

Age shall not weary them, or slow them for that matter

Those of you who know Rob Thomson will know him to be highly entertaining with a quick wit and a wicked sense of humour. You've got to love him.

He also has two other characteristics being both a masochist and a sadist. He seems to be a lover of pain more than anybody else putting himself through torture as he competes in endurance events. But he also loves others to share in the pain cajoling them to participate in the same events that he does.

So it came to pass that Rob signed up for the **Western Sydney Marathon** held yesterday at the Sydney International Regatta Centre near Penrith. After much deliberation, I decided to also enter as much to see if I could still run that distance as well as train for the Medoc Marathon to be held in September. Rob wanted a qualifying time for the 6 Foot Track but I knew that was beyond me. I just wanted to better my time in my last marathon – at Victoria Falls nearly two years ago -which I completed in 4:47:00. At that time, I swore off ever doing another marathon. The pain was just too much. But memories fade with the passage of time and so here I was again ready to put myself through more agony.

Bart Dekker had also signed up for the marathon, Richard Duggan was doing the half claiming he wasn't fit enough to do the full marathon (yeah, I believe that), Les Bryce and Brian Matthews were doing the 10km and Lynne Matthews the 5km. So a full complement of Trotters. Alex Matthews of 6 Foot Track fame and a Turramurra Trotter participant, though infrequently, was also there so we were in the presence of royalty. He is also the Western Sydney Marathon course record holder in a time of 2:28:29.

The course was 6 laps each of 7km, the 5km around the lake all dead flat of course and a further 2km around the surrounding roads with a slight hill. So a little repetitive but at least it would be easy to keep track of how much further to go.

I managed to keep up with Rob and Bart for all of 200 metres but then they started to pull away and I was content to let them go. But after about 5km, I saw them both stop for a pee break so I swept into the lead being the first Trotter through at the end of the first lap. No holding me back! Of course, it wasn't to last and they both overtook me shortly thereafter but I'd had my 15 seconds of fame.

I'd occasionally sight Rob and Bart on the event on the various switchbacks. Rob had dropped Bart and was looking strong. Bart looked like he was "enjoying" it almost as much as me!

Surprisingly, there was no food at any of the drink stations and running 42km without any energy supplements would be tough. I'd anticipated this and had a couple of energy gels and decided to take one at the end of each of the 2nd and 4th laps. Readers may choose to skip the rest of this paragraph – due warning here – but shortly after the taking the first gel, perhaps because of the sugar content, I felt an increasing need for a comfort stop. Soon I had to slow to a walk. It was definitely too risky to run! Mindful of losing too much time, I risked a fast walk and reckon I wasn't going much slower than when I was running so much had my pace reduced. Finally, after about 3km, I came across facilities and I was able to resume my running. But my Garmin told me I'd lost about 8 minutes, extra time which would be seen to be very precious at the completion of the run.

I resumed my running and counted down the remaining 3 laps, willing them to end. I even managed to pick up my pace over the last 2km but by then there were few runners left on the course. So little glory to be had overtaking others. Boy, was I glad to finish.

Results

Rob completed the course in 4:00:28 finishing 74th out of 135 male finishers and easily qualifying for the 6 Foot Track. Bart came home in 4:20:26 finishing 92nd and I came in a few minutes later in 4:26:13 finishing 94th. Importantly, I bettered my last marathon time by about 20 minutes so was pleased with that. I finished 2nd out of 6 in my age group (60+) and had I not lost the 8 minutes answering the call of nature, would have come close to winning it.

Richard Duggan completed the half Marathon in 1:40:56, finishing 6th in his age group out of 32 entrants.

In the 10km event. Brian Matthews won his age group completing the course in 56:51. Pretty good for an old bugger. Les finished in 1:02:58, another great time for somebody who only recently had a pacemaker fitted.

Keeping it all in the family, Alex Matthews finished 2nd in the marathon and Lynne 3rd in her age group in the 5km in 44:09 including pushing her grand-daughter around in a pram. No mean feat.

Interestingly, my Garmin watch for some reason beyond me, only seems to periodically download. It only just downloaded the results from my triathlon held at Port Stephens a couple of weeks ago. I clearly forgot to switch the watch off as Strava shows I ran the 201km back to Sydney at an average speed of 0.47/km! No one will ever top that. Definitely not the same pace today but a great effort by all the Trotter entrants. Those Saturday morning runs must be doing us all some good.

Nick Swan

3 June 2018