

Running on Empty

The Newsletter of the Bendigo University Athletics Club

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Running the infamous 6 foot track

BUAC stalwart Jenny Buchanan recently ran the Six Foot Track marathon in March of this year. She has been good enough to put pen to paper to describe the unique and popular race exclusively for Running on Empty.

“45kms of adrenalin rush or 45kms of sheer torture? It is only after you have completed this “run” can you answer this question.

It started the same as all previous marathons – queuing in the cool early dawn, for the porta loos. A buzz of excitement as novice and veteran runners traded conversation as to what to expect once the starters gun was fired. I was one of 300 novices, my first marathon in NSW, my first trail run, my first ultra marathon, my first time on the famous Six Foot Track.

Its origins date back to the mid 1880's when a bridle track was blazed through the virgin bush from Katoomba to the Jenolan Caves, (discovered in 1838) in the Blue Mountains. The caves had become a must see for many Sydney people. The track had to be wide enough (6 foot) for 2 fully laden horses to pass each other. It was simply called the “Bridle Track” until 1937 when its name was changed to Six Foot Track.

The marathon was 1st run back in 1984 with 7 runners participating. All 7 finished, with the winning time being 5 hours 26 minutes. Compare that to the winner's time this year of 3:35.15.

Back then, I'm sure they did not have the benefits of numerous aid stations, manned by friendly fire fighters, providing water, sports drinks, gels, power bars, coke, bananas, water melon, sunscreen, Vaseline and the all important lolly snakes – particularly the red ones – at regularly intervals along the track.

I remember going through the aid station at the 25km mark thinking..... 20kms to go..... been running for 3 hours..... 2 more hours would make it 5 hours to complete the course..... 20km, 2 hours = 10kms per hour..... nearly over the worst of the hills.....just a regular Sunday morning run.....easy.....

The course varies from a narrow, rocky track near the start, to paddocks, sandy gravel tracks and dirt/muddy fire-trails with a number of hills, big and small and rivers, big and small to cross.

We began with a 200 metre sprint to the narrow single file steps which led down into Nellie's Glen. 14 minutes for the 1st km.....this is going to be a long day. The track then widened out and we finally get the chance to run, although having to negotiate cattle grids, styles over fences, cattle tracks and rocky single file paths, where passing was definitely frowned upon. And then there's the hills, you can't believe the hills, 28kms of uphill. After crossing the river you start to climb. The first 2 kilometres consist of mostly 10 – 15% uphill grades, a good chance to chat with your fellow runners, or at this stage, fellow walkers. Most people were very friendly and happy to pass on their previous experiences. Finally we hit the downhill section, which feels good on the now tiring quads, although the final 2kms is quite steep, your footing isn't great on the narrow single path and you're having to dig your toes in to hold yourself back.

At last you can see the cave's house roof and you know you have nearly finished. A big crowd applauds as you negotiate a flight of steps down to the road and then a 20 metre sprint to the finish. Just to add to the delight, there has been steady rain for the past 30 minutes or so. It continued to rain for the next 2 hours while we waited for the presentations and the rest of the runners to finish.

Once the “sweepers” run past, you know the race is finished. Two guys, start at the back of the last wave, run the entire course at 7 hour pace, carrying a straw broom each. If you are caught by the sweepers, you have to retire from the run. 32 people from the 877 that started failed to reach the designated cut off points in the required time or were caught by the sweepers. Many people that run Six Foot get hooked on it as was witnessed at the presentation. “Legend Status” was awarded to one competitor for completing 24 Six Foot Track Marathons. He is only the 3rd person to receive this award.

The event is co-organised by the Sydney Striders Running Club. All of the funds raised go towards the NSW Rural Fire Service & Six Foot Track Heritage Trust. Further information can be found on the web site www.sixfoot.com, including registration and entry criteria. Be quick with your registration, as this year the 300 spots for novices and 300 spots for those who had run it less than 5 times, filled within 8 minutes of registrations opening. The race is limited to 900 participants.

