernmost beach to its southernmost.

The race itself was a day I will never forget as long as I live. Somehow managed to cross the line in 8.21.19, a negligible 63 seconds ahead of Dave Williams, having struggled badly from Tom Ugly's Bridge where I had had a 5km break on him. Dave had a unique "stop and look at the flowers" philosophy on running ultras, and finished looking like he had jogged round the block. This was in marked contrast to Laurie and myself. However, the three of us had finished 23rd, 24th and 26th, and were pleased as punch. I had been correct about the "special feeling" on crossing the line - no other running experience had quite matched it, not even my first marathon.

Blister No.21, issued in late 1984, saw the start of my "Ultra Report", which was to appear in 16 Blisters over a 4-year period. The report described the first Strider to finish in the Sydney-Wollongong 50-miler of 1984 as "the new Wonder-Boy" - it was none other than Nobby Young! Dan Gray, Bryce Courtenay and myself also finished, Bryce and myself not without some difficulties on the way down Mount Ousley. Don't remind Bryce about it - he winces at the thought of it even now!. Brenda Hamill became the first female Strider to complete the "Gong", winning the women's race and taking out the Club's Outstanding Achievement Award for her trouble. "Wonder-Boy" soon went on to greater things: A 4th place in the Bathurst 50-miler of 1984, and first Strider to run 100km.

Blister No.33, in mid-1985, contained perhaps the most outrageous "beat-up" in club history, a report entitled "Shock Gang Grudge Challenge Clash Allegation Bloodbath Massacre Scandal Horror". (I kicked myself later for forgetting "Mercy-Dash", "Feud" and "Drama"). The supposed deadly rivalry between two violent groups of Striders extremists, the Ultra-Freaks and the Triathletes, was later to boil over into a skill-free tennis match and a bruising ten-pin bowling session, both of which the Triathletes won by handsome margins. In addition, both were followed by fairly solid booze-ups, which softened the blow of being humbled by those we reputedly despised.

Perhaps more significantly, Blister No.23's Ultra Report mentioned for the first time Ian Hutchison's Blue Mountains Six-Foot Track Race. The three participating Striders, Nobby Young, Dan Gray and Jim Donovan, were seen as even more crazy than usual for attempting what was then regarded as a strictly-for-loonies event. Compare this, if you will, with the 1990 Striders entry of more than two dozen! In 1985, however, it was a sign that some members were willing to break away from the traditional ultra road races and give something different a go.

The 1985 Wollongong-Sydney was notable for a number of reasons. Firstly, Nobby "Wonder-Boy" Young ran like a clockwork train to establish a club record of 7.00.50 which was to stand for 3 years. Secondly, triathlete Alistair Mackie became the first Strider to complete an Ironman triathlon and an ultramarathon in the same year.

Thirdly, a superb team of Striders (Bernie Corden, Scott Lawrence, Derek Liebenberg, Phil Garvin and Wayne Stanton) took out the inaugural 5 x 10-mile relay, writing the club's name in position number 1 on a trophy which broadened the appeal of the "Gong", but was arguably responsible for its eventual demise four years later, owing to Police misgivings over runners' safety.

Perhaps not so well-known, however, is the fact that Graham Firkin, who was later to break so much new ground in two Westfield Runs, first made his appearance on the ultra scene in that 1985 Wollongong-Sydney. Little did I know as I congratulated him on the Town Hall steps after his 8:12:24 run, that 4 years down the track he would complete a race 12 times as long as the one we had just finished!

1985, in fact, was quite a big year. Nobby Young, unstoppable that year, went on to become the first Strider to run for 24 hours (168km was his total) and win the Outstanding Achievement Award, and Dan Gray made up for his absence from the "Gong" by setting a sub-10-hour club record for 100km at Bathurst.

It was in 1986 that most Striders really started to believe that the Ultra-Freaks had finally turned the corner - we went right out on a limb and organised the first Striders' 24-Hour Track Race at Hensley Field. This was a very low-key affair, organised on a shoe-string budget of about \$500, and with only 8 competitors. It was ironic that of the 3-man organising committee (Nobby Young, Dan Gray and myself), whose sole motivation was to compete in a 24-hour race without having to go to Melbourne or Adelaide, only Dan ended up on the track. However, he did us proud, winning stylishly with 182km. Graham Firkin made further strides along the road to stardom with 133km in his first "24", with Grahame Deacon and Mathew Kaley the only other Striders to participate. It wasn't originally planned that way, but after the success of the first Striders' "24", the race was adopted as an annual event, attracting Westfield sponsorship in 1987 and assuming the title of "NSW 24-Hour Track Championship".

The unpredictable Cedric Sidebottom was first Strider to finish the 1986 Sydney-Wollongong, with an unprecedented total of 6 Striders finishing. Dan Gray, Graham Firkin, Brian Tailford and Grahame Deacon all easily beat me in my Wollongong swansong. If nothing else, I proved that it's possible to stroll to Wollongong in less than 10 hours on average weekly training of only 15ks a week!

1987 was the year the Striders' 24-Hour Race took off with a vengeance, with a full complement of 39 entrants including Cliff Young. At last Sydney had an ultra track-race to compete on equal terms with those in Victoria and South Australia. Westfield were happy to throw in a few dollars, and nominated it as the NSW qualifying race for their Sydney-to-Melbourne Ultra. This race saw the emergence of the likeable little Irishman, Frank Kelly, who recorded 212km to finish ahead of Maurice Taylor (202km). The 1986

winner, Strider Dan Gray, set a new club record of 198km in achieving 3rd place, just ahead of "Old Gumboots" in 4th. Graham Firkin continued to gain strength and experience which would later serve him well, running 164km for 14th place, while Keith Jackson (153km) and Brian Colwell (151km) were the other Striders to compete.

Darth Vader, as Graham Firkin had come to be known, was first Strider to finish in that year's Sydney-Wollongong, followed home by Keith Jackson, Jack Woodward and Brian Colwell.

The "Gong" may have died the death, but ultramarathoning lives on, with an ever-expanding range of events to choose from. The recently-formed Australian Ultra Runners' Association, based in Victoria, is now doing a great job of codifying race standards and co-ordinating the national ultra calendar. A glance at the AURA Magazine's fixture section shows track, trail and road races from 42km through to 1000-milers, 12-hour sprints to 6-day endurance ultras. Is there any end to it? Perhaps the 20-year anniversary Blister in the year 2000 will tell us!■

Striders 10k Time Trial.

PAUL RUSSELL

BLISTER 28, 1986.

THIS IDEA ORIGINALLY CAME ABOUT because I realised I didn't know how fast I could run a 10k, and I needed same to feed into the numerous formulae I had seen, telling one how to calculate one's best marathon time based on present PB plus 10 k PB. I asked El Presidente, Mr. Nobby Young whether he knew of any 10k runs that didn't require a packed lunch and a days travel for participation, he said no and suggested I organize one. I chose a 5k, loop around Macquarie Uni, on a Saturday morning at 7.30a.m. The course was originally quite flat (at least it looked it on the Gregory's) but about 10-30,000 years ago a glacier apparently went through the place resulting in a couple of hills (rating 2). Other than that, it had no roads to cross and there is very little traffic apart from a 1 k, hike along Epping Road where it was very advisable to keep on the footpath. The course was marked every km using the measuring wheel which had to be wrestled from a sleeping Steve Cornelius after his 24 hour run. On Saturday 26th July, 1986 it broke so cold I nearly didn't bother getting out of bed myself for the run. I was pleasantly surprised to find 20 plus theramolactyl underwear clad runners in the 0° temperature, despite no promotion at all. I learnt a few do's and don't's for the next time trials:

1. Make sure all runners have correct maps, we managed to mark a few maps incorrectly

to give runners like Vince Engel a little handicap.

2. A stopwatch that goes for longer than 15 minutes.
3. Less organic fibre in the hot water.
4. Breakfast frankfurts are preferably eaten hot. Despite all that it was a tribute to the participants that all seemed happy (had however warned that as I was moving house the same day any complainant would be drafted to help!). I hope to organize 1-2 per calender and as it is a 5km loop one can opt for the shorter distance and get an accurate 5 km time. The course is marked each km and refreshments provided at the finish. The only problem I have realised is that I still don't know my 10 k time as I am too busy to participate. Thanks to Rod McLean, Nobby Young and Matthew Kaley for their help and to all those runners who participated.

RESULTS: Matthew Kaley 36.13., Vince Engel 36.30 (approx. 11km)., Tony Vipond (?)., Bernie King 37.47., Ivan Freys 38.56., Graham Burke 39.40., Jan Morton Evans 40.24., Wendy Downes 43.18., Barry Jones 43.52., Russell Young 59.55 (9km)., Ian Cross 59.55 (9km)., Robyn Murphy 62.09.■

Sydney Striders 10k Series.

NOBBY YOUNG (1990)

BACK IN 1986, Paul Russell suggested to me that we could hold a 10k time trial so he could find out what time it would take for him to cover the distance. I agreed that it was a good idea and asked when was he going to organize it. This is the same Paul Russell who was awarded a trophy for carrying a medical kit while competing in the Blue Mountains Six Foot Track Race. Anyone who can work out that way of winning a trophy can certainly take care of a 10k race. Hence, on the 26th July 1986, we had the birth of the 10k Series. That first run, on a very cold morning at North Ryde, we had 12 competitors, Mathew Kaley won in a time of 36.13 and Paul was too busy organizing to get a gallop. Life can be cruel!!!

By May of 1987, Mathew Kaley, in his role as Training Director, had incorporated into the Time Trial a Handicap Series. These were for Striders members only and handicaps were worked out on a very complicated formula, basically, he or she who bullshits best has the advantage. Edwina MacArthur won the handicap and John Hodges was first home (35:40) followed by Jon Marsden (36:27). Times have changed, John and Jon would have trouble getting up pace going downhill in a wheelchair these days. We had twelve starters.

By the fifth race of the series, Mathew was still winning most of the races, we had about 25 runners each time, Warwick Selby was leading the handicap on 33 points and I was

struggling with only 11 points.

Race 11. Paul Russell wins in a time of 35.09. It has all been worthwhile for him!!

The end of the series and Mat Kaley is the outright winner by a mile and I win the handicap series by two points from Heiner Huning, who promptly packs up and moves to Western Australia to live.

The second series, starting in 1988, saw a regular turnout of 20 to 25 runners, and very competitive running in the handicap. Race 9 was a special, the Bicentennial Blast at Manly, which attracted 43 starters. John Sauer won outright in 33:32 and also on handicap, with Linda Thompson the first female (37:13) to be one of the few females to ever finish ahead of Tina Campbell.

The final race saw Scott Crawford tip out Ian MacArthur, who had the lead to that point, by a mere 3 seconds, and take the handicap series. Scott ran very well in the last few races and continued that form into the next year. Bill Flanagan won the outright trophy and Tina Campbell was the female outright winner. Ian MacArthur did not move to Western Australia.

Alf Field became the Series Director in 1989, although none of us actually recall him expressing his willingness to do so he fine-tuned the handicap system, Sportscene Hornsby came in as a sponsor and the fields built up to average in the thirties.

Phil Garvin and John Sauer shared most of the fastest times with Phil winning both the handicap series from Scott Crawford, and the outright series. It will be many a year before we see this again.

That brings us to 1990, the year of our tenth birthday, and the incorporation of an Open 10k Time Trial into the handicap series. These events are open to all runners and our largest field to date has been 84. It is just a matter of time until we pass the 100 mark. Dave Barwick has been elected 10k Series Director. It appears that the efforts of Paul Russell, Mat Kaley, Alf Field and Dave Barwick have turned the 10k into a permanent feature on the Sydney running calendar.

The Hot Seat: Pen Pictures of Strider Presidents.

NOBBY YOUNG (1990).

DURING THE FIRST TEN YEARS OF THE CLUB'S EXISTENCE, literally hundreds of Striders members (and quite a lot of non-members) have unstintingly given their spare time to organise the various club activities. Committee members, STaR hosts, Half-Marathon organisers, Sussan 10k and 24-Hour Track Race helpers, organisers of bus-trips and social functions, none of these have been paid for their labours of love, and all have contributed to the outstanding reputation the club has attained in its first decade.

For each of the four whose pen-pictures appear below, there are 50 or more without whose skills, resources and dedication the club would long since have ceased to exist. The positions of Half-Marathon Race Director and Blister Editor particularly spring to mind as time-consuming, onerous duties which have had a great influence on the club's development. Hopefully, some of their stories can be told in future editions of this magazine.

The four Club Presidents of the 1980's are simply representatives of that huge band of people to whom credit is due for a job well done. They're a varied bunch: Four different nationalities, widely different personalities, both sexes represented, each allowing something of themselves to rub off on the club. They are the four with whom the Buck Stopped, who occupied the "Hot Seat That Never Cools Down".

CHARLES COVILLE (Club President 1980-83)

Founder of Sydney Striders, and Club President for almost four years from its inception until early 1984, Charlie Coville was the man who shaped the image of the club and guided it to a position of prominence in the running community.

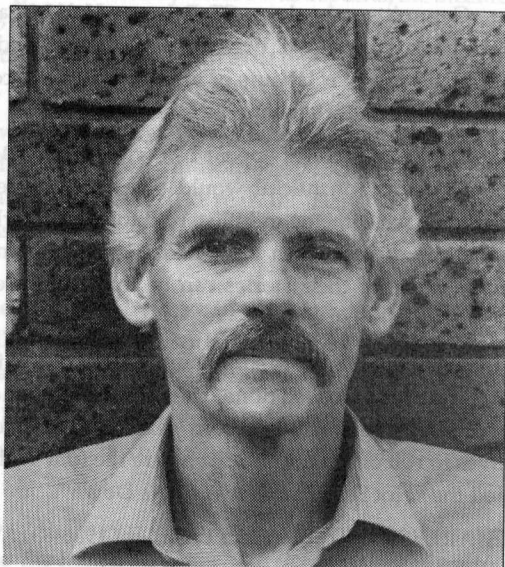
Charles was born in Plymouth, England, in 1948, but his family emigrated to South Africa when he was only one year old. He was brought up in Johannesburg and studied at the University of Witwatersrand. It was here that Charlie's tendency to "get involved" led him to the Chairmanship of the Wits University Cross-Country and Marathon Club, which experience plainly gave him a few tips he would use to good advantage later.

"Wits" was a club with a good social base ("plenty of boating and drinking"), and Charlie helped to rebuild it into one of South Africa's best marathon clubs by 1972 - "we should have won the Comrades' Marathon that year, but didn't", he now laments.

The running scene in South Africa is very different from our Australian experience,

with heavy emphasis on ultras. Being "too slow for cross-country", Charles was "relegated to the marathon and the Comrades". His first 21 races of 42.2 k or more included only 4 standard marathons, and his first ever was a 33-miler!

Charles left South Africa in the late 1970's with his wife Maureen, having run seven Comrades' 90k ultras as well as participating in field hockey and canoeing. Feeling a sense of some disillusionment with South African racial policies generally and at a sporting level, he started casting around for an alternative place to settle. "Perhaps you'd better not



Charles Coville

tell people about this", he says, "but Australia was only one of four possible destinations we considered". After a possible sponsorship to Canada fell through, Charles and Maureen applied from England to emigrate to the U.S.A, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, and vowed to accept whichever offer came first.

Australia won the Gold in this bizarre "contest of Immigration Departments", and today it is strange to think of the Sydney Striders club, the source of so much pleasure for its members over the last decade, having owed its very existence to such random factors as the relative processing-speeds of four nations' bureaucracies. The other three nations are today that much the poorer for the tardiness of their public servants.

Having been advised by a South African friend to settle in Sydney rather than Melbourne "because it rains less" (oh, really?), Charlie arrived in 1978 and soon perceived

the need for a specialist marathon club. A good solid run every Sunday morning was seen as a vital pre-requisite for marathon training, and a regular group was a pleasant and diverting way to do it.

But there was a second impetus for the formation of Sydney Striders - Charlie's South African experience had taught him a few things about race organisation, and his vision was of a club which could surpass the organisational standards which he saw in the Sydney of the late 70's. A running club which is entirely self-oriented has a vital part missing, and it is only when it puts something back into the game that it achieves maturity.

The catalyst, or possibly the final straw, was the NSW State Marathon of 1980, whose organisational standards disappointed Charles so badly that he called the inaugural club meeting within a matter of weeks. The belief that "we must be able to do better than that" launched the Sydney Striders Marathon and Road Runners Club, after a meeting of eight interested parties at the Coville apartment in Artarmon. The first STaR run followed soon afterwards. Charles regarded it as easier to start a new running club from scratch than to "infiltrate" an existing one and risk resentment if he tried to change its established policies!

Considerable care went into the establishment of the Striders' club's image, with strategic media interviews and careful design of club uniforms and publications. Charles remained President until early 1984 when he carried out his much-heralded promise to "walk away from the Presidency and give someone else a go".

In the meantime he had helped to build the club into a position of influence and prominence in the running community far ahead of its numerical size, and he now regards this as the most gratifying feature of his time at the helm.

The standard of professionalism achieved in organising both internal events such as STaRs and open events such as the fledgling Striders' Half-Marathon set the tone for others to follow with pride in subsequent years. This has always been the Striders' strong suit, and, although Charles expresses some disappointment that the club has not attracted the quantity of elite runners he feels is it's due, it is still to be regarded as a mighty achievement.

On a personal level, Charles is "on the come-back trail", aiming to thumb his nose at 'veteranhood' by cracking his long-standing marathon best of 2:45:13. He regards that performance at Winstone, New Zealand, as one of his two best ever, the other being a much earlier 33-miler in Bulawayo, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), in which everything clicked for a time of 3:45.

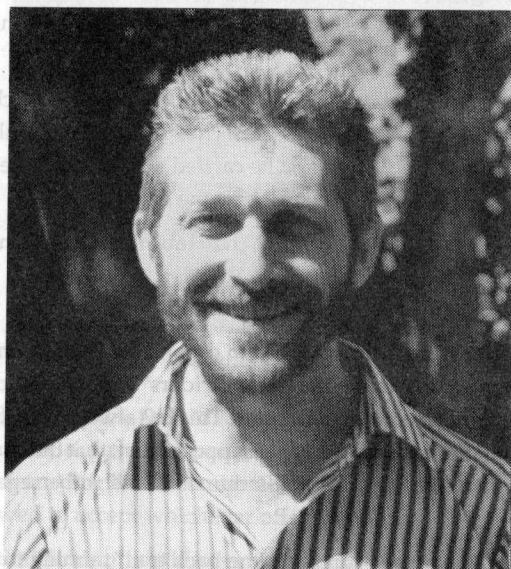
When not running, Charles works as finance manager for a law firm (although he has a tendency to announce wryly that he's a bouncer at a Kings Cross strip-club), and when

not doing that he enjoys spending time with Maureen and their children, touring, renovating and social tennis.

His two greatest wishes are: To live a healthy life in which the pressure of work can be kept at a manageable level and to see the NSWAAA "get off its arse and organise a decent event for once". Charles has recently, after a few years' absence, been spotted on a few STaR runs, where old-timers opine that "we knew he couldn't stay away forever" and where Charles' modest manner causes more recently-joined members to remain unaware of his role as the instigator of their favourite Sunday morning activity.

