

Hi Everyone, not everyone has seen posts about our adventures in Spain. This post is mainly to let family and non-athlete friends know what Margie and I have been up to. Here is a summary:

Margie and I were heading for Germany to visit our daughter, S-I-L and four year old granddaughter. We made a detour to Madrid for a few days then caught the fast train to Málaga where I signed up to compete in the World Championships. Due to a torn quad muscle from overtraining in the weeks leading up to the World Championships I had no expectations. I had two aims 1) Try to finish all seven events I had entered ( no guarantees in the walks) and 2) Don't come last in any event even though I would be the eldest.

For those who are aware, I entered the 5,000m Race Walk, the 8km Cross Country, the 2,000m Steeplechase, the 10 km Road Race Walk, the 5,000m track race, the 20 km Race Walk and the Half Marathon. My philosophy was simple, if I can't be the fastest then go the furthest. That is race more kilometres than anyone else.

My first event was the 5,000m M65-69 Race Walk on a hot, steamy evening one day one of the World Championships. I tried to stay with fellow Australian walker Jack Russell but my left quad started to twitch a little so I backed off. Later, when I was fully warmed up I was able to increase speed and make some ground but Jack was too good on the day. I finished 14th in a time of 32:04.44. The standard at World Champs is much higher. I won the NSW 5 km Road Walk within a few secs of that time.

I had to rise early on day 2 catch a taxi, the Metro and a shuttle bus to Torremolinos about 35 kms away. I traveled with Don Mathewson and Jim Langford, fellow Aussies.

It would take many pages to tell the complete story of the Cross Country Event. The short version is that it was a very difficult and dangerous course in conditions which were getting hotter by the minute. Jim had a fall and was concussed. I finished in one piece in 36th place. In the 65-69 yrs there were 56 starters. My time for the supposed 8km was 40:45. Three other Aussies won the Team Gold in the M65-69, Dennis Wylie, Ron Schwebel and Giovanni Puglisi. Onya boys!

Two events done and my injured quad had not been aggravated by my exertions and I had not run last.

We spent the next day exploring the old Cento part of Málaga. The whole area is full of lovely old houses in narrow, winding, cobbled or paved streets. In the heat and humidity it was more tiring than the cross country. LOL!

Next day, Sunday 7 September 2018 was my 70th birthday. I started by competing in the 2,000m Steeplechase. Although I was now 70, for the World Championships you stay in the age category you were on day one i.e. 65-69 in my case. I started the steeplechase well enough and stepped into and over the first two steeples. Then I remembered I was carrying an injury and decided to straddle the remaining steeples. (I place my hands on the steeple and swing my legs over. Only allowed for 60 yrs +). I finished 17th out of 24 in a time of 9:46.57, about 50 secs slower than my best. But I had not raced a steeplechase nor had time to train before the Championship. So I was satisfied to finish not last and in one piece. When I checked the M70-74 yrs results, I my time would have placed me 6th. Perhaps I should do some steeplechase training for the next World Championship. Ha, Ha.

Margie and celebrated my 70th dining with Don, Renata, Cameron as well as Jim and Margaret Langford.

On 8th September Margie, Margaret Langford and I joined a large group of Aussies and Kiwis on a bus trip to Ronda. Very interesting but very warm and tiring.

The 9th saw Margie and I “sleep in” and slowly walking around the old Centro part of Málaga. Hundreds of Cafés, restaurants and small shops. Thousands of people, mostly locals.

I had an early start on 10th Sept. in the 10 kilometre Road Race Walk. I surprised myself by walking my best time in years, 1 hr, 3 mins and 37 secs. Thanks to fellow walkers Jack Russell and Ralph Bennett for pushing me the whole way. That gave me 14th place in the M56-69 category. (46 Starters). I checked the 70-74 yr results. That time would have placed me 7th of 41 in my Actual age group. So I was very pleased. If I didn't finish another race I would be happy.