This year Bendigo had 3 representatives – Geoff Moulday 4:19.53 38th overall, Lisa Wilkinson 4:56.11 162nd overall and me 5:17.59 277th overall.

Would I recommend it.....YES Would I do it again.....YES"

Injury tips

When to press on and when to back off

It can make you limp down the stairs or struggle to get out of your chair. But that doesn't mean muscle soreness is all bad. "Muscles go through physical stress when we exercise, and the discomfort that stress causes may be perfectly normal," says Allan Goldfarb, Ph.D., a professor of exercise physiology at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. In fact, muscle soreness is often a good thing. "It's proof your body is adapting and growing fitter," Goldfarb says. "You're reprogramming your muscle structure and making weaker cells stronger."

This can make your job as a responsible runner who wants to avoid injury tricky. If you park yourself on the couch after feeling any inkling of tenderness, your training could come to a standstill. But if you push through the pain, you might hurt yourself. So how do you toe the line between a healthy dose of creakiness and pain that's a sign of trouble?

On the run

Sometimes the physical stress of exercise manifests itself as soreness while you're still running. That's because the action of running pushes your body's weight downward—and even the most cushy shoes can't alone handle the shock. "Some of the force goes back into your muscles," Goldfarb says. "That shock-absorption process releases chemicals that can activate pain receptors."

You can minimize midrun soreness by making sure you are in good shoes that aren't too worn (replace them every 500 to 600 kilometres) and choosing softer running surfaces when possible. And consider doing the next day's easy run on the treadmill, which has more give to help your recovery. When soreness escalates beyond slight discomfort, back off the pace (take walk breaks) and distance (take a shortcut or stop running and walk the remaining miles). Follow up with at least one rest or cross-training day—don't try to make up for the missed mileage.

Aftershock

You may feel fine during and right after a workout, only to discover you're quite sore a day or two later. "The gradually increasing discomfort that peaks 24 to 48 hours after activity and disappears five to seven days later is called delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS)," says Carol Torgan, Ph.D., an exercise physiologist in Bethesda, Maryland. DOMS usually occurs when the leg muscles have performed an eccentric contraction (which increases tension on a muscle as it lengthens). Speedwork, races, long runs, or any type of workout you're not used to are other causes. "Intense or new activities put a lot of stress on muscle cells," Goldfarb says. "Some of those cells are strong from your regular workouts, but when you work your body in a new way, you hit some cells that are weaker. The weaker ones develop microtears." This damage causes achiness. The good news is that once your muscles repair themselves and grow stronger, they are more

resistant to damage for up to eight weeks.

While it's okay to do an easy run while you're dealing with DOMS, hold off on doing another intense workout for a few days. And expect to feel a little stiff during the first mile or so. It's important at this point to recognize the difference between a Wow, I really pushed myself and a worrisome Oww, I really hurt. "If the soreness lasts longer than a week, it develops into pain, or there is any sign of swelling or redness see a doctor," Torgan says.

That said, running or racing your best does not necessarily mean hobbling for the ice pack afterward. "If you are perfectly trained for a race, you may not be sore afterward because you didn't stress your muscles in a new way to lead to damage," Torgan says. "If you think of times that you were really sore after a race, typically there's an element that you didn't properly train for, such as not enough hill work. Or you raced significantly faster than your training pace."

Age limit

As our muscles become conditioned to certain activities, they are less likely to become sore. "Muscles that are stressed will rebuild and adapt and cause less discomfort over time," Torgan says. "Think of it as a survival mechanism." There is, unfortunately, an exception to this rule. As we age, we become more prone to pain. There are two reasons, according to Goldfarb. First, we lose muscle cells—typically because of inactivity, but also just because that's part of the aging process. That means there are fewer cells to recruit during a workout. The ones that are engaged will work overtime to get you to the finish line, but they'll also suffer the repercussions: tears and inflammation. Aging also slows down the body's muscle-repair mechanisms. "The protective processes in muscles are down-regulated and our connective tissue doesn't work as well," Goldfarb says.