STEVE CORNELIUS (Club President 1984).

When Founder-President Charles Coville stepped down in early 1984 there was considerable reluctance among members to fill his shoes, so much so that no-one at the AGM accepted nomination to the position! It was agreed that the newly-elected Committee should elect a President from among their number, as the first act of their first meeting.



Steve Cornelius

Steve Cornelius "drew the short straw", and consented to do the job on the clear understanding that it was to be regarded as an interim presidency, and that he would stand down after a single year.

Born in Newcastle, England, in 1947, Steve studied at the Universities of Reading (near

London) and Toulouse (France) in the late 1960's. Finding London a difficult and expensive place to live, he left for a one-year working holiday in Australia in 1972, "because it seemed like a good idea at the time". Now, over 17 years later, he says he just never got around to buying the return ticket. After four years in Perth, he moved to Sydney where he has lived ever since.

A long-time football devotee ("that's PROPER football, played with the feet, not rugby"), Steve started running in the late 1970's, as a convenient way to keep fit without having to rely on about 20 other people. Completion of the 1980 City-to-Surf led him to experiment with half-marathons and some of the Marathon Clinic's 25k and 30k races, and inevitably to marathons in 1981.

Joining Striders in early 1982, he was hoodwinked into "doing a little something for the Committee" by Brian Colwell, and has never forgiven him. The "little something" turned out to be organising the Striders' Calendar, but one thing led to another and it was only in 1989 that he finally relinquished the last of his Striders hats, that of Computer Manager. Steve says his role as President in 1984 was simply as a stop-gap, and regards his roles in computerising club records and in getting the Striders' 24-Hour Track Race off the ground as much more significant contributions to the club than anything he did as President.

Throughout the mid-1980's, Steve was known as an ultra-freak, although he readily admits he "never had the stomach to take on anything more than a 50-miler". However, he still regards his 1985 Wollongong-Sydney effort of 7:29:02 as his best run ever "the sun stayed behind the clouds, and everything just fell right for me on the day".

Steve has not done much running in the last two years, and now spends most of his spare time at Macquarie Uni, where he is in the second year of a B.A. in Linguistics. He teaches computer programming for a living "because it's the only job I know where they PAY you to be a pedantic old fart".

Steve's greatest future wishes are: (a) to lose the 10-kilogram spare-tyre round his middle; (b) to see tobacco made illegal ("it would be if it had been invented yesterday") and (c) for himself and his wife Sally to stay healthy to a ripe old age.

CAROLE LUDINGTON (Club President 1985).

The first and only woman to be Striders' President, and incidentally the only Australian-born President in the clubs' 10 year history, Carole brought her own distinctive touch to the job. When asked, she is too modest to say what she considers to be the most significant achievement during her presidency, but those who knew her during that time remember her unique talent for making newcomers feel welcome.

An outgoing personality, Carole combined the presidency with the post of Membership Director, and made a point of knowing the name of every single club member, a feat

greatly envied by her predecessor and successor. Carole's contribution to the development of the social side of Sydney Striders was incalculable.

Carole did not take up running until 1976 at the age of 42. Her husband Herb and her two sons were runners, and Carole happened to comment one day that she doubted she could run one lap of the oval. The family immediately drove down to the oval to put her theory to the test, and she was right! She made it her ambition to run 2 miles non-stop.



Carole Ludington

Nine years later in 1985 Carole retired from running with 9 marathons, 2 Kosciusko Classics, 4 Palm-Beach-to-Manlys and countless half-marathons, road races, track events and cross countries under her belt. Her fondest memories are her 1981 Gold Coast Marathon (her first sub-4-hour) and her 1983 completion of the Canberra Nocturnal Marathon (she was the first woman in history to complete this unique event, although many had tried and fallen by the wayside).

"But I enjoyed every race I ever entered", she says, "except the Blacktown marathon - I'll NEVER forget that Great Western Highway. In fact it's the only race I didn't complete".

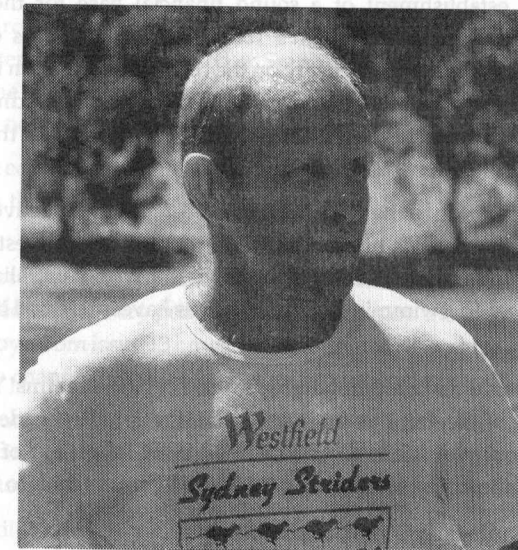
Carole and her husband Herb were introduced to Striders by Dorothy Flanagan, but were also at various times active members of NSW Vets, Sutherland DAAC, Western

Districts and the Marathon Clinic. Both gave their spare time unstintingly to these diverse clubs, often driving long distances from their Caringbah home to act as race marshals or to perform some other benevolence. Herb also made a valuable contribution as Striders' Half-Marathon Race Director for a year.

Carole is now in the 3rd year of a B.A. course in Italian, and also studies 6th grade piano. Her aim in life is to continue both of these and pass with distinction. She enjoys theatre and opera, and on a less cerebral level, participates in aerobics, bushwalking and golf. As if all of the above isn't enough to occupy anyone full-time, Carole still finds time to look after "the (in)famous Herb".

NOBBY YOUNG (Club President 1986-1990).

Nobby Young (who will not thank the author for revealing that his real name is Gordon) is now Sydney Striders' longest-serving President, having been re-elected at the recent A.G.M. for an unprecedented fifth term. During the last four years he has done an unbelievable amount of work for the club and has sacrificed large slices of his leisure-time



Nobby Young

to organise Striders events and ensure the club's wheels keep turning.

It is Nobby's sense of humour, however, which makes him an unforgettable character for most Striders members. When the author telephoned Nobby to obtain material for this pen-portrait, a simple question about his birth-place quickly prompted a long series of

sheep-jokes and many minutes of thigh-slapping before we could return to the business at hand. Those who know Nobby will tell you that this is fairly typical of the man.

Born in Marton, in New Zealand's North Island, in 1946, Nobby came to Australia at the age of 20. His original intention was to stay for four months on a working holiday, but something about the place caught his fancy and 24 years later it seemed a good idea to apply for Australian citizenship! To everyone's surprise, the Department of Immigration didn't object!

It was not until the 1982 City-to-Surf that Nobby started to get involved in distance running, quickly graduating to half-marathons and longer distances. His first contact with the club was by means of the notorious 1983 newspaper article which described Sydney Striders as an elite. "Initially, I thought it had to be a send-up", he says, "but when I met the people realised it wasn't!". However, he was impressed by the friendliness of the club, and was soon taking an active part in its organisation, as Vice-President in 1984.

He thinks the best achievements of the club during his presidency are the growth of the 10k race series, the establishment of a sound financial base for the club, and the experiment with the two Sussan women's 10k races. As far as his own running is concerned, Nobby looks back with pleasure on the run which won him the Outstanding Achievement Award for 168k in 24 hours, his 1985 Wollongong-Sydney run in a few seconds over seven hours, and his best marathon of 2:56. His plans for the future include an outing in this year's Striders' 24-Hour Track Race.

On the work scene, Nobby has, in the past, been as hyperactive as in Striders administration. He now regards himself as "semi-retired" after divesting himself of 3 part-time jobs, retaining only his full-time employment with Australia Post. As far as other sports are concerned, swimming and martial arts have interested Nobby at various times.

When asked about his aims in life, he laughs "I'm too old to have aims! You know, I used to have a philosophy of life, but I've forgotten what it was!". The reader can be assured that Nobby's philosophy of life is to get a full-on belly-laugh out of life, even if the application of that philosophy sometimes paradoxically causes him to forget what it is!

"The title of the 'Blister' was decided upon because I believed blisters to be the most common problem affecting runners".

Charles Coville.

ROGER RIGBY (1990).

THE 'BLISTER' WAS THE 'BLISTER' FROM THE VERY FIRST ISSUE, which consisted of four foolscap sheets stapled at the top left corner.

Issue number 2 comprised fourteen A4 pages folded in half and made up to two A5 pages per page. Which means that the editor (assumed to be Charles Coville however, there are no clues), could see that the beautiful symmetry of International Paper Sizes would eventually serve the Blister's purposes.

Number 3 was saddle-stitched and started to take on the form of the standard 'Blister' of the next few years. Issue numbering was confused until someone started a straight numbering system at about issue 7 or 8.

At issue 12, (circulation 150) the delights of advertising agency suppliers was discovered and Bryce Courtenay obviously leaned on Smith & Miles, long-suffering supplier of 'love' jobs and had the entire issue set and made up in 8pt Times Roman. The same issue reproduced the new 'Blister shoe' artwork for the first time, again thanks to Bryce.

Earlier on, the editor was nameless and one assumes that Charles Coville controlled this office as well as the one of President. However, he went public in issue 7 and declared himself Editor.

Issue 12 must have broken the bank, or the friendship of 'Smithies' and subsequent issues were based on the very good sense of making up the magazine from assembled type-written copy. From issue 13 onwards the Blister style was really stabilised and there was virtually no change to general layout or production methods until 1989.

The first halftone photograph appeared in issue 12 and in varying degrees of quality after that. Looking through back Blisters, photos have always been the magazine's weakest attribute, right up to the present day.

Issue 14A indicated that a re-organisation in the Committee had occurred and a Literature Manager had been appointed in the person of Bryce Courtenay, one assumes to assist Charles.

By issue 16, the Publication Manager had been dismissed and a Publisher appeared instead, yes, Bryce Courtenay. This issue also sported the first Index and was the largest issue to date at 70 pages plus cover.

A major change occurred in issue 19. Bryce remained the Publisher and managed to

have his name positioned above and sovereign to that of the President, in true Publisher style. The major change however, was the listing for the first time of Bill Flanagan as Literature Director.

The next issue (20) saw the disappearance of Bryce from the Blister executive. Bill Flanagan had obviously won a power play and had assumed the mantle of Editor as well as retaining his title of Literature Director.

Issue 23 (April 1985) comprising a record 80 pages plus cover, was the biggest Blister to date and commemorated the 200th STaR and Fifth Anniversary. The circulation stood at 280, a strong indicator of the health of the Striders. By now, Bill also had Roving Reporters working for him, an idea which needs to be resurrected for the future.

In April 1986, issue 27 saw the name of the new Editor, Graham Butler, who also assumed the title of Literature Director. Graham obviously had an iron grip on publishing proceedings from issue 27 until issue 38 (January 1989) when he retired, by now bereft of his Roving Reporters.

As a result of the Annual General Meeting in 1989, Nobby Young and Wayne McCarthy have much to answer for. They proposed and seconded the present Literature Director, Roger Rigby, together with two Assistant Directors in John Ayliffe and Owen Denmeade.

1989 saw the production of a couple of issues by the new team, who learnt some of the idiosyncrasies of Blister-producing, before bringing out a special 400th STaR issue for number 41, in December 1989.

To read every issue as we have done, is to realise just how determined the various editors, literature directors, assistants, roving reporters, publishers and the lone publication manager, were about making the Blister a substantial and representative magazine.

To read the issues of 1983-85, is to relive the fervour of road running and racing at that time, probably the height of the community's love affair with endurance pastimes. To read earlier Blisters, is to experience the search for knowledge and for help in the formulation of good marathon-running techniques. There was not a lot of humour in the magazine during the early years, but there was a lot of self-help and advice.

Reading Blisters from 1983 onwards, it is easy to form the suspicion that Blister 'humour' emerged from the efforts of several identities, particularly Cornelius, Young and Flanagan. Some of the notable exchanges are contained in a later chapter.

Charles Coville has written and preached that the 'Blister' is one of the institutions which are central to the good health of the Striders. The past history shows this claim to be true and, at the very least, it forms the only written 'history' we have. ■

"A day of big fades...."

THERE IS NO HARDER EDITORIAL TASK than compiling a properly representative selection of 'Blister' articles.

There is a wide range of talents in the Striders to say the least and this range is thoroughly represented by the kinds of articles which comprise the 'contributions' to each Blister.

Forty-three issues represents a lot of pen-pushing, however, there is no hope of being fair to most contributors.

Just about the only tests which could be applied to the choice of articles, was one of freshness and of readability. There has been much good material left out and we feel that the only way to redress any apparent wrongs, will be to revisit past Blisters from time to time in future issues of the magazine.

There are a few who have scored double credits in this chapter and this situation can only be blamed on our indecision. A good article is a good article, so at the risk of being charged with 'favouritism', we stuck to our selection.

Our best defence is that all the articles are about running, ranging from straight reporting to whimsical, humorous to eccentric. Advice, always a strong component of earlier Blisters, is covered by Dr Erwin Light on dehydration and an entirely mad article on computerising splits by that closet mathematician, Harvey Blue.

We hope, as Steve Cornelius wrote about Kar Wong that "...all is [eventually] forgiven".

The Avon Marathon.

SUE HILL

BLISTER 4, 1981.

NO NEED YET TO LIMIT THE FIELD and impose a time limit for this Marathon. With only about forty competitors, it is the one race where I don't feel hesitant about taking some of the limelight and starting in the front line.

The Marathon, on May 24th, is the third Avon Marathon to be held in Australia. All have been run on the Harbord Diggers course and I must be one of then few stalwarts who has competed in and finished, all three! Perhaps that is my excuse for taking 4.5 minutes longer over the distance this year than last year.

Well, no more gripes about my disappointing run - many others were justly proud of theirs.

Organisation of the event can't be faulted. Avon certainly did us proud with regular and superbly manned drink and sponge stations (plenty of words of encouragement accompanied the staminade or water) and splits given accurately at each 5k mark plus half way. The leading runners didn't really change from the 2k point onwards. I understand Rosemary Longstaff (ACT) held the lead throughout the race, closely followed by Bev Shingles (NZ), Barbara Byrnes (Vic) and Tess Bell (NSW). Only towards the end did this group spread out significantly.

Of course, I was unable to observe all this, being several minutes behind. For me and, I suspect, many others, it was an extraordinarily lonely race, often with no one in sight to act as a lure or as a challenge. Boredom is certainly the hardest thing to contend with (as I maintain - it's all in the head - and I was feeling empty headed!). I found myself actually stopping at drink stations, just for a chat. At one stage I even stopped to re-tie my shoelaces (double knots and all!) and was soundly reprimanded for worrying about such trivialities. When passing the paper boy at Narrabeen on the return journey, there was a temptation to grab a Sun-Herald for light relief - but I was not sure that I could make the necessary speedy getaway!

It was only at the 40k mark that I eventually spotted another runner, Jacky Turney (Vic), visibly slowing, in front. This was all that was needed to quicken the pace - and she was the only person I managed to overtake during the entire 42.2k.

Winning times were not impressive with R. Longstaff finishing in 2.49.07, Bev Shingles 2.50.29, B. Byrnes 2.53.56, T. Bell 2.55.55, J. Pratten 2.57.22, and then myself in 2.59.45. Hopefully, times in Ottawa will be better - and I'm sure they will. ■

Knackered at the Diggers.

JOHN SNELSON

BLISTER 4, 1981.

KNACKERED. YES KNACKERED WOULD BE AN APPROPRIATE WORD to describe the condition of this Sydney Strider after the 1981 Harbord Diggers' Marathon for Legacy. Elated would be a fair description of the general feeling of success - after all I finished standing up and managed it without walking or committing any purgative atrocities on the way. In some ways though, perhaps I used others to give me a tow - I ran the first 23 ks to just after the Bayview turnaround with Nick Heath of the Turrumurra Trotters, chatting all the way, and the last 10 ks with Neil Callum - not chatting all the way. I managed the intervening 9 ks along, just talking to myself and trying to appear in good condition every time I passed my wife and 6 month old son who had come along to see if it was all really true.

After just enough training (I followed the 13 week schedule published by the Striders - with the exception of the Saturday STIC) to give me the confidence that a finish was possible, including several STaR appearances on the North Shore and other Sundays galloping around Cowan Creek and the tracks at Bobbin Head, it was a bit of a surprise to have to deal with and endure such a variety of elements - rain, wind, high humidity and sunshine.

Still, having the physique of a xylophonic emu, the conditions seemed not to have such a detrimental effect on me as on other runners. I couldn't believe that at 30 k I was passing some good runners - no names, but I thought I must be going too fast (joke) or they had been home for breakfast. Then I saw Neil in front and thought that if I could catch him up, then I could hold on to the finish. A quick look at the Alan Cole compulsory Casio watch confirmed that Derek Clayton was not in danger of losing his record but that a 3-30 was a possibility; so off I went in pursuit.

Isn't it funny that runners who are travelling at about the same speed, say 200 metres in front, can be awfully hard to catch after you've already run 30 ks? It took me ages, and the more I tried to increase the pace the harder it became. Eventually I caught up after legging like a lizard down the hill from Long Reef; it was good, having some company through the depressing streets of Dee Why and Brookvale - full of old sods with big guts and thongs, hangovers and Sunday papers "there but for fortune" I mused and then it was into the "shuffle". Every kerbstone challenged and was negotiated like a hurdler, without bending the knees.

Onto the promenade, and I thought of holding up the head and relaxing the shoulders

but on reflection decided that that would look pretty stupid on a bloke who looked like he was running on stilts!

Neil said "How about a sprint down the prom?" I said "I am bloody sprinting!" Soon it was all over, and a rather sore, elated and yes, knackered little Strider with little strides crossed the line.

Georgina, a Lady and a Runner Beyond Price.

BRYCE COURTENAY.

BLISTER 11, 1982.

THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH POMS. First they let a whole heap of people come from the West Indies and Pakistan, then they let them take over the railway system in the UK. That means that all the real Pom station masters, fitters and turners, shunters, etc. had to migrate to Australia and take over the unions and the railways over here.

The station at Glenbrook is a typical example. This little town dozing on the foothills of the Blue Mountains is so sleepy the dogs have forgotten how to bark. Nothing ever happens at Glenbrook except for one day a year - the Woodford to Glenbrook run. A bush run that is rapidly gaining its popularity amongst the urban set. Registration for the run takes place at the local railway station where everyone then catches the train to Woodford and from there runs back through the bush to Glenbrook.

On the surface, it all looks tidy enough, hardly an opportunity for even the most rabid Pom Station Master to cause chaos and dissension. But, as we have learned to our cost over the past couple of centuries, put a cap with a badge on a Pom's head and it will inevitably lead to both.

I arrived at Glenbrook Station at 7.30 a.m., mainly because I'd never heard of Glenbrook and I imagined it would be at least three hours from home, which it wasn't. At 7.30 am. on a Sunday morning nothing stirred in Glenbrook except the Station Master who, when I approached him, was reading "Whizzer and Chips". That's another thing about Poms - they never really grow up.