The 11th Sept saw Margie and I on another interesting and enjoyable but warm and tiring bus trip to Granada.

On the evening of 12th September I competed in the M65-69 5,000 track run. After my hard 10km Race Walk and an exhausting excursion to Granada I was uncertain how I would perform in the 5,000m run. In my slower heat I started well not far behind the leading group. About two laps into the race I felt my left quad spasm. I immediately backed off and ran conservatively for a few laps. I felt OK so I slowly increased the pace again. I was then passing runners for the remainder of the race. The young volunteers on the drinks station were cheering us all. It helped. I finished in 24th place of 37 in a time of 23:43.32. Again I was happy not to finish last. After the race two young volunteers came over to introduce themselves and ask a few curious questions about Australia. It was a nice way to finish a race.

So 5 events down only two to go. The two longest.

Margie was a bit crook that night and next morning but by afternoon we were able to do some slow walking to some of the Roman ruins and parks in Málaga.

It was very warm that night and the street noise ensured a lousy night's sleep.

I rose early on Friday 14th September 2018. My first 20km Race Walk in Competition. (With Judges). My aim was to keep the judges happy and finish. Any time would be fine because it was hot and humid. I brought two bottles of sports drink but there was no Australian table. Two very kind Dutch helpers, Rudi and Rod said I could use their table.

Jack and I had our usual tussle in the 20km walk. We took turns leading. About mid race Jack had a significant lead and I was going as hard as I dare in the very oppressive conditions. At about 15kms my sciatica flared up sending pains through my left glute and hamstring muscle. I shortened my stride and slowed down. Jack was slowing too. I just kept concentrating on my form. I slowly crept ahead of Jack and pushed on through the discomfort. I finished the 20km walk in 12 th place in a time of 2 hrs 16 mins 32 secs. (41 entered).

I was just so relieved. I finished! I went straight down to the drinks tables to thank the Dutch gentlemen who held up my drink and raced ahead to collect it after I gulped a mouthful. I had a shower the another. It was hard to cool down. Still six events down, one to go. Could I recover enough in two days to jog the Half Marathon?

I tried to do as little as possible for the rest of the day and the next, but Margie and I ended up walking to shops and restaurants that night and next day visiting the locals markets and various shoe shops. What the heck we hadn't been to Spain before and I was just going to jog the Half.

It poured rain the night before the Half Marathon.

I woke early on Sunday 16 September and walked 2 kms to the Metro Station. It was already very humid and not a cloud in the sky. The most oppressive day of the Championships.

I started the Half Marathon slowly but found that as I warmed up I was moving more freely and started to pass people. I continued in this fashion until about 15kms into the race. I had to stop and walk a few seconds to recover as there was no shade and some thirsty person had snatched my drinks before me. They had water to drink but a little sugar would have helped. I must have walked another three times. ( I have never had to walk in a Half previously). The race seemed to last forever. I struggled to the finish in 1hr 54 mins 03 secs in 37th place. I was shattered after the run. Dehydration and hypoglycaemia forced me to just flop onto the lawn in the shade. Margie came to watch the relays but ended up walking a few kms to buy food and drinks to revive me.

Imagine my surprise as I read a text message from Ron Schwebel claiming we had won a Bronze Medal in the M65-69 Teams event With Yassine (Yassi) Belaabed, a fellow Aussie. To tell the truth I thought it so unlikely, I figured he was joking. But Ron's time was 1:36:54 and Yassi's time even better at 1:35:41. So despite my slow time our Australian Team finished about 6 mins ahead of the fourth, German, team. It was a long hot wait in the presentation tent to receive our Medals but somehow we found new stamina and managed to get over the shock and smile for the cameras. Ron took it all in his stride, this was his second medal at these Championships. Yassi and I kept saying "I can't believe it, we won a World Championship Medal!" How did that happen? I came into the Championships under trained and carrying an injury? On top of that I ended up running and walking 71.1 kilometres during the Championships. It is still hard to believe I managed it.

Regards

Dennis & Margie