That's why even the most talented masters runners take extra rest days and spend more time cross-training than they did in their younger years. You can still work hard and perform well as you age—so long as you prioritize recovery.

Want relief?

Achy, sore, tender muscles? Six ways to ease the hurt

Ice bath: Sitting in a cold tub for 10 to 20 minutes after a hard run helps flush out waste products and reduce swelling and tissue breakdown, Allan Goldfarb, Ph.D., says. You can also apply an ice pack to individual sore spots.

Heat Therapy: "When muscle temperature is increased, blood flow increases, bringing nutrient-rich blood to the damaged muscle," Goldfarb says. Wait 24 hours after a run to apply heat.

Active recovery: Twenty to 30 minutes of low-impact exercise increases blood flow to muscles to reduce trauma and re-establish the body's pH level, Goldfarb says. Cross-training the day after an intense workout can help you recover from a race, speed session, or long run, Carol Torgan, Ph.D., says.

Massage: Researchers in Australia found that sports massage may help reduce muscle soreness by as much as 30 percent. "Massage may increase blood flow to the damaged muscles and enhance recovery," says lead study author Ken Nosaka, Ph.D.

Gentle stretching: "Stretching loosens muscles while lengthening them and this allows them to relax and get back full range of motion," Goldfarb says. Hold gentle stretches for about 30 seconds at a time, postrun.

NSAIDS: Aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil and Motrin), and naproxen sodium (Aleve) alleviate muscle soreness by preventing the body from making prostaglandins, substances that control pain and inflammation. "The problem is that NSAIDs slow the repair process by disrupting the re-synthesis of proteins, so use them sparingly," Goldfarb says.

Training tips

Pursuing and achieving your goals

Pursuing a goal is a great way to get motivated and unlock your potential—as long as it's a target tailored to your abilities and ambitions. The trick is to set objectives that are within reach—if they're too ambitious, you risk frustration, burnout, and injury. If you currently run two or three times per week, take aim at one of these goals and you'll become a stronger, more confident runner.

GOAL: Double your long run

ACHIEVE IT: Long runs boost endurance, burn fat, and make shorter runs feel easier. Every other weekend, slow your normal short-distance pace by three minutes per mile, and increase the distance of your run by one to two miles. On alternate weekends, run half the distance of your current long run.

GOAL: Run your first race

ACHIEVE IT: A race brings meaning to every workout. Prepare by increasing the length of your long run until you can comfortably cover the race distance. On one of your shorter weekly workouts, run part of the course, especially the more challenging segments.

GOAL: Fit into your too-small jeans

ACHIEVE IT: The longer you're on your feet, the more calories you'll burn. If you normally run continuously for 20 minutes, add several one-minute running/one-minute walking segments and gradually increase your time to 45 to 60 minutes. Walk for 10 minutes to cool down. On non-running days, walk up to 60 minutes.

GOAL: Run consistently for a month

ACHIEVE IT: Schedule four workouts on your weekly planner, such as, run for 30 to 45 minutes on Tuesday and Thursday; do a long run (or race) on Saturday; and a short 20-to 30-minute run on Sunday. If you miss a workout, don't beat yourself up—just make sure to run the next one!

Equipment

Getting to know your shoes

We spend a lot of time in our runners, but do you know the anatomy of the shoe? Use some of this lingo the next time you purchase new runners and you will feel like quite the expert.

Collar: The inside back portion of the shoe that provides comfort around the ankle

Dual-Density Midsole: A mechanism, most often a firmer wedge of foam on the medial (inner) side of the shoe, used to correct excessive pronation

Eyelets: The holes that the shoe laces run through. “Eyestay” material is traditionally used to anchor the eyelets to the sides of the shoe.

Heel Counter: A semi rigid internal support feature in the rear of the shoe that conforms to the shape of your heel.