"G'day," I said. He looked up, plainly disturbed at having his morning read interrupted.

"You 'ere for the run then?" he asked. I replied that I was.

He fixed his eyes on the curry stain on my track-suit, no doubt thinking dark thoughts about the West Indians and Pakistanis who had caused his downfall at British Rail and subsequent migration to the Antipodes.

"Not on then, is it?"

"Why not?" I asked.

"Don't you listen to the bleeding news then?" he replied.

"No," I said.

"Been a derailment up the line, your lot can't get through."

"We could drive up if we can get some of the locals to drive our cars back?"

He found this genuinely funny. "After Saturday night at the RSL, the locals only assume half-consciousness around 5 p.m. on a Sunday!"

It was obvious that he felt happily responsible for the derailment and that it pleased him mightily to have created mayhem among us with so simple a ploy as playing with his train set.

I decided that there was no point in carrying on the conversation; as far as he was concerned it was game and match for the Hornby set.

"Where can I have a leak?" I asked.

He looked at me with distaste.

"The toilets are down the platform and don't throw the paper towels on the floor!"

I climbed up the steps out of the Station to find a lady in a tracksuit setting up a table attached to which was a large handwritten sign which read 'Race Registration'.

"I thought it was off," I said.

"No," she smiled brightly. "You mean the derailment? We've got a bus coming".

Before the day was out I was to gain considerable respect for Ms Georgina Price of the Blue Mountain Joggers. The unflappable Georgina indicated that we could park in the National Park some three kilometres away and that a bus would take us up to Woodford. She ticked me off the roll, took my money and directed me to see a guy with a truck, if I wanted a T-shirt. ("Only five bucks and if we sell 30, we break even") So I went over and bought a T-shirt.

We had to wait for the park ranger to open the park. I don't know if he too was a Pom, but he was big and mean-looking with a great black beard, so there seemed no point in telling him that he was half an hour late.

We found ourselves parked in a delightful little valley white with frost and soon a whole cavalcade of cars began to assemble, cutting rude tyre marks into the sugar-frosted landscape.

As I had a non-running driver with me, we decided to take the car up to Woodford rather than wait for the bus, so that I can't report on the bus ride up. But I'm sure Georgina made it all look pretty effortless.

We drove up to Woodford Station, which was empty. No doubt the Station Master was an Australian and had heard about the plot to keep us from running and had decided to take a sickie so he didn't have to face Georgina.

Around 10.00 a.m. the runners were all assembled and there was Georgina, stripped down to her running gear, introducing us to the starter, a tweedy old gent who once ran in the Olympics.

Not only did Georgina have organising talent, but she also had the panache to get us going with a bit of class.

However, Bill Courtney of the Western District Joggers lowered the tone immediately by admonishing his team to "Beat the Christ out of them Sydney Striders" But the green and white seemed only faintly amused and the race got under way with the usual disappointing plop of the starter's gun.

What newcomers to the race hadn't been told about this bush run was that runners are strongly advised to have their running shoes re-soled with tractor tyres. The last time this track saw a grader was when Georgina was in nappies.

The first 12 ks of this 25 k run cannot be imagined. But the best way to see it in the mind's eye, is in profile. Imagine that the run is a sales graph and that the company performance it shows has monthly peaks and valleys roughly at about the incline and decline of Mt Everest. Then consider that every jagged rock in the area worth its cutting edge somehow managed to accumulate on this particular first 12 ks, and you can see that those of us wearing racing flats were in the deepest proverbial. Four letter words interjected with 'Oooh's' and 'Ouches' adequately explains why they call them the Blue Mountains.

Going up the inclines was hard work, but nothing compared to going down the other side. Bodies soon piled up on either side of the road clutching ankles and kidneys with gravel rash to be seen by the metre as runners tumbled down the slopes on anything but their legs.

I settled in behind Brian Colwell, grateful to find at least one Strider that hadn't streaked ahead of the field. Michael Halmay, Keith Canard, Robert Harrison and Charles Coville had taken off as though this was a 5 k sprint and I began to pity the Western District Joggers; their humiliation was obviously about 80 minutes away.

The rest of the male Striders seemed to settle down to a more reasonable pace led by the ever-determined Ray Doran and Dave Cox and followed by Bruce Usher, Robert

Shaw, Steve Cornelius, Neil Collum, Richard Cleland and then Brian and myself with Ron Feeney also attached to us. I can't tell you who was behind me, except to say that there weren't too many of them wearing the green and white.

I soon discovered that following in the footsteps of Brian Colwell has one great disadvantage. While Brian climbs the inclines at about average speed, he takes the declines like a Mac truck out of control. On a downhill run Coe and Ovet would not have Buckley's.

The race settled down to a pattern, which consisted of dodging the sharper stones and keeping one's eyes glued to the ground. Taking in scenery for the first 10 ks would have been to have taken one's life in one's hands. If one were to add 'rock avoidance' to the total distance of the race, then it's probably a 30 k race. But finally around the 12 k mark the road turned into a smoothish, ambling, slow decline and eyes that had run rock avoidance for the first part of the race could now be raised to take in the passing scene.

What a lovely run it turned out to be. The air was clear as a polished goblet, the sun was warm, with just a sliver of ice, so that running conditions were just about perfect. The first of the wattle blossom was out and while I was taking all this tranquillity in, that rotten Pommie Bastard, Colwell, heedless of the beauty of the scenery, had advanced another couple of hundred yards ahead of me.

So I concentrated on my duty and caught him up. You see, it was the first time I had ever asked to be a member of a team and the responsibility weighted pretty heavily. It was also my first race with the Striders which compounded my potential misery. What if my namesake, Bill Courtney (note the difference in spelling at least) and his Western District Joggers should manage to beat the Sydney Striders Veteran team by just enough seconds for it to all be my fault? So I glued myself to Brian. I figured that if I came in around the same time as the Club Secretary then they would have to string him up on a gum tree next to mine.

Now that there were no more precipices to run down, Brian turned out to be a hard but fair runner and I dogged after him almost to the finish where it turned out that the last 100 metres was a steep incline into the valley and finishing line. Brian turned around and said something rude to me and took off like a Jack Rabbit to win our personal contest by 20 seconds. (Typical under-handed Pommie trick.)

I was followed in by Ron Feeney, Brian Lynch, Cecil Ford, Mike Edwards, Dwight Melson and Karl Topher, all in around 1.40, and by the time my breathing had returned from desperate to medium hard, Jim Travers, Glen McGregor and Peter Ryan, the last of the Striders but by no means the last of the field, were home. It had been a lovely race and the first 12 ks was happily forgiven with the hospitality of the Blue Mountain Joggers and

their team helpers showered upon us. Tea came in great steaming cupfuls, orange juice and bickies and sausage sandwiches followed, and everyone smiled.

I recalled the Manly Giant Jog a couple of weeks previously, the most underwhelming event of the season. They sure could use a session of mountain air and mounting people.

Finally, the prize giving came. And who do you think had to do that too? Our Georgina. She did the announcing and let the old gent have the glory of shaking paws and giving out the trophies. The Striders won the first and second male home (Michael Halmay and Keith Canard), then first and second in the open male teams. I decided that it was time for me to disappear. What if the male veterans, my team, hadn't made it? I'd be to blame for sure. With Keith and Ray first and second veteran home, and I already knew Richard Cleland had finished ahead of me by a clear two minutes, losing would be my fault, wouldn't it? I mean, you couldn't do much better than the other three did, could you? And then Georgina, God bless her, announced that the Striders Veteran Team had won by the massive and truly overwhelming margin of 45 seconds from the Western District Joggers, who had clearly limped into a dismal second place. How could there be a more perfect day or a more perfect race!

Finally, it was all topped off when Georgina blushing announced that she had won the women's open and that her team had won the female team event.

Congratulations Georgina Price, you run a great event. We'll all be back with our mates next July.

You should have seen my youngest kid's face when I told him that I'd won a medal. "Gee, Dad!" he said. "How far into the bush did you say?" ■

Light on the Subject.

DR IRWIN LIGHT

BLISTER 15, JUNE 1983.

MUSCLE CRAMPS ARE A COMMON COMPLAINT afflicting long distance runners. Most often the legs, and in particular the quadriceps, are involved, but of course any muscle group in the body is susceptible.

A broad approach to some of the causes and suggested remedies follows:

1. Muscle cramps can be caused by loss of mineral ions - potassium and sodium are the most common. Now, although we lose sodium and potassium all through our training in long and short runs (even in cool conditions), most of us concentrate on replacing

the salts only on marathon day, by which time it is far too late, and I therefore suggest taking extra salt in your every-day diet - unless this is contra-indicated for some other medical condition - and, in addition, trying to eat foodstuffs which are known to have high potassium content, such as bananas, Coke and Tab. I re-emphasise that it is pointless to try and exhort your body to absorb vast quantities of sodium and potassium on a day when you expect it to carry you through a marathon, i.e. keep your bank balance up all the time and this prevents the unpleasant consequence of being overdrawn.

2. With blood diversion from most parts of the body to your legs, cramps in other muscles, due to lack of blood perfusion, commonly occurs and this is a suggested cause of abdominal cramps. Slowing down or even walking should help them.
3. One must not forget that cramp in the quadriceps muscles is often due to muscle fatigue. Many athletes and their coaches have an inherent respect for muscular strength in endurance events. Muscle fatigue is due in part to poor perfusion and to the extent that a strong muscle is easier to perfuse than a weak one, the strengthening of muscles could conceivably minimise the extent of muscle pain and loss of skill as exhaustion is approached. Thus, if the end-point of a marathon runner's effort is muscular pain, then a selective gain of strength in the most active muscles is very likely to improve performance. Costill (he's the man who did all the clever pioneering work with the caffeine/fatty acid relationship) has drawn attention to the fact that marathon runners habitually operate just below the threshold at which they begin to get pain from lactate deposition, and taking his postulate one step further, it follows that if by taking caffeine in the recommended amount before a marathon, one can delay the onset of fatigue. This will delay the onset of whatever pain is due to muscular fatigue and also that which is due to lactate deposition. Therefore caffeine-rich substances such as coffee, coke, tab, chocolates, tea, etc. will also help to prevent muscle cramps.

To summarise:

Don't wait until you get thirsty - start drinking water early and keep well hydrated throughout your run.

Maintain a relatively high diet content of sodium and potassium all the time, not only on marathon day.

Training should include some strength as well as flexibility orientated muscle training.

Train adequately.

It won't hurt to take some caffeine - unless if you're running in the Olympic marathon where caffeine has been listed as a prohibited drug.

A note of warning - there are a few medical conditions which can produce muscle cramps in their own right, so if your problem persists or occurs when not related to exercise, consult your doctor.■

Jerusalem to Jericho.

DEREK WHITE.

BLISTER 25, JUNE 1983.

THIS EVENT WAS ORGANISED BY THE ROMAN ADMINISTRATION in an attempt to give the local populace an interest other than nationalistic and religious fervour. The day was quite a success and may become an annual fixture. The entry fee of two denarii (one for children) was considered modest and attracted a large field, but there was a marked absence of male competitors from Bethlehem in the 25 to 30 years age group.

The course was rough, but straightforward and almost traffic-free, and guaranteed accurately measured by Roman engineers. The number of runners and the presence of legionaries acting as marshals deterred the muggers that sometimes infest this road. Drink Stations were manned by members of The Good Samaritan Club and The Daughters of Jerusalem, who offered runners the choice of water or figs.

Favourites to take out the race were Castellus the Centurion, Baruch the Zealot and a young Rabbi from Nazareth. Woman favourite was the reputedly very vast Mary of Magdala. The team events' top contenders were expected to be the Legion "A" Team, the Sodom Striders or the Galilee Gallopers - a group of sturdy lakesiders in fishnet singlets.

At the start line Castellus looked a likely winner as he toed the mark in the dust in his waffle-soled racing sandals. Ele and some others complained about children pushing forward, but the young Rabbi only seemed concerned for their safety in the heat and the dust; their presence appeared to please him and he was undoubtedly their hero. Rumour had it that he had just put in a rigorous forty days' desert training and he certainly looked racing fit.

The Roman Governor performed the ritual start, washing his hands then clapping them together loudly as the signal while his surveyor started the water clock and sand glasses and observed the angle of the sun. The field streamed out of the city gate and down the Jericho road, with the favourites quickly drawing away. Castellus made a particularly fast start and led for the first few kilometres, but Baruch and the Rabbi were pressing him hard, and, at the first drink station, only seconds separated the first three. It was after this

that strange things began to happen and strange rumours began to fly about.

Firstly it was discovered that somehow the water at the drink stations had turned into wine, causing great merriment and some riotous behaviour involving The Daughters of Jerusalem. Then the marshal at the brook was derided because he reported that the young Rabbi had run OVER the water instead of through it. It was about this time - at about half distance - that he took a clear lead and drew away from a steady Baruch with a tiring Castellus holding third place from Andrew, a young, strong fisherman. Hills, stony ground, the heat, nothing seemed to slow the Nazarene and he strode to the finish line an effortless winner.

Baruch and Andrew dead-heated and collapsed in second place; Catellus followed them in to the cheers of the legionaries. But it was the young Rabbi's day and he proved a popular winner.

At the presentation, when he was given his trophy, a handsome cloak, he modestly gave all the credit to his coach, Cousin John, and his special diet plan of locusts and wild honey. The teams events were won by the Ten Lepers (men) and the 5+5 Virgins (women); nobody could touch them in their respective classes.

Mary of Magdala was the leading woman as expected, but as a professional was disqualified and the prize awarded to Martha of Bethany.

The organisers were quite pleased, but will make a few changes for next year. The figs were found to be unsuitable and will be dropped. More sponsorship will be sought from The Sanhedrin, the Temple retailers, the Innkeepers, and so on. The run may be reversed to go from Jericho to Jerusalem - a harder proposition, but offering a bigger centre for the finish.

Everyone who completed the course in under three hours received a scroll donated and inscribed by the Scribes.■

Computerised Splits.

HARVEY BLUE

BLISTER 15, JUNE 1983.

ANOTHER OF THE NOT INDISPENSABLE TIME WASTING ACTIVITIES I cannot do without is playing around with a computer I recently bought. A program to do splits for a marathon! Just type in Target Time and fade and my Sharp PC 1500 will print out a complete race

strategy. That I take no notice of it on the day, go out too fast and blow up is of no consequence. The desire to devote even more time to these crazy hobbies has been satisfied.

OK, so here we go. Start with the target time (TM). Better work in whole minutes that will make calculations easier. Now fade. The best way to work this out is by your time at half way (TH). Most marathons are marked out in 5 kilometres, so let's get the PC 1500 to print out the time for every 5k. It would be handy to know that pace you had to run in each of these splits. Let's get this out in minutes per kilometre. But I always judge my speed in minutes per mile. OK, so let's print that out too.

Most of the books and magazine articles I have read say you should go a little slow at the start, then pick up the pace in the middle and drop off sharply at the last. Crawl in hands and knees more likely! Let's call this feature the speed profile. In the eight and a bit splits we are considering in the 42.195 ks, let's do the first 5 k two bits slower than average rate, the second 5 k two bits faster than average, the third, fourth and fifth 5k sections three bits faster than average. That takes us up to 25 k. For the next 5 k we plan to go one bit faster than average. That takes us up to 30 k, so two bits slower than average. Should be hurting like hell now, better go 5 bits slower than average. Then for the last 2.195 ks we'll come home as we can. This place we will call W for walk. Let's call these fast and slow bits pace units (PU).

Now the slower bits must balance out the fast to arrive at the finish of the target time:

$$(-2 \times 5) + (2 \times 5) + (3 \times 5) \times 3 + (1 \times 5) + (-2 \times 5) + (-5 \times 5) + (-W \times 2.195) = 0$$

Clearly, you can work out how many bits slower than average a walk is: $W = 6.93$. Wow!! If you thought that was complicated just wait - "you ain't heard nutting yet!"

We have to work out just how much faster and slower those pace units are if we are going to be at half way when we want to. Remember (TH). Half the target time minus the time at half way (TH) will give you your fade. It is assumed here that we all do fade. Only R. DeC. comes home faster than he goes out.

$TM/2 - TH = F$. Now look at how many pace units you have in credit at halfway from the speed profile:

$$(-2 \times 5) + (2 \times 5) + (3 \times 5) \times 2 + (3 \times 1.0975) = 33.2925$$

This enables the value of the PU to be established.

$$PU = F/33.2925$$

We are ready now to work out the split times for each 5 k. Let's do it for that illusive 3 hours, and let's say TH is 1 hour 25 minutes:

$$TM = 180 \text{ F} = 5 \text{ PU} = .15 \text{ minutes, about 9 secs.}$$

$$TH = 85 \text{ Average pace } 4.27 \text{ min/k}$$

The time at each 5 k at average pace is first worked out, then the PUs in credit or debit are subtracted or added:

$$5K : 5 \times 4.27 - (-2 \times .15 \times 5) \text{ IOK} : 10 \times 4.27 - (-2 \times .15 \times 5) -$$

You may notice that the PUs for the first out:

$$15K : 15 \times 4.27 - (3 \times .15 \times 5) = 61.8 \text{ etc. } 40K : (40 \times 4.27 - (9 \times .15 \times 5) - (1 \times .15 \times 5) - 22.85 = 22m \text{ } 42s \text{ } (2 \times .15 \times 5) = 42m \text{ } 42s$$

two 5's cancel each other:

$$61m \text{ } 48s - (-2 \times .15 \times 5) - (-5 \times .15 \times 5) = 168.5 \text{ } 2h \text{ } 48m \text{ } 33s$$

That means you have got 11m 27s to do the last 2.195 k. That is at 5m 13s per kilometre.

Now we are getting near the end. Only have to work out the pace for each section. Let's call the slowness or fastness in each section the speed (S). These from the speed profile are -2, +2, +3, +3, +3, +1, -2, -5, -6.93, then the rate is:

$$([TM / 42.195 \times 5] + [S \times PU]) / 5$$

is the time taken to run 5 ks at average pace with the speed factor times the pace unit added and all divided by 5. Clear as mud. As this is minutes per kilometre, just multiply it by 1.609344 to get minutes per mile.

Now what I suggest you do is throw all this away and go running instead. Your time will probably be much better spent. ■

Qantas Jog-About.

ALEX HAMILL.

BLISTER 13, 1985.

WHEN BRENDA AND I FIRST DECIDED TO TAKE A QANTAS PACKAGE to the West Coast of the United States and Hawaii, we hadn't really thought much about keeping up the running. About a month before we were due to leave, Bryce Courtenay convinced us to join the Striders and suddenly it seemed terribly important to keep some of the condition we'd gained after just three STaR runs.

So, even allowing for jetlag, demanding children, change of diet, bus travelling and

everything else one expects on a trip like this, we made the pledge to run at least once in every city. So, for the uninitiated, here's a guide to the Qantas Jogabout Tour of the West Coast.

Arrival in the States.

On arrival we were met by our tour guide, Gordon. He was a typical Californian - sun-tanned (or ray-tanned), about 28 years of age, with a trim beard and looked like he just stepped off the cover of *Runner's World*. We established in the first two minutes of discussion that he was a runner and that we'd spend some time on the road together. (Have you ever noticed that even complete strangers will establish each other's running credentials very quickly?).

San Francisco - The first run.

On our bus tour we discovered the marvellous Golden Gate Park. It breathes the Pacific Ocean and we were told that when the fog rolls in the temperature can drop ten degrees in ten minutes. Next day we took the chance and caught a cab from the hotel to the ocean. We then set off on an early morning run through the Park.

It was a marvellous experience - Americans use their public parks better than anybody on earth. We passed fellow joggers, frisbee throwers, roller skaters and bike riders. At one stage, as we tried to run the jetlag out of our legs, we came upon a fenced enclosure containing a herd of American bison. That in itself made the run worthwhile.

The interesting thing about the Park is that the man who designed it (and it's all man-made), included lakes, man-made waterfalls and even flower beds resplendent with the local football team's colours and insignia. The one thing he decreed was that there be no statues. So the first thing they did when he died was to erect a statue in his honour.

The run through the Park is about 5 or 6 kilometres and you come out at Stanyan Street, down to Geary and then downtown to the hotel. Apart from the blacks, an overheard conversation between two men saying "I love you too" and police with loud speakers pulling over a fast speeding car, it was like any Sydney run. We had heard a lot about the San Francisco hills but they didn't worry us on this day.

San Francisco - "Come on Aussie".

Deciding that it wasn't worthwhile catching a taxi out to the Park again, we checked a map and realised that we could run from the hotel to Lombard Street, which was billed as "the world's crookedest street". It seemed ideally located on the map near Fisherman's Wharf and, whilst it required us to run through the Saturday city shopping crowd, we decided to have a go.

Running through the crowded morning shopping centres, resplendent in our Australian

T-shirts, we realised that from all the "goodonyermates" yelled at us that half the people there were also from Down Under.

Whilst Lombard Street is billed as the world's crookedest street, somebody forget to tell us that you need to climb the world's hilliest hills to get there! At one stage, passing Filbert Street, I really thought the angle-parked cars were going to tip over. As we climbed Lombard Street, determined to run to the end, a big, black American who was walking slowly to the top raised his fist and yelled "More power to you!" It was enough to see us to the peak, pretending that we weren't utterly exhausted. In all, I guess the run was about 8 kilometres, but with the hills involved, had to be worth at least double that to our still-tired legs.

As we arrived back at the hotel, we saw tour guide Gordon setting out for his run. We looked like he'd been dressed by Calvin Klein for an Olivia Newton-John movie. Resplendent in head-band and designer brand gear, he certainly looked the part. But could he run? Brenda was determined to find out.

Yosemite - "Peak-hour Park".

Despite the fact that Yosemite National Park is a 4-5 hour bus trip away, we decided it would be a splendid relief from the people- and car-choked streets of San Francisco. However, on arrival we were to be deeply disappointed. An article from the *San Francisco Chronicle* summed it up nicely: "most tourists expect to find a wilderness and instead find a small city". And it's true. Whilst the surroundings are postcard perfection, the truth is that there were more cars in the valley than downtown San Francisco.

However, we were determined to find some solitude and less than 20 minutes out of the chaos was a bush trail and a tranquillity that even the hundreds of cars couldn't disturb. The pine scent is overwhelming and the chipmunks and bluejays on the track made it an ideal run. On the way back, we once again saw Gordon setting off on his run, looking a million dollars.

Monterey - "His bark is worse than...".

A quick glance at the map reveals that Monterey is on the seafront and, as any runner knows, you can always find a track where there's ocean. This was no exception. The run through the sterile-clean city area was pleasant in itself, but only ten minutes out of town you hit the famous Cannery Row from John Steinbeck's novel. It was a marvellous feeling to simply run along this renowned street.

As I came upon the seafront, I stopped abruptly as the air was broken by the sound of loud and vicious barking. I had already read about guard dogs that American companies hire out overnight to watch over their premises and felt so sure I was about to be set upon by a giant Doberman. Looking in the direction of the noise, I realised it was in fact coming

from the sea. It wasn't dogs, but a herd of seals doing perfect Fido impersonations. I continued on the track out to the Stanford University Marine Centre and then back to town along the same route. A more picturesque run you'd never find. Probably about 9 kilometres in total.

Brenda ran separately with our two sons, Marcus and Joshua, and reported that she actually saw Gordon jogging, which means there must be more to him than the pretty clothes.

Santa Barbara - "Brenda Gets Gordon".

Santa Barbara is billed as offering "the most expensive real estate in California" and deservedly so. Gloriously placed on the ocean, it is a joggers' paradise. A track runs at least 5 kilometres from point to point with the ocean on one side and lush, green lawns on the other.

At this stage we actually cornered Gordon and he agreed to come for a run. We jogged out slowly to the south, past Fisherman's Wharf (there is one in every American seaport) up to the point. I had intended a slow run - about 5 minutes/kilometre pace - but it was obvious that Brenda was feeling toey. She set out at least 50 yards in front and was determined to test Gordon. On the way back, I decided to also see if there was anything left in the legs after all that travelling and quickened pace. Misreading the location of the motel entirely, and thinking I could see the motel, I sprinted and then realised I was at least 2 kilometres away and did the last section very tough. Brenda really worked Gordon out, as he exclaimed at the end "I have never run this fast in my life". But he also decided that he liked it and in fact spent the rest of the holiday looking for us to go for a run.

Los Angeles - "Can muggers catch joggers?"

Everyone on the tour bus was hyped about LA and the crime problem. Our hotel was not so well located downtown and by the time we landed there our fellow tourists were tentative it was obvious they were not going to move more than one block away. I am sure that the person writing our tour guide has a franchise on the coffee shop next door, because that's about as far as anybody went the first day. (It reminds me of the time that I saw an American jogging up and down the corridor of his Osaka hotel because he was scared of getting lost outside).

Only a cross between Roadrunner and Apollo Creed runs in LA but we decided to go anyway. It was the day of the transport strike (they have them over there too). and the city was choked with cars. It wouldn't rate highly on a "must run" list, but we covered about 10 blocks in both directions and certainly got to see more of LA than anybody else on the tour.

Anaheim - "Disneyland for the Kids - Nothing for the Runners"

Walt Disney might have created the Magic Kingdom for kids but somebody certainly forgot us runners when they made Anaheim, which is the suburb surrounding Disneyland. It looks like they held a convention for fast food and low-priced motels twenty years ago and they decided to stay. If Walt designed Tomorrowland and Fantasyland, then Anaheim was surely created as Horribleland. Even running a couple of miles away from the highway reveals nothing but factories, dust and low-cost housing. I think I can honestly say it was one of the few runs I have not enjoyed and even Brenda, who is never one to complain about such things, put it down as a one-out-of-ten. Still, it was a run.

San Diego - "A Run above Par".

As we drove into San Diego we learned that the blue line down the main street is the route of the San Diego Marathon and knew we were on a winner. Driving around the edge of Balboa Park we saw runners by the hundreds. It is truly one of the perfect running cities of the world and a conversation with a cab driver revealed that there are over 40 marathons held in the city. He was also a marathon runner, having competed in the Seattle Marathon just months prior.

We decided to go for an evening run and I suggested the golf course beside our hotel complex. Brenda is also a golfer of some note and warned me about the dangers of running on a course. However, our previous attempts in LA and Anaheim made me even more determined to stay off the roads. It was perfection. The course was lush and undulating and took at least an hour to run right around. The air was fresh and the only noise was the quiet motors of a couple of golf buggies. We decided to do the same thing again tomorrow.

Tomorrow - "No chance at the course record".

We set out at 8 a.m. into the golf course with Gordon accompanying us. He was excited about the prospect. I had painted a picture of the ideal running circuit and he was anxious to try his new-found speed. However, as we set one foot on the grass, a loudspeaker boomed out "No joggers on the golf course!" (Was it recorded? Most things in America are). Unperturbed, we simply turned left, across the highway and suddenly found ourselves running through a hilly, meandering park trail to reveal a lookout over the city. I knew San Diego wouldn't disappoint.

Las Vegas - "Gordon Gets Even".

They say that entertainers who go to Las Vegas suffer a thing called "Las Vegas throat". It is a condition that comes about because of the harsh, dry desert air and usually takes about two weeks to manifest itself. Let me tell you that RUNNER's Throat comes after about 20 minutes on the road.

Despite the fact that it was only 8 a.m. the temperature was already nudging over 30 degrees. Still, we were determined to at least try it. Gordon plotted the route which was simply up and down Las Vegas Boulevard and also involved walking through the hotel casino (which at 8 a.m. is as busy as the MCG on Grand Final day). resplendent in our sweat-soaked gear. Gordon was used to this weather, having grown up in Florida, and insisted that we run down the sunny side of the street, just to ensure that the temperature was that much hotter.

At the time of our visit Caesar's Palace were holding their Grand Prix. They had already promoted world-class boxing and other classic sports events. I am sure that one day they will decide to run the "Caesar's Palace Marathon". Don't go!

Honolulu—"The Capital of Running".

I guess nothing really needs to be said about running in Honolulu. Despite the humidity, this has to be one of the best places on earth. We ran up Kalakaua Avenue with Waikiki Beach to the right of us... up around Diamond Head and back down through Kapiolani Park, which is where the Honolulu Marathon finishes. Our route was actually part of the Marathon track and we saw the mileage signs painted along the road. Honolulu claims the title of the world's capital of running. They certainly deserve some consideration.

Honolulu - "A Nodding Acquaintance".

We decided to do the same run again, but this time simply run up to Diamond Head and back down the beach road. It occurred to me that there is one different aspect of Honolulu running that stands out... for every man on the road there are at least two ladies. Fat ones, slim ones, Caucasians and orientals, some pretty and some not so pretty, but never anywhere have I seen so many women. Brenda was in her glory.

If you have ever run in the Emperor's Park around Tokyo, you will know that the many thousands of Japanese who frequent this track ALL run in an anti-clockwise direction. No-one ever runs the other way. The reason for this is simple - Japanese society decrees that it is polite to say "hai" to people you pass who have something in common with you. The logic is that if you run around nodding "hai" to every runner you meet, you finish with your head feeling worse than your legs. This is also true of running in Honolulu because if you decide to be friendly about it and at least acknowledge runners coming in the opposite direction, you look like a reject from that funny CC's TV commercial where people keep nodding like they have a nervous problem. This is particularly difficult where the pretty girls are concerned.

All in all, it was worth every step and there is definitely no better way to see or feel a city. If any of you plan on a tour, get onto the streets. You won't regret it. ■

Smiley Comes Through.

BRYCE COURTENAY

BLISTER 15, JUNE 1983.

NIKE 1983 WASN'T A GOOD RACE FOR EVERY STRIDER. In fact, the glazed eye wobble, a technique imported by Bryce Courtenay into Australia from Honolulu, seemed to have been taken up with enthusiasm by a number of my running colleagues.

Now folks, let me tell you, that while this technique will get you on to television, it doesn't actually improve your performance. Real stars finish smiling. They finish with their arms high in the air and smiling. Like de Castella. I mean, if we can't run like him, we can at least finish like him. But let me begin at the beginning.

The kid from Balmain started on me three weeks before Nike. "We're running even splits", he said. "No more charging out under the mistaken belief that your body has somehow developed new resources you previously knew nothing about. Just remember you're nearly fifty, you've got legs like a canary and we haven't ever done more than 80 ks a week this year".

"You're right, Alex. I absolutely promise that we'll run strictly to our splits, come what may".

"And, we'll run three fifteen or maybe three twenty, depending on how we feel after thirty kilometres?"

"Word of honour, Mate".

The kid made me repeat the promise about ten times so that it was properly programmed into my distinctly under-developed running brain.

"Just stay glued to Alex", I told myself all week leading up to the race. "Don't listen to your ego, listen to your mate".

So there it was. I knew that, providing I didn't come disastrously unstuck, we'd be coming in "Siamesed" at around three twenty.

But typical of a kid who hasn't had a proper upbringing, Alex arrived at the starting line with a severe virus, the kind that keeps most people in bed. So much for my running mate. So much for all those carefully worked out splits.

Alex hastily wrote my splits on my arm and promised he's run with me as far as he could. "Stick to those bloody splits, you hunchbacked canary", he wheezed.

We ran off together, Alex, Bob Cheetham and myself.

Alex kept us rigidly to our splits; in fact we never varied by more than 12 seconds over the first fifteen kilometres. The dreaded flu was catching up with the kid and at around the 18 k mark, I joined Irwin Light and Leo Leader, while Bob elected to stay with Alex a little longer.

Irwin declared that he would run as "Hare" keeping us honest. It must be the first time in marathon history that two scrubbers like Leo and myself actually had our own hare. If I hadn't been so busy breathing I would have broken down with mirth.

Now the reason Irwin Light doesn't run around 2:50 every time he races is because of his running shoes. They were a free test sample given to him when the Tiger shoe company went into the running business twelve years ago and Irwin says he can't bear to part with them; after all, they've clocked 50,000 ks together. If someone could persuade him to try on a pair of New Balance 420s he'd discover that his shoulder blades were not meant to smack him behind the ears every time his feet land.

Irwin slid back at around the 30 k mark at about the time I too was beginning to feel a little weary. Leo and I continued on together. Leo, turning to me, said: "I've got a Mars Bar buried around here somewhere".

He's running well enough, I thought, but obviously he's gone a bit woofy in the head.

At about 21 miles, when you know that the wall could be waiting for you around the next corner, I looked at Leo: "How's it feeling, mate?", "Good as gold", he replied. "But I should have found my Mars Bar and Coke by now".

"Christ! He really is gone, poor bugger!"

Just then a nice looking lady with a couple of kids was seen on the grass beside the road, holding up a Mars Bar and a can of Coke. Leo peeled off like a Spitfire in a dogfight. "Like to share?", he yelled, not really meaning it. "You're out of your #%\$*# mind", I thought, doing a bit of a surge in case he turned violent.

"I'll catch you later," he yelled after me. "Not bloody likely", I thought. "That's the first runner I've ever burned off with a Mars Bar and a Coke".

The rest of the race was just a matter of sticking to my arm, that is, Alex's numbers written on my arm.

Over the last five or six ks I kept passing Striders who were limping home as well as some hundreds of other runners practising "Courtenay Collapse" or "Honolulu Finish". As I was still feeling human, I tried not to imagine how.

With a kilometre to go I started practising. I'd throw my hands up in the air and try to grin through the grimace on my face.

One guy on the sideline asked me if I was all right and then after I'd passed him I heard him say to his mate: "I think he's having some sort of a fit".

With 100 metres to go, I had enough strength to get my arms up above my shoulders and if there wasn't much of a smile on my face, at least the corners of my mouth moved east and west.

I crossed the line at 3:13:58, thirteen minutes better than my previous best.

Leo came in, munching and burping, only 5 seconds later! For him it had obviously been a delicious race and also a P. B. It takes all sorts to run a marathon.

Bob ran a beautifully judged 3:20 and Alex (they make 'em tough in Balmain) wheezing and grimacing, the muscles in his calves twitching like a junky doing cold turkey, crossed the line in 3:38. Alex's run along with Steve Cornelius', who also ran with a viral infection, if not the best performances of the day, were certainly amongst the most gutsy.

Well done all. It was lovely running with you. ■

On The Road From Sydney to Wollongong.

BRENDA HAMILL

BLISTER 21, OCT 1984.

RECENTLY I WATCHED GERALDINE TURNER sing a brilliant tune called "Just a Housewife". It described to the finest detail the Mickey Mouse chores that a housewife has to perform. Well, I'm just a housewife, or as I prefer to call it a "Kept Woman". Sure I have all those chores too, but manage to keep them all to a minimum. It's amazing what a quick flick of a duster and a vase of flowers can do to a room.

Who could want for a better job? One's own boss and at least six hours per day to do as one pleases. That is unless the children are sick, need chauffeuring to tennis, cricket, football, swimming or athletic training, the dog has been in a fight and in need of veterinary attention, the P&C meetings are on, it's my turn for canteen duty or, worst of all, the washing machine breaks down and all day is wasted on waiting for the service man to call.

Still I do have some time and like to utilize it well. After running in marathons for the last three years I decided this year I would try something different. My aim was to run in the Sydney to Wollongong Ultra.

The inspiration first hit me in October last year. I was standing alone with a large group

of people on the steps of Sydney Town Hall watching the finishers come in from Wollongong. They came in all ages, shapes and sizes and amongst them was Caroline Vaughan - a woman. Not that I was about to compare myself with her. She ran it in 8.04.22 and is a very accomplished runner. Still, I felt if I took it slower, I could finish.

As we were away for six weeks in December-January I had a forced rest at that time and took January-February to get slowly back into training - averaging about 50k per week. In March and April I worked up to 80k per week. Anzac Day saw my first Marathon. I died around halfway but managed to finish in 3.35.00. After that I went into a different, for me, style of training. I knew I'd have to have longer runs up my sleeve but knew also that I would be too tired to increase my distance and run every day.

My training program went something like this: STaR on Sundays, short run Monday, rest Tuesday, Long - between 30k and 45k - Wednesday, rest Thursday, short Friday and Saturday, depending on the Social Activities of the night before. I also swam at least three times per week and spent six weeks working out at a gym. So my mileage didn't really increase, just the addition of one long mid-week run.

I ran all the Half Marathons and Marathons I could get near. Striders Internal, State, Wang, Cooranbong, Woodford to Glenbrook and Gillawarna with the idea of finishing comfortably and being able to go out and train again the next day.

The only Marathon I missed was Campbelltown. Unfortunate it fell six weeks prior to the Ultra and along with my planned Wollongong partner Bryce Courtney, I took the advice of other club members and ran a 60k that day. We finished utterly exhausted but felt sure on the day we could manage another 23k.

After reading all the material put together in the ultra kits, Bryce and I decided we would try Dave Williams' theory of walking for a few minutes every half hour from the start. We also decided unless one was sick or injured we'd run together.

With the help of Alex, Terry McIver, Richard Mack, Lyn Evans and physiotherapist Margaret Turner (well trained by triathlete Harry) we set out on a cool Sunday morning. The 5am start from Sydney Town Hall ensured absolute minimum of sleep the night prior, but I knew from Marathon experience I would have trouble sleeping anyway.

I was fortunate to have company for the whole run despite the fact that Bryce and I had to separate, but more about that later. I think there were about 50 starters, but you lose track of them. Most attempt this event with a very carefully planned strategy. We discovered that others were following the Williams theory and certainly planned drink stations seemed to coincide. We had intended to place ours about every 8 ks but in fact we found that we needed them more frequently towards the end of the run. There is no way you could attempt this event without a team of supporters. Apart from the obvious

requirement of someone to hand out food and drink, company is absolutely essential. Our team took turns at running, although on looking back, Lyn Evans completed well over 60 ks. As agreed, Bryce and I did run together until Sublime Point where a knee injury (Iliotibial Band Friction Syndrome) caused by running that sort of distance on the same camber had become extremely painful and I was slowing Bryce down.

Margaret produced the can of magic spray on several occasions and then finally strapped my knee in the hope of giving it some support. However it was the support that Alex and Lyn gave me over those last 20 k and the two of them continuously telling me that my knee was feeling better that got me home. A special thanks to them.