Heel Tab: The part of the shoe that surrounds the Achilles tendon and helps lock the shoe around the heel; also called the heel collar, Achilles tendon protector or Achilles tendon notch.

Midsole: The material (usually EVA or Polyurethane foam) that sits below the upper and above the outsole, providing protection from impact forces and oftentimes encasing nonfoam technologies, such as GEL or Air, to increase durability and protection.

Outsole: The durable part of the shoe that makes contact with the ground, providing traction. Overlays Reinforcing strips at key stress points that help give the shoe structure.

Quarter Panel: The material that makes up the sides of the shoe.

Sockliner: A removable insert that sits just below the foot and helps the shoe better fit the foot. Tongue Soft elongated flap that fits over the top of the foot to protect the tendons and blood vessels from pressure caused by the laces.

Upper: The part of the shoe that encases the foot.

Who’s hot, and who’s not

Who’s hot..... More baby news with Ben and Lisa Marsh welcoming young Jonty Marsh. A brother for young Avery, and a potential training partner for dad in the upcoming years. Congratulations.

International update! BUAC runners Kevin and Francis Walsh, along with well known Bendigo running celebrity John “Superstar” McGrath, competed in the legendary Boston marathon in April. John ran in 3.35, Kevin ran in 3.45 on limited preparation and Francis ran in 4.08. Several BUAC members will be running in the Great Ocean Road and in the Sri Chinmoy Williamstown marathons in May, so check out next month’s edition of Running on Empty for semi accurate results.

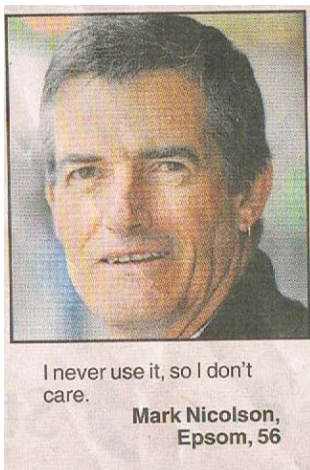
The College Classic course records were smashed by some of our speedier runners. The male record of 16.37 was broken by Bryan Keely with a time of 16.26. Andy Buchanan also broke the record in 16.34. The female record that was held by Lisa Wilkinson, was reduced by 55 seconds with Rebecca Tweed running a time of 20.38. The numbers of runners at all runs this year have been very impressive.

Who’s not..... Are we over the royal wedding yet? A nice bogan touch at the beginning of the ceremony where wedding goers were transported to Westminster Abbey in what looked like grey coloured Nissan Urvans.

Media watch



BUAC El Presidente Jenny Jones muscled her way into this shot with the lady from the IGA ads. She was later able to negotiate a great bulk deal on snags for the BUAC Invitation, and on twelve pack toilet rolls for home.



BUAC stalwart and former handicapper Mark "Nicco" Nicolson, answers a question regarding either his common sense or deodorant.



Steve Hams relaxing at work with what seems to be a fluffy marshmallow hat. The patient isn't looking very lively though. He may be sulking as he has been given a smaller hat than Steve's. Either that or he's dead.

Training groups

Join the long distance “Buchanan-McGrath Training Super Group” at The John Bomford Centre car park next to the Kennington Reservoir on a Thursday morning at 6.00am or a Sunday morning at 7.00am. For a bit of speed work, join the “Wayne Forbes’ Need for Speed” training group who meet at Lake Weerona on a Wednesday evening at 6.00pm. For those new to running, check out Jac Tremayne’s Triathlon Coaching Bendigo at www.tricoachbendigo.com.au.

Internet stuff

Visit “www.bendigouni.com” for all of your BUAC news, and join “Bendigo University Athletics Club - Uni Pride!” if you are a Facebook user. It’s better than listening to the wireless!

Race day contacts

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Feel free to make suggestions, or to submit information and pictures, to help fill these pages. Contact the editor, Pat Kenny by email on mpken1@bigpond.com with any information (preferably true but not a prerequisite).