During my training runs I tried everything from bananas, biscuits, jelly babies and Mars Bars to Primas, Coke and coffee. On the day all I had was chewing gum, water, apricot Primas, barley sugar and black coffee and towards the end some cold Coke. Nothing tasted as good as the cold can of Carlton Light I grabbed from Bill Flanagan's hand as I crossed the finish line. It was a great thrill to finish and apart from my In fact, taken slowly, it is much easier than the marathon.

My congratulations to other Strider finishers Steve Cornelius (his second year), my running mate Bryce, Dan Gray and, maddest of them all, Nobby Young who has completed two more ultras.

As it has taken me a while to get back into running because of my knee injury I have found a new way to fill those "free" hours. Trying to master the art of cycling. Only last Saturday I was terrorising a group of Striders in Lane Cove Park.

The next serious challenge is a mini triathlon for novices. Providing the lap counters in the cycle leg are not in a hurry to get home I should be able to finish.

Sure beats the midday Soapies and as for the "Bored Housewife Syndrome", there's no time for that.■

Editorial.

BILL FLANAGAN

BLISTER 21, JUNE 1984.

THIS BEING THE LAST BLISTER FOR 1984, it may be the right time to look back at the year.

The STaRs continued to attract their largest numbers in March and May, as we all got keener with Nike and Wang bearing down. Instead of the usual 50 - 70 attending, we

peaked at well over 110 during that period.

This may be the reason for some disappointing individual marathon performances during the year. It seemed that many members suddenly cranked up the mileage and intensity in a last minute panic before their marathon. The most pleasing performances came from Striders who were regular attenders at STaRs. They found that they had only to train consistently during the year, to rip out a good marathon. There isn't a need to do the long course every week, but rather just come along for an easy run.

Too many Striders seemed to be doing their biggest mileage ever 2 - 3 weeks before a marathon, or ripping out mammoth speed sessions they'd never tried before, thinking it would ensure a good return on marathon day. Never has anyone said they ran a bad marathon because they didn't train hard enough in the two weeks before the race, but plenty have come unstuck because they did too much during that period. Remember the taper.

It seems that another problem arises after an early-season marathon, when some can become overkeen after a good performance, then, while still on a high, they try to continue long hard training immediately. These runners usually disappear after a few weeks. It needs to be realised that P.B. marathons really do take a lot out of you, no matter how good you feel afterwards, and I'm sure it would be better to run very easily for a week or two. Come along and enjoy an easy short-course STaR before building up for another race.

Talking of STaRs, those of you who've been burnt off the road by Alistair Mackie on Sunday mornings will be interested to know who his training partners will be on October 31. He has teed up a run in Canberra with a group which includes Deek, Daniel O'Dea and Graham Clews. Wonder who's running in the fast group!

After hearing the comments about Nobby Young's column in the last Blister, I decided I'd need to put aside a couple of pages for replies from Striders (or their solicitors). As we go to press, only one has been received - You've got 'em Nobby, although you must have got president/database controller worried, as he has reinstated you to page 1 of the marathon ladder. I thought the going rate for this favour was a case of cold ginger beer after a STaR.

The general consensus of Striders (according to the Blister survey) seemed to be a liking for training advice type of articles. It seems that most are interested in Why, rather than How, the P.B. marathon is run. After all, it's the three months or more before the big day that bring that elusive P.B. Could all future contributors keep this in mind when putting pen to paper. Tell fellow Striders your secrets that brought about your performances.

This certainly doesn't mean that we want contributions from sub 2.20 marathoners only. One of the beauties of the Blister is that the 3.45 marathoner can read an article by

a fellow Strider who just cracked 3.30 for the first time. Surely he/she can relate more to this than an article on how Deek runs 2.08. The same applies for the 2.50 marathoner reading about a Strider's 2.40 effort. ■

Kar Wong Fan Club Bulletin: Come Back Kar, Ali Is Forgiven.

STEVE CORNELIUS.

BLISTER 22, JANUARY 1985.

AFTER ONE SHORT YEAR RUNNING WITH SYDNEY STRIDERS, one of our most popular members has left us to live in South Africa. This is an unusual departure for a club which is accustomed to welcoming immigrants FROM Johannesburg and Cape Town, but that's pretty much par for the course as far as Kar Wong is concerned. Normality and conformity, for the man who has been described as "probably the most unlikely Strider ever", are non-starters.

Kar began his career in the marathon-running scene with a 6 hours 10 minutes result at the 1980 Gillawarna. Kar himself, with typical candour, describes this as "an unofficial time". One can imagine the scene as Kar, inscrutable expression up front, attempts to assess the deserted finishing area, the abandoned barbecues, the imminent sunset, and stores away in his mathematician's brain-box the information that, even for Western Districts Joggers and Harriers, patience is finite.

Within two years, the be-spectacled phenomenon had crashed through the 4-hour barrier, and was heading for the stratospheric levels of distance running. After another quantum leap to 3.22.21 at the 1983 Big M, Kar discovered Sydney Striders and purchased an emerald-and-white singlet. Subsequently, he was rarely to be seen without it, some of his fellow-Striders hypothesizing that he also used it as a nightshirt surrogate.

1984 was to be a big, big year for Kar. The very mention of a marathon, anywhere in the southern hemisphere, had him hurriedly packing his toothbrush and Striders singlet and sprinting fanatically for the Greyhound bus. It would be true to say that if Bullamakanka had staged a marathon in 1984, Kar Wong would have represented Sydney Striders in it. After 11 marathons in nine months in four states, including five PBs, his marathon standard stood perilously close to three hours. How many of us, smart as we may think we are, can claim to have HALVED our marathon PB in only three years?

When he took out the "Most Improved" trophy at Campbelltown in July, the bemused president of Western Districts turned to me and said, "He's one of YOUR blokes, isn't he?" "My word," I braggled, as Kar brandished his impressive trophy, "he's a Strider right

down to his bootstraps."

Who could fail to be captivated by the flailing arms, the chest-high knees, the steamed-up glasses, the vague "absent-minded professor" gaze, the tendency to do solo 60 km runs the day before STaRs, and the indisputable (and seemingly never-ending) series of marathon PBs? Poor old Wayne Stanton, after running 5 km of a marathon in 17 minutes and finding Kar Wong AHEAD of him, had a mid-life crisis about fifteen years early and has never been the same since.

Brian Colwell drove Kar from Randwick to Liverpool for the State Marathon in his white Commodore station-wagon, and was surprised, after the race, to find Kar sitting confidently and imperturbably in someone else's car which was neither white, nor a Commodore, nor a station-wagon. "Ahhhh", he lamented, "I THOUGHT someone was wrong with this car."

By the time Kar was voted 2nd in the Striders' Outstanding Achievement Award of 1984, he had acquired a following akin to the devoted teeny-bopper fan-clubs of the 1960s. "Man," groaned one of them at the Prizegiving in February, "Kar Wong is so damn 'cult' he makes Stefan Grossman and Ellen McIlwayne look like Countdown Chart-busters." I just have to agree. Kar, I'd even forgive you for the day you got me lost in the Hermitage Reserve on Harvey Blue's STaR run and we got threatened with shotguns by five angry householders whose gardens we'd violated, if you'd just say goodbye to the Applied Maths Department at Wits University and put your Striders singlet on again for next Sunday morning. Come back, Kar Wong, all is forgiven. ■

The day of big fades:

The Nike Canberra Marathon.

NOEL BARTON

BLISTER 23, APRIL 1985.

THINKING ABOUT IT, I HAD AN EARLY HINT that things were not quite right for the Canberra NIKE. That was when I woke up and went for a stroll in the warm morning air at about 6.00 a.m., two hours before the race start. In the previous year, the weather was "bracing", but this year, it was plain nice - shorts and T-shirts were possible, and the fans and spectators looked set for a comfortable day.

Still, I had done all my preparations: I'd averaged over 100 km per week for four months; I'd tapered off very thoroughly; I'd eaten like a horse at the mandatory carbo-loading

dinner at an Italian restaurant which was replete with track-suited runners, talk of shin splits, PBs and negative splits and I'd improved my half marathon time in 1985 by 2 minutes down to 82.5 minutes. And, of course, I was going to run 2 hours 54 minutes, a 6 minute PB. It was going to be Plan A: A slow start to settle down, and then steady kilometres at 4 mins/km until I'd get a little tired, and then I'd gracefully slow down a little bit before crossing the finishing line triumphantly like last year.

The atmosphere at the start was terrific and I had just enough time to take a little jog, and to take on and dispose of fluid until my water balance was absolutely perfect. Immediately before the start, the crowd of runners was friendly and not pressing too close, and the gun went off at 8.00 sharp.

The race initially unfolded exactly as planned: The first 10k was up in 42 minutes and we (fellow Strider and running mate, Don Price, and I) smoothly picked up the pace a little bit. We were 20 mins 54 secs at 5 km and 40 mins 54 secs at 10 km, and we only lost a few seconds to the 4 mins/km pace on the hills the first time through Weston Park. It was 85.2 minutes at half way, and we were doing nicely.

Along the way, we'd plenty to keep us entertained and alert. There seemed to be Striders everywhere: they were led by Phil Garvin and Ken Wylie who were running beautifully, and followed by Ron Corden and Graham Burke who'd got off to a cracking start by doing the first 10 km in under 38 minutes. I remember yelling "You're going too fast!" to Graham, whereupon about twenty runners near him looked absolute daggers at me. We had a word or two with other Striders such as Bruce Murray and Bernie King who'd started a bit faster than us, but who we swept past pretty easily.

And so it continued, until some signs of weariness appeared for me at about 25 km. Suddenly, I was aware of sweating profusely, labouring hard, and of being unable to keep up with Don Price who was steadily pounding on in his inimitable lizard-squashing style. Still, at about 27 km, Nobby Young appeared by the side of the road. "You're doing well," he said brightly. "You look fresher than all the rest, keep it up!"

At about 28 km, I spotted my friend with whom my family stayed and he (being about 95 kg) jogged with me for about 20 metres. "If I can run the next 14 km in one hour, I'll do 2 hours 54 minutes" was my hopeful rather than confident observation. But, almost immediately, I felt twinges of cramp in both calf muscles and later all throughout my legs and feet, and I knew I was in big trouble to be so incapacitated so far from the finish.

Another striking thing happened to me shortly after. I had been following a woman runner for about 5 km whilst desperately trying to overhaul her; picking out individual runners and trying to catch them is my pet strategy late in races. Suddenly, there was another woman passing me, so, ever-gallant, I politely enquired as to what time she hoped

to run. She looked at me with sheer scorn and witheringly replied "fast enough to win". Well, that was astonishing! The thought that people could entertain ideas of winning races had never entered my mind - a race was, for me, something that you just did your best in and naturally finished in the middle of the field. The conversation did not continue.

The latter stages of the race became a very personal effort. I couldn't stretch out and run efficiently because of my cramps, and I was finding the going very warm and sweating more and more. Probably the only thing that kept me going was the thought that I'd done all that training and put my family to such inconvenience that to pull out was unthinkable. I caught a glimpse of a few fellow Striders near the Weston Park turnaround. Ken Wylie was still running well and had a tight smile and wave for me, but Ron Corden looked in bad shape and I'd caught Graham Burke just after 30 km. About that time, Bill Howley determinedly went past me, and Don Price had run out of sight.

In fact, my cramps were so bad that the last 14.195 km took me about 76 minutes, of which the very last km took over 6 minutes. The grim truth behind those appalling times was that I was trying as hard as I could, as my legs attested for the whole of the following week. In the end, I crossed the line to a sputter of sympathetic applause in just under 3 hours 10 minutes, over 10 minutes slower than last year.

The finish was a disaster. I could hardly walk. I was cold despite the warm day, and I was still cramping badly. No one that I spoke to had run a good time and even the top class runners seemed to be many minutes slower than their best.

That brings me to final memories. Of course, I apologise for not mentioning more Striders, but I genuinely didn't see many at the end and I'm not sure of the names of some of those I did see. The staging of the race was superb and the crowd was supportive and friendly. I particularly liked the drink stop crew in evening dress, including the sporty (female) assistant in a brief basic black cocktail dress. I heard later than an uncouth runner, not a Strider I'm sure, emptied his Staminade over her and she responded with language that would have made a bullock-driver blush. Another striking memory is of a middle aged man who apparently stood at the same spot near Parliament House throughout the whole run. He had a word or two of gentle, real encouragement for every runner: "Keep going number 314, come on the Sydney Striders".

But I owe the final memories to Nobby Young who was standing near the 41 km marker, smirking and shaking his head as I hobbled past.

"It's a day of big fades," he said.

Nike Canberra Marathon (1986)

HARVEY BLUE

BLISTER 27, APRIL 1986.

OFF AND RUNNING ALONG TELOPEA DRIVE, only 26.2 miles to go. I have come from 40 miles a week, up by about 5 miles every week for the last couple of months, to about 75 miles last week. Two three-day throat infections saw a couple of 40-mile weeks in that, but no traumatic injuries. One speed session a week, even did one last Tuesday. Very different from last year - one injury after another. Only one this year: An ankle injury in bush on the North Head Trek two weeks ago.

Garry Hand sent us off on our way. Very punctual, right on 7 o'clock. Pity he is not running. Great morning and no wind, about 12 degrees; looks like my anticipated time of 2.55 could be a goer.

The splits print-out from my computer program are emblazoned on my arm in big bold letters, much laughed at by Bernie King who is also trying for 2.55. Graham Burke, Wendy Downes and I, all in green and white, look great heading out to the first k mark. My program says 4.20 per k for the first five (21.30). I seem to be going the right pace. Why is Bernie so far ahead? In fact, why are all these people passing us? Graham and I agree we will see them all later when we pass them.

One mile in 6.35 - spot on. Down along the lake side, past the Art Gallery and then back past Parliament House. Not so many passing us now. 4 k in 17.30 - that's spot on. Legs not totally freed up yet. The first 5 k must be part of the warm-up. Must admit Graham's quips to the other runners make for relaxed running. He knows all the Melbourne and Canberra runners. 5 k past and time 21.45 is to plan. Graham and I agree to pick up the pace to 4.10 and start pulling in some of the early speedsters. Through the start for the second time and the first water station. Graham assures me that we need not stop and re-group. We run a while behind a girl with a long black plait who passed us back at two miles, but our pace is more important than that. We will see her when she finishes.

Out to the eastern turnaround and a chance to see the leaders, and how far Bernie is ahead. Also a chance to see all the Striders. There is a Kiwi in front, and Phil Garvin is running fifth. Bernie is about 200 yards ahead. Great to see all the green and white - there are Brian Lynch, Graham Butler, Ray Reid, Bryce Courtenay, Paul Russell, Edwina Garvin and Wayne McCarthy.

The leg stiffness has not worked itself out yet. Wonder how I will feel here next time on the second loop at this point. Back through the largest spectator group and out along the lakeside for the second time. Past the 10 k mark; that's right on, judging the pace well.

Now we must get going. This is where I'm supposed to enjoy it as I run relaxed. But the leg stiffness is a touch worse. Perhaps when I stretch out a bit all those miles of training will overcome it. Graham is still chatting away - wonder if he has noticed that I am not replying much. Certainly pulling in runners now. Hills coming up for the first time. Really appreciate the well-run drink and sponge stations. Going to need these later. The sun is very strong although not hot.

Hello, there is Bernie just up ahead. We will have him in a couple of miles. I must tell Graham to talk me through the 15 k point. That's where I cramped up two years ago and pulled out. But that is on the downhill side of these hills - love the downhills. Perhaps this will get rid of this increasing soreness in the legs.

The leader goes past, still the Kiwi Graham Macky. Past the boat club with three or four guys shovelling gravel in front for some obscure reason. I contemplate the stupidity of some people who get out on a beautiful morning and do such stupid things.

Hello, Graham seems to have pushed up the pace at the 15 k. Time seemed to be just right; no increase is called for. There is John Fazio coming back from the west turnaround. He is going for a sub-2.40; seems to be on target. The west turnaround is not as good as the east - it is a loop, and you cannot see those just behind you.

My God! Graham is flying away from me. I guess I must have slowed a bit. Wonder if my training has been as good as I thought. Maybe I shouldn't have done the Tuesday "Pain in the Domain" session. Still, I didn't run Thursday, Friday or Saturday.

Those idiots still shovelling gravel. A bit hot for that now. 20 k, boy have I slipped. 1 minute lost in 5 k. At that rate I will only just break 3 hours. Halfway in 86 minutes, but wanted it to be 85. I am not going to feel any better. Another half-marathon to run. Just try to run relaxed. That works for about 100 yards, then stride gets shorter and pace drops again. This is getting serious. Try pouring water over legs, head, back, feet and especially my thighs. Saw 'Deek' do that in Brisbane. Worked for him, not for me.

Those water stations (not stops) are becoming more important in my race plan. Previously they were just places where the water was, now they are goals in themselves. Back past the spectators. Hello, thought I heard somebody call my name. Wife and daughter must be here somewhere. Somehow turn around at east end - doesn't seem quite the great place it was last time. Graham has passed. Bernie but Bernie has got well away from me. The only thing that makes me feel better is the look on Bryce's face. I am not feeling too bad.

As I come back to the spectators I see that it was Adrienne and Hannah who called out. Better look relaxed for them and smile. Don't know how I'm going to get out to the west and back here, the way I feel. At the 25 k mark I am slipping at the rate of 2 minutes per

5 k. How am I going to get over that mountain range up near the 30 k mark? Shuffle that's the way, but some really old guy passes me while I am doing the Harvey shuffle, and there is nothing I can do about it. Gravel shovellers have stopped for a rest. What sensible fellows.

At western loop for the second time, Brian Lynch passes me. Well now I am 6th or 7th Strider. But what's this girl with the long black plait doing passing me too? Things that go through one's mind when one is in this much pain:

*There was an old runner called Blue,
The marathons he ran were too few,
So he abandoned his splits,
Which gave him the shits,*

(leave last line for Nobby to complete).

Perhaps I'm not race-hardened yet. Better get out over the next eight weeks before the Australian Marathon and do lots of speed work, make up for this poor showing. At the 35 k mark, disaster. I trip over this huge red lump in the middle of the road and hurt my ankle again. The lump I ran into happens to be a cats-eye road reflector. This gives me some idea of how high my legs are lifting. The pain goes away from my ankle in about 100 yards, but that is the only place. It's amazing how all the old injuries return like long-lost friends at this stage. Injuries I had two years ago start to nudge back into my consciousness.

30 k to 40 k I manage to pass a few people. They are walking; at least I am not down to that yet! Rhythm is all I've got now. 2 k to go. The old guy is walking and I go to overtake him. Just as I draw alongside he starts to run again. Oh well. 1k to go and he stops again - this time I pass him. Hell - Telopea Drive has turned into a hill. It wasn't this steep 3 hours and 3 minutes ago.

Up to the finishing chutes, and would you believe it, Mike O'Donnell, a mate from Talay's Wednesday night runs, passes me with 1 yard to go, and looks around with a big grin. Such bad manners. 3 hours 4 minutes and 29 seconds. Well I suppose that leaves room for improvement. The Nike sure puts things in perspective - a lot more training to go.

Striders Half Marathon, A Few Thoughts.

IAN SINGER

BLISTER 37, JULY 1987.

I HAD THE RACE FIGURED OUT. My strategy was clearly thought out. All I had to do was run two 10 km time trials back-to-back and I could do a time of around 76 minutes. If I felt bad, in the last, say 10 km ... well - I could just hang in there. I was in with a good chance.

As we gathered at the start, I couldn't help but overhear some nasty remarks aimed at unsettling my strategy. One young blonde person, for example, said that in the beginning of the race nobody sees me and then later they see a lot of me. Subtle as stampeding elephants! This was the same person who has presented a hip pain as an alibi for not running. I'm sure that this must be the biggest bludge in the history of the Striders Club. I mean, most people have problems with achilles, hams, knees, calves - but no, not this fella, he has to go for the big stuff - hips!

In the beginning, while my body adjusted from a state of relaxation to one of agony, my mind was running the other way with a rush of thoughts of the most trivial nature imaginable - e.g. did I put the garbage out. Different songs flashed through my brain, like HELP!, to Lola! This gradually builds up to more profound thoughts like is there a life after running, is there death after life or life after death - perhaps even death after running.

One of my goals was to avoid suffering a shock defeat at the legs of Gavin Morriset. Contrary to his claim to laziness in the last few months, I suspect he has been on a very unique training programme. This involves chasing chickens up the hills of NSW in an attempt to do for chickens what Cliff Young has done for potatoes (or is it what chooks would do for Gavin what potatoes did for Cliff!).

My next stage of psychological trauma is the rabbit vs. the fox syndrome. This schizophrenic condition is characterised by the dual feeling of fear and power; I ran as scared as a bunny so the runner behind me doesn't catch me and, like a fox, to consume the runner in front. The question is, will this conflict render me immobile - with the result I will stand on the spot, motionless.

Rhymes start jumping in my mind about the different Striders. Bruce Murray comes to mind:

*Bruce Murray is the best around
for running advice and tips he is sound
For example, hamstrings, achilles and where bones join
Especially about his tender groin.*

*The longer options are his best
He never seems to need to rest
Be careful not to take short cuts
Unnecessary surges or make nasty cracks
Or else he will report you to the committee for smacks.*

*We acknowledge the groin ache he has to endure
While doctors and quacks all try to find the cure
I think we should all put in a coin
To have a farewell party for his bloody groin.*

Organisers of the race were a little concerned about Kevin O'Kane who appeared to be running in a deep sleep. Kevin had put so much mileage in over the last few weeks that when Steve said "Get set - go!" Kevin thought this must be "go to sleep". Congratulations are due to Kevin for a PB of 110 mins over the 21 km distance. It was Kevin's debut for running a half-marathon while asleep, and in fact has become a pioneer in this field.

Well, what of the women's runners:

*Joanne Tibbetts was running there
With her blond hair shining in the glare
Her face looked a lighter shade of pale
I think it must have been the on-coming gale.*

It wasn't the biggest turn-out, but let me say that:

*The ad men were there in force
John and Wayne and Hugh of course
They must regard the race as too perilous
'Cos they don't seem to take it too serious.*

*To them it is a kind of joke
As they reached for another bottle of coke
But I suspect they really want to make
The half-marathon into a kind of Irish wake.*

Congratulations are due to Steve Cornelius (organiser), Noel Worthington and Graeme Butler who showed special qualities of commitment by enthusiastically posing as turning posts, Barbara Firkin for a wonderful brekkie, Phil Garvin for setting such high standards. Sympathy is extended to Paul Russell who thought the race finished when he had completed 69 minutes when in fact he still had 5 km to go. We all know you are a good runner Paul, but 69 minutes on that windy course is, should we say (in all kindness) lacking in humility, don't you think?

As for me, I finished 7th - ah well, it's back to the drawing board and the long hard road...

"....do you think I always smell like that?"

CHAPTER THREE: SOME DOUBTFUL HUMOUR FROM THE 'BLISTER'.

HUMOUR ON THE RUN IS PART OF THE RUNNING ETHOS. *Maybe there is a need for release when the body is under stress, or perhaps it is triggered by endorphins. Any run will bring out the 'funnies' which seem hilarious at 6.15 am in June, only to suffer from 'humour fade' by the end of the run. Maybe, that is why there are less 'one liners' in all the Blisters than might be imagined.*

The editing for this chapter did become a bit difficult. There are very few Striders who are prepared to be funny in print, so inevitably the 'few' are over-represented. The current president causes special problems because, not only does he like the look of his name in print, he has attracted a disproportionate share of buffetting by the humour of others.

Naturally the meaning of some of the humour escapes newer members. As 'scumbag' became almost the generic name for Steve Cornelius, one cannot help feeling that there had to be a reason. The snide references to Herb Luddington promise a person of fearsome attributes, if only one had met him to find out what it all means. What could Alex have done to 'Scumbag' to earn a PS to a letter "...I hope his lycra jock-strap shrinks in the wash"?

Then there is the 'pairs' humour. Running attracts 'buddies' who give each other mutual support. In a few cases, this leads to giving each other some 'stick' as well. There is the running humour feud (for want of a better phrase) between Harvey Blue and John Turner, John Ayliffe and Alan Phillips, Wingebag and Terry McIver. There are a few samples of these exchanges in the following pages.

Owen Denmeade and Bryce Courtenay seem to attract occasional frenzies of scoff. We all know about Bryce's success as a writer, but can you go past Owen's ".....even my hair hurt....." (issue 41, 1989), as a great runner's line? For sheer drollery, though, the contribution by Noel Barton concerning 'wingebag', is unsurpassed in the history of the 'Blister'. ■

The Hazards of Lunchtime Running: Flash or Fantasy.

SAM DAHER.

BLISTER 11, JULY 1982.

AFTER COMPLETING A STRIDERS FARTLEK SESSION, Phil Caldwell, Charles Coville and myself were walking back to our respective shower facilities when we were approached by two enthusiastic photographers and a woman dressed in an overcoat. The woman was excitedly explaining that she wished to have a photograph taken of Aussie runners and could we jog towards the cameras some 20 yards away.

Oblivious to everything around me, vanity got hold and I started to wonder whether my hair was in place and hadn't noticed one important fact - the woman was dressed ONLY in an overcoat. A quick glance confirmed all was not right as the woman had positioned herself between the photographers and ourselves with a grin on her face a mile wide.

Charles was first to size up the situation and Phil agreed. A quick decision and three Striders (one reluctantly) were seen bolting in the opposite direction at 3 minute per km pace. It's the last time I run with married men (I bet they don't even read Playboy). ■

"Once you learn to disregard the facts, the rest is easy".

NOBBY YOUNG

BLISTER 21, OCTOBER 1984.

SINCE MY EFFORTS IN THE AUG/SEPT BLISTER, I have been in great demand for my journalistic abilities - phone calls from Rupert and the Goanna whom I had to turn down. They also made me an offer but had to say "Thorry, I just don't have the time".

It is great to have the natural attributes of the popular press writer. My hearing is not the best, so I just guess the bits that I don't hear clearly; my eyesight is a bit defective, so away goes my imagination. Once you learn to disregard the facts, the rest is easy. But despite all this success, there are a few corrections to be made in connection with my last effort.

First Bill Flanagan is not FAT. Bill was FAT, but between the time I wrote about it and the time the magazine went to print, he lost 25% of his weight. He only did it to make a liar

out of me! But I'm pleased his Gloria Marshall fees set him back a few dollars.

What have you all got against Alex Hamill? Not one club member has taken up my invitation to go to his place and drink his beer. I grant you that he looks a bit rough, but he really is quite a nice bloke, and I assure you his beer is top class.

Poor Ken O'Connor! A few days after reading that I thought he wasn't bright enough to go running without getting lost, he led about thirty Striders 3k off course during a STaR run. Would you believe his wife Julia didn't know about it until I told her?

Bernie King has informed me that someone has reversed the spring in his bull-worker so it isn't his fault that he is so thin. Or should that be 'so skinny'?

Alistair Mackie found a great way of making me feel small (apart from standing beside me) for what I said about him last time. The bugger turned up about 2.30am to run support for me around the block in Gladesville during a recent run of mine. Imagine what his wife thought of him! Imagine how I felt! He must be all heart - and not much above it.

To make up to Derrick I have declared February 7th to February 14th 1985, as "BE NICE TO DERRICK WEEK". For that week, we will all be kind, considerate and friendly to him, even if it kills us.

Phil, I'm sorry. Very sorry. I forgot that you hand out the jobs at the national half-marathon. I will be around to do your lawns again on Saturday.

The Bjelke-Petersen badge that Steve Cornelius wore wasn't his own, but actually belonged to Phil Caldwell. A higher chest was desirable and Steve was just helping out. Isn't that nice? If he takes on the Presidency again next year I will refrain from mentioning him in any Blister for his term of office.

Now I'm about to put the record straight about Carol and Herb (short for Herbilious). Boy, did I ever get it all wrong? Carol has made it perfectly clear to me that she has not given up on "between the sheets" activities. In fact, every time her ship comes in, she credits herself with an honorary 10k in her Sportspulse Log Book as it uses up about the same amount of energy. Herb puts down 15k which is fair enough as he does most of the work.

Notice how I write without fear or favour? Next Blister, new targets. Pay your dues, get your copy, you might be in it! ■

"Someone Wanted to Get into My Shorts".

NOBBY YOUNG

BLISTER 22, JANUARY 1985.

SOME RUNNERS DON'T TALK TO ME AT STARS ANY MORE because I might write something about what they say. Makes no difference really as it is what they think that I go by. And then there are those who try to hide, look behind Herb and find three or four Striders in green and white trying to look inconspicuous.

Bernie King, I'm sorry I didn't mention you again in the last Blister.

Have you noticed some of the odd habits that some of our runners have? They stand on one leg, pull the other leg up behind them and try and push their running shoe up to where it was never designed to go. I suppose it could be a cure for flatulence but there must be an easier way.

When you next do Bill Flanagan's run try the drink station down by the cemetery - really nice water, has a bit of body in it.

Don't embarrass him about it but Bernie King thinks my name is Richard as every time I pass him he says "You little Dick".

We are in danger of permanently losing Jim Donovan from our STaR runs - we must empty more aluminium cans or he will find another running group with better thirsts than ours.

Brenda has been at it again - more media coverage. I think she is throwing out a challenge to Sonia McMahon to be photographed most for the press, and without using the tactic of undoing a side seam up as high as the armpit. Wonder if whats-his-name, Brenda's husband, will ever get his photo anywhere?

Every time I write one of these I get tempted to have a go at Bryce, but always resist the urge. You see, I like that spa of his and would hate to lose the use of it. Plus you can tell from the look of him that the poor little bugger is having a rough enough time with things without me helping it along.

On Sunday morning a while ago I bought a pair of shorts from Carol, then Robyn put on a merry turn that she wanted them. I let her have them. Made me feel good to know that someone wanted to get into my shorts.

I went out for the Nocturnal Marathon in Canberra and you would never guess who was out there from our own club - bloody Kar Wong again!! I've run with him so many times this year that people are starting to talk about us. I'm not that way. If you want to

know about Kar - ask him. The nocturnal, 26 one-mile sections of a bike track, all the same section, turning around a bucket at each end. When one of the runners tripped over the brown bucket marking the start/turn around point, I asked Brian Lenton (race director) if he had thought of using a white bucket instead. He informed me that he had but decided it would make things a bit too easy for the competitors. Can't argue with that can you.

As well as having at least four runners at Canberra, Striders also had a couple of spectators, Phil and Carol Caldwell. I know we try and maintain an image in this club but Phil was wearing a bow-tie, - other things as well as it was quite cool - but a bow tie at a marathon! That boy is all class.

Those who think that runners are a bit strange should study the endeavours of Brian Lenton, then they wouldn't think that way any more. They would damned well know that they were right all the time and not give us another thought.

The next couple of stories are ones that I shouldn't tell because they are true and I was the victim.

On the Sydney-Wollongong run we were heading down through the suburbs when I realised a pit stop was desirable. I required what we called at school a "number two" as we were not allowed to use its common name. That time of the morning it was very hard to find a toilet and by the time we found a garage open, the "desirable" had changed to "desperate". Diving in through the door and - oh hell - race number, singlet and shorts all pinned together. I want you all to know that it is possible to continue to do the job at hand under those circumstances, not comfortable, but possible.

And then there was the Bathurst 50 miler. About 20k out on the run and "number two" again but this time things went from "not required" to "very urgent" within about ten paces. By the time I cleared a couple of support cars it was a real touch and go situation. I jumped down an embankment, turned by back to some poplar trees so I was facing back up the hill, and just made it. Great!!! Reached behind me to hold a section of the poplar to keep my balance and found that someone had cut through my section of the tree just above the ground. Back went the tree, back I went and next think I knew I was looking at the clouds and my Pumas at the same time. What a mess. No further details should be required so now you can all have a laugh at my experience. I can hear you sniggering from here!■

"Do You Want a Call at 4.30 to Eat Toast..?"

CED SIDEBOTTOM.

BLISTER 23, APRIL 1985.

THE CANBERRA MARATHON BEGAN ON 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1984. The plush souvenir Race book and long-time Striders, who are always super, magically fit, may state otherwise; but for anyone with only distant memories of marathons and a reading on the bathroom scales of around '21C', there is the six months as well as the three-hour barrier to be beaten. The catalyst for me was the attitudes of my workplace, full of Fit-Young-Blokes. Made marathon-wise by the 'Wang' they no longer accepted, if they ever had, my pearls of wisdom on such subjects as what de Castella should have for breakfast. Worse, armed with height : weight ratios, etc., the F-Y-Bs were positively caustic about my rotund physique. "I am", I explained in vain "an ectomorphic somatotype with muscle fibres that twitch fast on contraction". "You are", chorused the F-Y-Bs gleefully, "a fat slob with big boobs that jelly-wobble when punched. Like this!". "Ow, stop". Oh, the shame.

My saviour, now my guru, was Ken Wylie. Kenny prescribed miles, limitless, grinding, miles. It wasn't till later that the suspicion grew that Ken might provide the same prescription for everything from the male menopause to the third World War. Meantime, I suffered sore shins - "You'll run through that" - heel spurs and sciatic hamstrings - "You'll run through that" - and once, greatly daring, for one jests not lightly with gurus, I suffered from the Khyber Pass and the Berlin Wall. And, yes, that too I am destined to "run through". The Reward? "You are," said Kenny about January time, "coming to Canberra". Oh, the joy, no more white feathers, removal from Bill Flanagan's terrible last page, "Striders who won't run marathons despite joining"; no more: "There's been a marathon in Hobart and Kar Wong went!".

Nature may have many gentlemen; but paramount amongst them would have to be long-term Canberra resident, Wylie senior. Never once did he hint that it was odd for an imperfect stranger to spend three days, two pre-and one post-run, flaked on his bed. Emerging only to eat everything put before him, and indeed the few things that weren't, the stranger would retire again to guzzle a nauseous mix of fruit cake, bananas, honey and staminade. Mind you, Kenny also had his peculiarities. "Do you want," said he, "a call at 4.30 - to eat toast?"

For pleasant anticipation read, usually, blue funk. This time strangely I slept ok., woke around six and, an hour later with limbs loosened, lay back contentedly gazing out the window. Outside Ken, rugged-up against the inland chill, pranced up and down the road like a War-Horse sensing battle, little puffs of white mist forming as he breathed. The

mood of contentment lingered. What's Everest to me may be an anthill to most; but we all create our own mountains to climb; suddenly I know with the certainty of absolute conviction that this will be one of the good days when I'll get to the top of mine. Eyes close, the mind wanders. Through the window, Ken is now snorting down distended nostrils, pawing impatiently at the ground. Suddenly he spies a pile of stones, milk bottles?, in the road. Arching his back and neck, he bucks like a rodeo horse. Loose now, he gallops off down the road, neighing wildly as he jumps and kicks in celebration of freedom. Waking again, I'm pleased with my silly imagery and am laughing uproariously at four blank walls when Wylie senior comes to get me. The look he gave me can only be described as very odd indeed; but a Scotsman is equal to most occasions. "Your marathon," he said, "is waiting for you, if you're feeling all right?"

The race? Well, the feet do this bit. They go in front of each other, alternately. So keep your cool - no rushes of blood to the head - and leave it to your pattering feet. The starter has a flair for drama and is armed, literally, with a sawn-off shotgun as used apparently by all best - worst? - bank robbers. A thunderous detonation, the waiting is over and we're off, charging headlong down the road. Heavens, this is fast, too fast. But everyone else is racing hard. Kenny's out of sight already. How fast is he going? Where are the George McGraths and Tom Gillises who used to ease so gradually into the early miles? 6 minutes 18? This IS too fast, for me anyway. Ease back. Cool it. You've got to get to the other end of this. 5 k coming up. 19.56, 58, 20 minutes. That's better.

The field has settled down. A competent-looking man running my pace is explaining to his friend how to run marathons. Tuck in behind them. Relax and slip-stream. Maybe he'll explain to me too. 10 k coming up 39.58, 40 minutes and through the check before the call goes to 02; full marks for precision so far. Gee, this is a good course the few ups and downs so gentle good really to vary your stride a bit; and nothing too steep for a big bloke like me hammer-pounding the old legs. And the surface - smooth, soft bitumen: no cambers; no bumps; and none of the hard-set, jolting concrete that would see me lame for a month after a hit-out on the old Manly - Bayview course. 15 k in 60.30 something. Still all right. The middle miles drift by. Always there are other runners to see. The leaders, nearly all of them A.C.T. runners, are just faces to me; but further back there are plenty of old friends whom, over the years, one sees, like ships passing, at long distance race turn-arounds. Strange how many one has never seen, would not recognise in normal gear doing a work-a-day job; for always we meet in ritual garb, priests of the cult primaeval, re-enacting the ancient rite when, for very life, man must kill or man must run. You pompous fool, day-dreaming again. You're a middle-aged 'postie' with flat feet. The sun's blazing. Your legs hurt. And you've dropped another bloody minute. Run, you mug, run. ■

At 34k Kenny comes back past me for the last time. "keep it going, you beauty; give it heaps." See his arms, his rhythm; You can see he's tired, but he's still got rhythm - and arms; and you've got to run on them when the legs pack up. Another drink station; don't stop; these are tomorrow's drinks now; just keep your rhythm. A runner in a Bob Talay shirt storms past, but others are coming back. Hell we're slow; we're all crawling. No, this is still 7.15, 7.30 at worst. That's that in kilometres? 40 k; what time did he say? No matter; tired; too tired to do sums now. Hi, know him; "hang in there old mate, home soon." One kilometre, two more bends; hell this straight goes for ever; faster; last bend; sprint; you're kidding, these aren't my legs I'm running them; What's that clock saying? 54 something? Blimey, Adam was a boy the last time a clock said anything that good to me. Into the shoot; phew; Pretty blonde girl just behind me; first lady? One for chauvinism; pig, you shouldn't think like that. Usherette - She's pretty too. "Are you O.k? Drink? Let me take your arm." "Honey, you're sweet; but I can't flake on you; you're half my size."

So that was Canberra; and it's over for a year. next year? Well, I suppose I'll be just that little bit faster; but nothing in Canberra could be too hard, for there is a dreamlike unreality about the whole place. When as you race, you run in a trance; and, as the miles float by, the ether gets to you and the pain is soothed to a pin-prick; then even that is gone and happy memories only remain. So I'll be there next year and I hope you will too. ■

Letter to The Editor.

STEVE CORNELIUS.

BLISTER 27, APRIL 1986.

The Editor,
Blister Magazine
Dear Graham,

First of all, let me congratulate you on your election to the post of *Blister* Editor. However, I must warn you that you will probably live to regret it, as you will inevitably receive many whingeing letters from the ratbag fringe. Some people in this club make a habit of whingeing about everything and anything, and I hope you will have more sense than your predecessor, who used to print any letter at all, no matter how scurrilous.

While I've got your ear, I just want to draw your attention to a slight inaccuracy in edition number 26. This is not REALLY a whinge, just a little correction of fact. On page 15 of that edition, ex-President Ethel Strangler claimed that a 10-mile road race would be "attractive to all our members from beginners to ultra runners".

This is plainly a lot of rot, as even Blind Freddie could see that 10 miles is too damn short to be attractive to anyone at all. Nobby Young and Dan Gray usually haven't got out of first gear after 10 miles, and as for me, I'm usually still applying the Vaseline to my nipples by the time the race leaders go through that distance.

Obviously there has been far too much triathlete influence in the club recently, and now that Internal Events are safely back in my hands, members can rest assured that more 50-milers and 24-hour track runs will replace the wimpish distances foisted upon them by those who consider wallowing in a heated swimming-pool to be a valid kind of exercise.

Just take my tip, Graham old chap, and weed out the letters from the professional whinge-bags. They only serve to bring down the tone of what is otherwise an excellent Ultra-Freaks' publication.■

Furphy Awards 1986.

STEVE CORNELIUS.

BLISTER 29, OCTOBER 1986.

AT XMAS AND NEW YEAR IT SEEMS THAT EVERY NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE you open is listing its awards for the previous year. *The Blister* is no exception. Here are the Sydney Striders Furphy Awards for 1986, in alphabetical order:

- A** is for Absent-Minded Professor of the Year: To Graham Butler, so engrossed in organising a Half-Marathon Handicap that he missed his own starting group.
- B** is for Brass Monkey Award: To Messrs Tailford, Firkin, Gray, Lyncy and Butler, who ran the Curl Curl 50 k in July while Cornelius was safely abed.
- C** is for Cult Figure of the Year: To Kar Wong, who retains the trophy outright for three consecutive wins.
- D** is for Darth Vader Look-Alike Competition Winner: To Graham Firkin, the black tights and evil look at the Hensley 24-hour track.
- E** is for the "Eminence Grise" Award: To Charles Coville (where HAS Charlie gone, by the way?).
- F** is for the Fakawi Trophy: To Paul Russell for his trick maps at the 10 k time-trial.
- G** is for the Grin of the Year: To Alex Hamill for his long-lasting Cheshire Cat act while "boring it up" his old friends [sic] after the Bathurst Marathon.
- H** is for the "Hamill Out-Hamilled" Award: To Brian Lynch for his epic, and totally

lunatic, cycle-ride across the Nullabor in midsummer.

I is for the Innocent Bystander Award: To poor old Kevin O'Kane, who fronted up to watch the Sydney-Wollongong Relay and finished up putting his boots on!

J is for the "Just a Little Snooze" Trophy: To Grahame Deacon, for his 5-hour absence from the track in the Hensley 24-hour race.

K is for the "Kitten Liquid Wax" Award ("Some things in this world just go on, and on, and on, and ..."): To Dorothy Flanagan, for remarkable fortitude in her protracted negotiations with a government department over our incorporation.

L is for the Least Appropriate Run of 1986: To Mathew Kaley for his 72-second lap of the 400-metre oval during a 24-hour track ultramarathon.

M is for the Meat-axe Trophy: To Kar Wong for doing three ultramarathons in the space of 22 days.

N is for the "Nothing's Changed" Award: To Dave Blackhall, for having the oldest marathon P.B. on the Striders' ladder.

O is for the Ostrich Award: To the organisers of the 2Day-FM Triathlon, for refusing to earn anything at all in 12 whole months.

P is for Psych-Out of the Year, the most effective pre-race gamesmanship of 1986: To Graham Firkin, who rode his bike to the 24-hour track ultra.

Q is for the "Quart in a Pint Pot" Trophy: To Western Districts Joggers, for expecting 600 runners to filter into a 2-metre track within 30 metres.

R is for the Re-Cycler of the Year: To Jim Donovan, for the 7th year running.

S is for the Silliest Race Result of 1986: at the Vets' 5000-metre time-trial in November: Steve Cornelius 19.48, Mathew Kaley, DNF, Bill Flanagan DNF.

T is for Tortoise of the Year: To Steve Cornelius, last Strider to finish in this year's Sydney-Wollongong, who was still running down Mount Ousley as the race winner's plane was touching down at Auckland Airport.

U is for Unluckiest Loser of 1986: To Phil Garvin, whose ludicrous garb at the fancy-dress run the day after the Bathurst Marathon would normally have scooped every prize. Pity he had to compete with Terry McIver.

V is for the Very Short Race Trophy: To Bill Flanagan, winner of the 5-yard Dash to the bar at Selina's.

W is for the Wobbly Award: To all runners who ever completed the long course on Dicky Bamann's STaR run.

X is for the extremist of the Year: To Nick Reed, who decided to auction Louise Fitzsimmons to raise the cash to buy his bike.

Y is for Young Nobby: This isn't actually an award, but if I didn't put him in at this point the poor little sod wouldn't get a mention.

Z is for the "Zonked" Award: To Dan Gray after 456 laps of a 400-metre track.

Happy New Year, Striders!■

Friday With Norths Rugby Runners.

OWEN DENMEADE

BLISTER 29, OCTOBER 1986.

FRIDAY 12.06. PETER FOULSHAM IS FIRST TO ARRIVE and changes quickly, confident someone will notice his glitzy new Brooks shoes (won the previous weekend for his age category at an OUT OF TOWN Triathlon!). Alex is putting his tie on the hook without undoing the knot! Rumour is that Brenda ties his tie each morning and if it came undone during the day he would have to go home! Alex of course has noticed Pete's shoes but naturally does not comment. Predictably, Pete blurts out the news and receives a Balmain bake about driving 200 km to an "obscure" Triathlon.

Pettett arrives minus Joe Loewy and immediately begins apologising to Owen Denmeade for the "gross rat act" he pulled off on the previous Sunday's STaR. Denmeade, emptying his P & O bag to find a top that exactly matches his shorts, does not mind too much since he knows that Courtenay was really to blame, and anyway it will make a good story!

Michael Mooney came in bright as ever with his gear in a plastic Food City bag, curiously out of wack with his Porsche and yuppie lifestyle!

McCarthy is meticulously inserting his state of the art contact lenses, having skilfully manoeuvred the Ferrari into the coveted corner parking spot where it is visible to all of the club and half of North Sydney! He reveals that Wearne is in a state of deep shock. Adrian Burton had diagnosed achilles damage; no running for months! Keith is talking bicycles! If Clarence St cycling cannot help him, he can probably find a superseded, never-raced Vitus in Alex's bikeroom!

Ivan turns up dressed, would you believe, in apple green designer jeans like something out of Jacko's Oxford shops! Since Ivan the Terrible usually runs down from the electoral heart of North Sydney, it is obvious it is an RDO or he has flexed off! Rod Jackson this very

moment is powering the 911 down Alfred Street in the wrong direction prior to 48 minutes of garbage bin leaping, wind sprints and walks!

Keeble appears from the "mud flats of Clemenger" direct in a \$60 silk Asser & Turnbull bow tie (hand tied of course!) and while changing arranges a 60 km pre-dawn bike ride with Hamill for the following day! A loud lawn mower-like clatter means the Council workers are doing the edges or Spencer has arrived! It turns out to be Spencer! The car park by now resembles John Newells North Sydney or the Toy Shop with Phil Morgan still to come! Spencer hustles in with a Qantas business class bag and immediately accuses Denmeade of having shoes that do not match his, by now, perfectly coordinated outfit (nothing worse!).

Courtenay is here muttering something about Loewy deciding at the last moment to stay in the agency to help a client! We all realise Joe suffers from a strong sense of responsibility and doing the right thing. Bryce does not have this affliction!

Down the steps with the usual mumblings Alex reminds Owen that the overhanging branches need cutting!

Foulsham, who usually leads across the Park, is hanging back to give Hamill every last detail of his triathlon category win. Shuffling along beside Big "A" now reveals that he was told all three legs were short and that the run was downhill!

Keeble, Denmeade and Mooney in a bold move have established a breakaway group to the rear where Pete is practising his coming Caxton presentation. Owen tells him it does not matter what you say at Caxton as long as you wear something funny! Pete is not convinced! Geoff Lindley toots us in Kurrraba Road which starts a new conversation!

On the Harbour pathway Ivan goes cross country and strikes the Jackpot! He spots a young woman "topless" in the McCallum pool (general agreement she is another bloody public servant on her RDO!). At Cremorne we have a replay of last Friday's excitement, the Illustrious, The Missouri and the big crash! Last Friday was a memorable one! No detail is spared! Courtenay charms old ladies all the way to Mosman.

From 60 metres back we can hear John Ayliffe giving Bryce part IV of his continuing achilles problems. Bryce identifies four varieties of small gum trees and recommends careful examination of John's daily shit (there must be some connection!).

We encounter the usual group of insurance brokers and advertising people headed for long lunches at the Towers! Around the pole in 23 minutes (plus a few seconds). The run home is completely different... everyone stops for water at the tap. The "street smarties" go low, disconnect the hose, and completely bugging the pressure at the bubbler. Thanks! Wayne does not stop but calls back "you won't catch me" (they all say that!). The "racers" are gone, including John Pettett who is dead set the most improved in '85!

Spencer too has "wobbled off". We all agree Hugh is getting serious - there is talk about 80 plus km weeks!!

We spend several k discussing Courtenay's new house, known to the Vaucluse locals as the "Hopetoun Road Hilton". We agree he must have made a poultice when he sold the farm!

We wait at the top of Honda Hill for a few strugglers and pretend we could have gone on! Almost home when Mooney and Denmeade stop - would you believe for mulberries! Once again Wayne does not stop (good fibre in mulberries, Wayne!). Pick up speed on the slope and across the park! "Walk up steps", Bruce says! So we do! Back at the club we find the others melting in the doorway and summer still to come.

Usual pandemonium in the change room.....waiting for favourite showers! For once, no one has forgotten their towel. The scales are now weighing light. Alex is first dressed (his transition time helped by not having to tie his tie) and he is off. Rod Jackson, next fastest, has no socks and predicts no one will be wearing socks this summer. We all nod, but everyone knows that socks will not be discarded until Bryce says so!

Over schooners of lemon squash with bitters (now 10¢ extra!), someone suggests we stay for the club's special Melbourne Cup lunch after a run, plus our own \$5 sweep - a top deal! We book a table for 20! Alex of course will be in New York with Wayne Garland for the N.Y. Marathon and will miss the Cup lunch.....(who knows, if he is in a car at the time he might phone us!). At the mention of Garland's name, we all take turns saying something rotten about him, including four people who don't even know him. Such is fame

The Porches begin leaving the car park like the works team at Le Mans. John, John and P.K. make the long climb up to the cabins of the 4W "offroaders" and away! One car remains.... Peter Foulsham takes his Ironman lunch in tupperware container from the boot of his car and carefully closes the boot! ANOTHER GREAT FRIDAY! You wouldn't be dead for quids, would ya mate!■

Whingebag Gets it Totally Wrong!

NOEL BARTON (STRIDERS DATABASE OPERATOR).

BLISTER 31, APRIL 1987.

READERS OF THIS ESTEEMED JOURNAL WILL INSTANTLY RECOGNIZE the name "whingebag". It belongs to former club President and "Triathlete of the Year", Steve Cornelius. What may be rather less known is that the whingebag claims to be a dab hand with the silicon chips; that is, he knows a bit about computer programming, and has thrown together the odd program or two to assist the Striders in their honest and worthy endeavours.

There aren't all that many programs, and there isn't all that much information stored on the Club's Sirius microcomputer. I checked just recently, and each Strider (of the approximately 200 members) only has about 30 pieces of information recorded. For example, name, address and postcode, through to best marathon and half marathon in 1985. It's really quite simple!

Any case, I had occasion to take two overseas trips over the summer, and so the trusty computer was returned to Steve to do with as he wanted. When I picked up the computer about eight weeks later, Steve said he had done a bit of reorganisation and that the entries for the Striders Open Half Marathon were to be processed on the Sirius. Actually, Steve hadn't written many programs and done much reorganisation. Merely 40 programs, some of which were as short as 50 lines of code. And the work for the half marathon wasn't much - there were merely 1100 entries, each of whom only had about 10 pieces of information recorded. Naturally, the whingebag SAID it would all work, but just in case, he was going to scoot off overseas as soon as the run was held leaving the rest of us to sort out any messes which might occur.

Finally, the times for the half marathon were all entered, and we had to print out all the results. Just to be on the safe side, Bill Flanagan and I decided to check that all the prizewinners in the various categories were the same as those which were announced on the day. And it was then that the whingebag's pathetic ineptitude was shown up: The women's U/20 section was won by runner X who was 0 (zero, nought, zilch) years old. How embarrassing! Bill and I bent our mighty intellects to the task and the diagnosis of the problem came within the quick time of two or three hours. When runner X's entry was processed and entered into the computer, her age was not entered, probably because she had omitted to include it. As a result, the poor computer compromised by assigning her the age of zero. Quite reasonable. Of course, any programmer worth his or her salt would have guarded against such a possibility. At the time, Bill and I solved the problem by amending the printout of results with white correcting fluid, although you'll notice if you

examine the results book that the winner of the women's U/20 category is listed as second in the category.

So, let us return to the nub of the matter. Let's face it: The whingebag made at least one mistake. There's probably more mistakes lurking in the 40 programs he wrote, and when I find them, I'll let you know. In the meantime, when you next run with the whingebag at a STaR, let him know he's not perfect. After all, we want the Striders to be a top club, right? So, it's just not good enough working for hundreds of hours if you're going to make lots of mistakes and turn in a shoddy performance. And next time the whingebag has the nerve to criticise your efforts, tell him: "You're in no position to throw stones at glass houses; you made a mistake in February 1987, and you'll probably make another one in the next few years"!■

Snide Snippets.

STEVE CORNELIUS

BLISTER 35, APRIL 1988.

* MATHEW KALEY TO TERRY McIVER, NORTH RYDE, Saturday 19 March 1988: "It wouldn't bother me if I only did one marathon this year. I'm going to be concentrating on shorter distances". Mathew Kaley to Steve Cornelius, North Ryde, Sunday 20 March 1988: "Steve, here's my entry-form for the Striders' 24-Hour Track Race". Will anyone seeing any dried brains blowing around the North Ryde area please notify Mathew Kaley on 909.1461, mislaid them and wants them back.

* Bill Thompson immediately before Final of NSW Veterans' Club's "Hugh Patterson Trophy" (Handicap 5000 metres): "I don't think I'll run, I'm a bit nervous about this." Bill Thompson immediately after WINNING "Hugh Patterson Trophy" by over half a minute, with a blistering 35-second PB of 1:17.23: "I'm a bit nervous about being presented with this trophy". If anyone hears Bill Thompson claiming to be CONFIDENT about anything, GET OUT OF THE WAY! He'll blow you apart!

* Name of payee on cheque from Westfield: TEDDY McIVER!. Do Westfield know something we don't?

* It's still renewal-slip time, folks, and those bloopers just keep on comin'. John Ross sent in his \$25 with a renewal-slip listing results in a number of 1988 [sic] marathons and half-marathons months before the events are due to be held!

* We recommend the bizarre but effective training methods of two of our members: First, the TERRY McIVER school of steeple-chasing. Terry's training for the NSW Vets' Championship 3000 metre steeple-chase consisted of (a) having a shifty sideways glance at the water-jump BEFORE they put the water in, and (b) refining his hurdling technique in the first two laps of the race. Terry took out the silver medal, having never jumped a hurdle or a water-jump previously in his life.

Next, the LOUISE FITZSIMONS school of debut-marathoning. Louise recommends running your maiden marathon after a warm-up consisting of a 3.8 km swim and a 180 km bike-ride ("just so as to avoid that initial stiffness"). The warm-up took just under 8 hours and the marathon just under 4. As it happened, there were a whole bunch of other kooks doing pretty much the same thing at Forster that day, and Louise won the right to do it all again in Hawaii as winner of her age category.

* Two items were lost by Nobby Young at North Ryde, appropriately enough on April 1st: (a) his Walkman Cassette, which "walked" after he had played 20 minutes of Willie Nelson on it; and (b) his pretensions to yuppie-hood, which "flew" when he was hailed by the driver of a garbage-truck in Wicks Road (right in front of his ruddy mates, too!).

* If anyone wants to know which public toilets in Gladesville are closed on Sunday mornings, ask Heiner Huning. He's been around to ALL of them.

* Welcome to the latest Ultra-Freak: Kevin O' Kane, who completed an epic 5-hour training run while assisting the ungrateful Ian Whitfield to design his new STaR run.

* A new club tradition has been started by Terry McIVER, who undertook the St Ives STaR after imbibing a very great deal of white wine and port, paid for by Trevor Roberts. He calls it: Bobbin Head with a bobbin'head.

SNIDE SNIPPETS

from The Editor Person (assisted by Ron Sluice).

* Iron-man triathlete and advertising agency principal, Alex Hamill, featured on the recent 10 Bridges STaR triumphantly carrying a lady's handbag through downtown Drummoyn. The elderly owner of the bag, Ethel Grump of Glebe, put up a brave struggle before superior strength-training techniques (developed in the hills near Akuna Bay) eventually swung the fight in Hamill's favour. Grump later told The Blister that she considered Sydney Striders to be "nothing but a bunch of bully-boys and faggots".

* In the latest of a long, long list of excuses for not training, 1984 Honolulu Marathon tour-organiser, Phil Caldwell (alias "Waikiki Black Magic") has had himself run over on a pedestrian crossing in Woollahra. Caldwell was spotted at a recent lunchtime

training session at the "Boy Charlton" pool in The Domain, not actually swimming but lying in the sun! He explained that his come-back from injury would be a gradual one.

* This year's Fakawi Trophy has been won by Frank Gallagher, for his epic run in the club Cross-Country at Marsfield in May. Frank, who has some difficulty distinguishing between flour and paint (don't ask him to bake a cake for you), finished the 13 kilometre race in something like 2 hours 15, having covered about twice the recommended distance.

* A new trophy, "P.B. of the Year", has been awarded to Striders' computer operator, Noel Barton, for his criticism of programmer Steve Cornelius, in which he displayed his inability to distinguish between program bugs and operator inefficiency. "P.B.", by the way, stands not for Personal Best but for Pedantic Bastard. ■

Satire on A Satyr: A Look Back at Blister No. 35.

BY STEVE CORNELIUS (1990).

AMONG THE MANY FUNCTIONS PERFORMED BY THE BLISTER MAGAZINE during the club's first decade, it has been an unparalleled vehicle for fierce, stinging satire. Tall poppies have been mercilessly scythed, and the merest hint of pretentiousness punished by incisive, biting wit. Even the suggestion that a Strider had a few dollars to spare would be enough to draw a swinging attack in the humour columns of this scurrilous rag. Positions of authority or prominence in this club are surely no place for the faint-hearted.

The current Club President, Nobby Young, has for many years been right in the thick of it (Thick, get it? It's a pun. See what I mean?), acquiring an unequalled reputation for dishing it out and often copping considerable stick in return, as one might expect. This is the story of one of the most notorious of the sticks he copped.

For a number of years, Nobby was employed by Westfield as an official on the Sydney-to-Melbourne Ultramarathon, usually as a general trouble-shooter and factotum. For an equal number of years, it was his annoying habit of conspiratorially inform other Striders that this employment was in fact a bludge and a sinecure. Even the Race Director, Charlie Lynn, he would boast, had difficulty diagnosing exactly the nature of his job, and the side-benefits, of which large quantities of gaudy-coloured protective clothing seemed to be a small component, were gargantuan.

By 1988, a small band of Striders could take no more of this blatant self-aggrandisement, and secretly conspired to bring about his downfall. An army of spies, some wearing trench-coats and dark glasses, were posted along the highway to Melbourne, and

frequent telephone calls took place between lonely locations out in the mulga and "Mission Control" in Lane Cove West. By the time Blister No.35's deadline arrived, a cruel expose of unprecedented malpractice was ready for publication.

The following is a re-print of that article which, to his credit, Nobby Young himself nominated as one of the funniest ever to appear between the Blister's covers, and uncannily accurate. Chief highway-spies Dan Gray and Brian Colwell had performed their task so diligently that author Steve Cornelius had simply to write down the facts as reported to produce an acutely true life pen-portrait of the man.

The then Blister editor, Graham Butler, was substantially bribed to cover the potential costs of litigation which the article could reasonably be supposed to prompt, and it appeared in May 1988 under the nom-de-plume "Young Nobby". Such was (and still is) the reputation of our glorious leader that many readers refused to believe he had not written it to lambast himself! This was a false impression which Nobby was at some pains NOT to correct! The closer a reader's involvement with the Westfield Run, the more he/she was likely to fall about, and gales of seismic merriment were even heard emanating from the corporate offices of Westfield Towers. Here it is:

What I did on My Holidays: Diary of a Camp Follower.

NOBBY YOUNG.

WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH 1988

This was a red-letter day! Picked up all my Ultra-marathon OFFICIAL's gear and attended the press conference. This is the day you really feel that at last, after weeks of butterflies in the stomach and sleepless nights of anticipation, you're a part of the great Sydney-to-Melbourne circus. And the gear is GREAT! Nice gentle pastel colours, no rude primaries, and the sponsor's logo tastefully tucked away in one corner so as not to seem too brash or crass. The word "OFFICIAL" is featured on some of it as well, which will help a lot if any nosy so-and-so wants to know who I am and what I'm getting paid for down the highway. Once again I managed to score one of everything (two or three of some things), I'd estimate four or five grand's worth. (Thought for the day: must talk to Alex and Brenda Hamill when I get back from Melbourne about how much it cost them to build that special extra room for the family's bikes - reckon I'm going to need an extra room for my ultra OFFICIAL's gear!).

THURSDAY 17 MARCH 1988

The start at Parramatta! Plenty of opportunities to get on camera. Made sure every time

I was near the OFFICIAL rostrum looked busy and purposeful. Many of the runners addressed me by name, which is always a good sign on the first day, but there were some new chums who obviously didn't know the appropriately respectful things to say to a Race OFFICIAL, and some overseas runners who barely spoke any English. Anyway, plenty of time to sort THEM out on the way to Melbourne. An awkward moment when had to point out to the Race Director that he hadn't yet allocated me an OFFICIAL car, and he seemed to have some trouble remembering who I am and what I'm supposed to be doing, but I got out of that by firing the starting-pistol and causing a diversion. It seems I'll have to use my own car until after the week-end, but anyway they supplied me heaps of stickers that say OFFICIAL in big letters, so that's not too bad. Besides, I'll hit them with that wad of petrol receipts I've been collecting since New Year, which should just about cover the wear and tear. (Thought for the day: must make sure I claim dry-cleaning costs this year, that's not really a rort, it's quite a genuine expense).

FRIDAY 18 MARCH 1988

Spent most of today sleeping in a motel, costs of which I'll claim back, apart from a couple of times I spied a TV news crew. Didn't want to get shanghaied into actually DOING anything too early in the race. Bad mistake, that. If you DO anything, people think it's your JOB, and before you know it you're LUMBERED with it right through to Melbourne! Yiannis has started now, and spent a bit of time with his crew, figuring (correctly) that most media attention would be with him. Bit hard to maximise my media exposure when Yiannis is 12 hours adrift of the leader, got to keep racing back and forth. (Thought for the day: must speak to the Race Director afterwards about this negative aspect of the 12-hour handicap).

SATURDAY 19 MARCH 1988

Took the bull by the horns today and told Dick Tout he'd better slow down so Race OFFICIALs don't have to be in two places at once to get a bit of TV coverage, but you should have heard the response! He's obviously taking this race very seriousl, Kiwi too can't understand how he didn't pick my accent, he'd surely have been a little more polite if he had. (Thought for the day: maybe I've lived in this Godforsaken country too long, and it's time to think about getting back to the Sheep-Infested Archipelago). Anyway, on the strength of his rudeness I decided to drive back to Sydney and pop in for the Striders' Half-Marathon. Made sure Race Control was going ok and took off. Plenty of exciting events to occupy my thoughts during the drive.

SUNDAY 20 MARCH 1988

The Half-Marathon was a lot of fun, but somehow it just doesn't have the razzamatazz of the big Ultra. And NO CAMERAS! Anyway, buzzed around looking busy, just as I do in

the Ultra, and clapped loudly when Alex thanked the Race OFFICIALs (Thought for the day: I'd wondered if the big OFFICIAL stickers on the car weren't possibly a little overdone, but after the race I noticed a group of people crowding round it, pointing and obviously admiring them, so it was ok - isn't it amazing how easily impressed Australians are? You don't have to do anything spectacular at all!).

MONDAY 21 MARCH 1988

Back down the Highway to catch up with the Ultra, and I must say it was great to be back in the Big-Time after the hickish atmosphere of the Striders' Half. Had to remind a few of the more forgetful Race OFFICIALs who I am, but I feel some of them might have been "playing dumb" just to needle me. (Thought for the day: At least with Sydney Striders, everyone's right above board and there's no sarcasm or underhandedness).

TUESDAY 22 MARCH 1988

FINALLY, they gave me an OFFICIAL car! And a young attractive bird to drive me around so I don't get too tired. (Don't laugh being an OFFICIAL tires you more than RUNNING in this thing). And as if that wasn't enough kudos for one day, they put me in charge of one of the two control rooms. It's a GREAT system they have on this race - the Race Director, at each check-point, sets up TWO control rooms. The first contains computers, whiteboards, coffee, telephones, secretaries, the works, and is generally referred to as the Bullshit Room. Everyone from runners upwards is allowed in this room. Hidden away elsewhere, out of the way, is another room where there are computers, whiteboards, coffee, telephones, secretaries, the works. No-one, but NO-ONE, is allowed in this one. As a Senior Race OFFICIAL, I scored the Bullshit Room to look after, and here comes the double-bluff: the Bullshit Room is the one where the REAL decisions are made, like how much milk to put in the coffees, what colour whiteboard marker to use, etc. He's a CUNNING sod! Anyway, I got a bit tired of that, because the TV crews didn't put in ONE appearance during the eight minutes I was there. (Thought for the day: why do the TV channels only seem to be interested in BACK views of FEET and CALF MUSCLES?).

THURSDAY 24 MARCH 1988

This is what it's all about! Yiannis and a couple of others crossed the finish-line yesterday, then a whole heap more today! I was so excited yesterday I even forgot to make a diary entry! I reckon I must have got my face on more film in one day than in ALL the previous years put together. I made sure ALL of them ran across the line with me in attendance. Tell you what, those Melbourne Greeks made it hard for us to get a look-in, and I have to admit I flattened three or four of them using my trusty old karate techniques. (Thought for the day: Maybe it would be best for this country if a lot of these overseas people went back where they came from).■

FRIDAY 25 MARCH 1988

Bit of strife this afternoon. A couple of these new runners snuck through to the finish without notifying me (my chauffeur and I were asleep, for heaven's sake). By heaven, I'll make sure they get disqualified, or at the very least refused entry to next year's run. Most other years I've made a clean sweep of ALL finishers! This year I had to make do with only 21 camera appearances at the finish-line, out of a total of 23 possibles. And even then, I had to wait an extra 3 hours for the last one, who sweet-talked the Race Director into extending the deadline and just WOULDN'T HURRY UP! Two o'clock in the ruddy morning by the time he put in his appearance, claiming blisters held him up. Pathetic! I would've arse-holed him out of the run back before Goulburn if I'd had my way, but the Race Director's just an old teddy-bear when faced with a sob-story like that. (Thought for the day: They wouldn't have bleated like that back in the old country - people'd call them pansies and such).

SATURDAY 26 MARCH 1988

Slept in today, and, while eating breakfast, phoned the producer of Wide World of Sports, blew him sky-high! He was only intending to use SEVEN of my twenty-one finishes on his show, and not for another FOUR WEEKS! God, these blokes get paid kings' ransoms for strawberry jam, don't they? I'll apply a little pressure to get him transferred to the Willesee Show, I think. Anyway, there was some good news - I've been invited as an OFFICIAL guest at the Otway Classic, and I think the all-weather gear they give away makes this Sydney-Melbourne stuff look like the stock in a St Vincent de Paul op-shop! (Thought for the day: wonder if Bob and Hazel will be there, like they were when I was an OFFICIAL guest at the opening of Bicentennial Park?) Put a quiet word in a few strategic ears about next year's event, and sadly parted company with the OFFICIAL car and driver. Well, back to work on Monday, and roll on next March!

President's Report.

NOBBY YOUNG.

BLISTER 23, NOVEMBER 1990.

A FEW DAYS AFTER THE SYDNEY STRIDERS WESTFIELD 24 HOUR RACE I received the following letter from Cliff Young. I could never write a President's Report that would give as much interest to the readers of the Blister as this little gem, so I'm sharing the text with you all.

Dear Nobby, Margaret, Jeannette,

Mark & Russell & Lindsay,

A few lines to thank everyone for the terrific way you all looked after me. I do appreciate that.

What a good race Nobby for your first 24 Hour Race - you never faltered, blood told in the end!! You have what it takes, mate, and I'm proud of you. I hope your foot has come good and you are running again but not too fast, just slow for a few weeks is the go, you have plenty of speed when you need it.

John Craig took me out to "Hope Town" yesterday and I helped the kids plant the trees, we planted two but dug three holes and we finished up with a spare hole, we all enjoyed ourselves.

John got me to the airport in plenty of time but then the rot set in; the plane got held up for about half an hour and my train left early, the man that sat next to me on the plane hired a car for Geelong and said I could go that far with him - and I had hopes of catching the train I missed at Geelong, but luck was not with me.

We got to Geelong station in good time but as I was getting out of his car, the loud speaker was saying "the Warrambool train is now leaving the Geelong Station, stand clear please". I broke even time with my two bags but it was too late, the guard said he could have held up the train if I had been a couple of seconds quicker, there was no more trains there till this morning, so I asked a taxi driver if he could drive me along the Colac road for a few Ks and I would hitch-hike from there. (I found out later this taxi driver was related to Ned Kelly!?).

When we got out about 3Ks I said "how much?", he said "\$9.90". When

I came to and he helped me up from the road I gave him \$10 but it tore a bit because my fingers seized up and couldn't let go.

I wished him a happy life and told him to keep the change - he thought I must be related to "Rothschilds".

After walking a few more Ks trying to get a lift with no luck because it was now near dark and all the motorists thought I'd escaped from "Pentridge", I came to an old public hall at "Warren Ponds"-(by this time my arms were nearly pulled out of my shoulders by the bags). I called it a day and crept stealthily around the back of the hall and luckily found a door open, tip-toed in and put the night in on the stage alongside of the piano, luckily my pillow and blanket were with me.

This morning bright and early I started walking again and had only gone about a K when a truck pulled up and started reversing towards me, thankfully I ran towards the truck and jumped in.

The driver was taking a load of dead chickens to Colac then to Ballarat and he drove me right out to my sister's where my little truck was, about 5Ks out of his way so he was a good bloke, but I was glad to get out of the truck. (Kept thinking about all those poor chickens swinging on hooks in the back of his truck).

It is cold and wet here so I've got the heater going, have just had a good feed of the usual cereals, poached eggs, vegemite sandwiches and some chocolate and will be having some steamed vegetables and cheese on toast for tea. Fed my brother's cattle some hay on arrival, I take it to them on a wheelbarrow, they were glad to see me come home.

The weather looks a bit better now so I'll get out of the house soon and do some work.

My next race will be a 24 Hour Race end of October, then after a 10k fun run in Melbourne in early November I'll get ready for the Six Day which starts on the 18th of November.

If any of you would like to come up and see me during this race I'd be pleased to see you.

Thanks for those nice surprises you gave me at Hensley, Jeannette, I could do with a few more at Campbelltown!?!?

Bye for now, look after yourselves.

Cliff Young

Harvey Blue

JOHN TURNER (1990).

AS I SAID TO HARVEY WHEN EDITOR AYLIFFE ASKED ME TO DO THIS PIECE, there's no way I'll bag you in print. Quite apart from the laws of libel, there's just nothing to write about, is there? Even if there was, I wouldn't tell. Self-preservation is a very strong instinct. If I revealed, for example, the horrible truth about what you did to that poor unsuspecting smoker, you could easily get back by mentioning a certain predilection of mine, the exact nature of which I prefer Striders should remain happily ignorant.

So the whole exercise is pretty futile. I mean, if Nobby Young wants to say you look like a Basque Freedom Fighter in that outrageous black beret of yours, then let him do the rubbishing. I won't - even if I do happen to agree with him! Imagine the scandal if they got only half the story - that the beret was brought to you with love all the way from France by an attractive young lady. But the full story is the lady was your daughter. You told me so yourself.

Another example. You and I know why you keep in your garage every pair of running shoes you've ever owned. Quirky that may be, but it's not what Nobby thinks, ie, that you're waiting for an offer from the Powerhouse Museum. The real answer is so simple. It's home-grown chemical warfare. No-one, but no-one, ever has an urge to mess with anything in your garage. Simple as that.

So Harvey, rest assured you won't find me bagging you in print for a cheap laugh. On the other hand, my 6:10 STaR group split their sides about you and the.....aaaaaahg! ■

John Turner.

HARVEY BLUE (1990).

I must admit that when I was approached to do this article I had to say "John who? Then it started to come back to me. I remember this fellow, he used to run marathons a few years ago, used to go skiing, but gave that away to sit in holes in the snow. A short stocky bloke, liked to think of himself as a triathlete, but was probably best known for cross country, skiing that is. His wife was a famous singer that did football ads. What was his name again. Dammed if I can remember. ■

The Magic Running Shoes.

LAURIE KING.

BLISTER 22, JANUARY 1988.

THIS IS AN ADULT FAIRY STORY TO BE READ ONLY BY ADULTS, I HOPE. Not so long ago in a suburb near you (don't blame me if the suburb is near you) there was and still is a young lad named Nobby. Because he was young and small everyone called him Young Nobby. No one was really sure why he was called Nobby. Rumour had it that it was because of the bumps on his head. This seems the most logical as his poor grey-haired mother tried to pound some sense into him, morning to night. She occasionally sneaked into his bedroom at night for some pounding practice. If you can think of a better reason than this, let me know. It needn't have to be true, but then again truth is stranger than fiction.

Anyway, on with the story. When Young Nobby left school - actually, he was forced to leave - he gave his kindergarten teacher a hard time. He kept failing finger painting and the afternoon nap. Even the cats wouldn't use the sand box after he'd finished with it. I suppose his teacher thought that ten years was long enough to be in kindergarten, but being a little fellow he really didn't look out of place.

Young Nobby always dreamed of being a fireman or an engine driver or a policeman or a politician. Well he didn't get to be a fireman. He wasn't strong enough to carry anyone down a ladder, and beside, he had trouble getting from one rung to another. He didn't get to be an engine driver as he couldn't see over the engine. He didn't get to be a policeman because you know he wasn't tall enough and his feet weren't big enough either. He didn't get to be a politician either. It wasn't that he wasn't smart enough, it's just that kissing babies always made him sick. Reminded him of his years in kindergarten.

All the good jobs were unavailable so Young Nobby joined the Postal Service. Being a postman wasn't so bad; at least it's in the Public Service. All hail the Public Service!

At first Young Nobby had trouble delivering the mail. They couldn't find a bag small enough for him. He kept tripping with the bigger bags and falling into them. Took him half an hour to get out. He kept trying, and because he couldn't carry as much, he had to make more trips and this meant he had to work faster. He became the fittest postman in his Post Office. From this he graduated to other jobs. He particularly liked thumping the fragile parcels with his big metal stamp. His first love remained delivering the mail. Out in the fresh air, being chased by chihuahuas. This was how he developed his speed.

Young Nobby was soon tired from all this running around and he noticed an advertisement for magic running shoes in a little shop that specialised in leather off

Oxford Street, Darlington. I won't mention the name of the shop or what its connection is with this story, but I did say it was a fairy story, but that's another story. The advertisement did say he'd feel like a new man but I don't think that was the reason he bought them.

Well, the shoes were fantastic on him. After he removed the sequins and painted over the silver, they looked great. So comfortable, and the build-up inner soles made him look much taller. He couldn't wait to try them out. He set new records in delivering the mail and he didn't get tired. He didn't really think the shoes would be magically inclined, but it appears they were. With all this extra energy he took up running, and was soon driving his wife up the wall. I forgot to mention Young Nobby got married and also had children he can look up to.

The change that came over Young Nobby was incredible. He became so self assured. Young Nobby was no longer the right name for him and he changed it to Nobby Young. He had never been known for originality. With the magic running shoes he could run all day. He joined a running club and was soon terrorising the other members. He could be heard every Sunday on what used to be a quiet peaceful run. Members of the public have complained about this noise. Earplugs are now a recommended item of dress in this running club.

Nobby used to be a pleasant young man, but he is now addicted to his running shoes and unfortunately they're changing his personality. He has taken to saying rude remarks about his friends. Talk about a swelled head - they don't make sweat bands big enough for him.

I'm afraid the only way to cure Nobby will be to steal his magic running shoes. He doesn't know that I know about his shoes, but I do, so next time you see Nobby, try to steal his shoes. It's for his own good. Knock him down if you have to - he'll end up thanking you for it.■