



After a lighter than normal year of training, Cartwright emerged to place second in the 2006 City to Surf. Image by Blue Elephant Photography

MEASURED

Hunger. Dedication. Toughness.

They are three key pieces of armory long distance runners must possess to protect them from the rigors of this brutal sport. However, if an athlete becomes too heavily armed with these characteristics, they can also become destructive ...

CANBERRA-BASED South Australian Brett Cartwright was once a case in point. Now 33 and adopting a more “measured” approach to his running, Cartwright, a multiple national champion and Commonwealth Games representative, admits it was his over-eagerness to get to the top which brought about his undoing as a junior. “I think when you’re a junior it’s hard to see the long term,” Cartwright says. “You’re only thinking six months ahead when really you should be thinking six years ahead.”

Cartwright was a junior star. At 15 he ran 3000 metres in 8.31, which was a national record and still ranks him as Australia’s second fastest ever under-16 over the distance.

He once destroyed an under-20 national cross country field, which included Lee Troop, by over 300 metres, and he also won the prestigious De Castella junior boys 3000 metres at the Zatopec track meet.

But junior dominance pushed Cartwright’s motivation into overdrive, and the result wasn’t the quick and easy transition into senior prominence he’d hoped for. He became almost obsessed with his goal of becoming a champion, running himself into the ground at training.

Cartwright’s junior coach Toby Schreier, who has overseen the progress of many fine athletes at the Flinders Athletics Club in Adelaide, remembers an athlete who was so hungry for success he was difficult to control.

“There was no holding him back,” says Schreier of Cartwright. “He just used to want to run flat barrel every night of the week”

Cartwright developed a reputation for jumping straight back into hard training sessions after injury in an effort to recover lost time. Usually the result was more time on the sidelines.

But his most costly error was a decision to train through a cold at around the age of 20.

“I ran myself into a hole,” remembers Cartwright. “It got to a point where I couldn’t even get through a 20 minute run.”

Cartwright had developed Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, an ailment so severe it can often prove terminal to an athlete’s running career. For Cartwright, it would sideline him for several years.

Gradually people began to forget about the once brilliant junior, assuming his career was over. But the same determination and grit that had caused Cartwright to over train went to work again, this time to help him overcome Chronic Fatigue.

“I never thought about giving it away,” Cartwright says. “I just enjoy running too much.”

In 1998, Cartwright re-emerged at the age of 25. His body had recovered, and in his first season back, a time of 13.49 on the track for 5000 metres announced his return to the elite group of Australian distance runners.

It would signal the start of a lengthy period as one of Australia’s best middle distance runners for Cartwright. A move to Canberra in 1999 to join then AIS head distance coach Dick Telford helped Cartwright to develop a more sustainable training pattern.

“When I look through my list of personal best times, I’m not really 100 percent satisfied with any of them.”



“When I returned to the sport as a senior, I learned the importance of patience, of letting the body recover”

As 2007 gets underway, Cartwright is satisfied but not content. Since his return from Chronic Fatigue some nine years ago, he has run under 28 minutes for 10,000 metres, represented Australia at the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games and at four World Cross Country

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After coming off a relaxed 2006, Cartwright feels the batteries have again been recharged to embark on a big year.

“Last year running slipped down to about fifth on the list of priorities for a number of reasons. Missing the Commonwealth Games was a major factor, but I also got married and finished off my CPA [Certified Public Accountant Degree], and moved into a new house, so it was just one of those times in my life where there was a lot of other stuff happening and it was hard to find time to run.”

Cartwright came close to qualifying for the

Full Name: Brett Anthony Cartwright
Year of Birth: 1973
Place of Birth: Adelaide
Currently Living: Canberra
Marital Status: Married to Stefanie
Occupation: Accountant
Height: 171cm
Weight: 58kg
Hair Colour: Brown
Shoe Size: 8.5
Favourite ever pair of runners: Asics Gel Empire
Personal Best Times: 5k – 13.38, 10k – 27.54, Half Marathon – 63.29, Marathon – 2.18.13
Three Favourite Races: World Cross Country, Sydney Half Marathon, Bay Sheffield Select Mile

‘Carty’ sporting his R4YL cap after the 2006 City to Surf. Image by Daniel Green

APPROACH

>> Commonwealth Games at 5000 metres, 10,000 metres, and the marathon, but felt fate conspired against him to deny him the chance he so desperately craved: to compete in a home Commonwealth Games.

"I was only seven seconds off the qualifying in the 10,000 metres, and I won at the Zatopek (which doubled as the national championships), so to miss selection was disappointing."

"Getting the right race in the 10km can easily make a 30 second difference, and I just couldn't find that race."

Although accepting he didn't fulfill the selection criteria, Cartwright said he believed an exception should have been made, and that an Australian athlete should have been selected in the 10,000 metres to avoid having no representation in the event at a home Commonwealth Games.

"It was disappointing to watch athletes representing England and several other countries who'd run slower than me," states Cartwright. "In 1986 they selected Moneghetti in the Marathon, and he'd never run one before. I think that was a good decision."

As he came to terms with missing selection in the Commonwealth Games and decided to channel some of his energy into other areas, Cartwright dropped his weekly training back to 70 to 80 kilometres for most of 2006. Missing morning runs, which were considered sacrosanct in his junior days, became a regular occurrence.

The lighter training load reiterated the lesson he'd learnt as a junior about the benefits of not over training. Despite a limited build up to the 2006 Sydney City to Surf, Cartwright ran his quickest ever time (41.13) over the course, and finished first Australian and second overall.

"That was a surprise for me. I decided about four weeks out that I wanted to do it, and I reckon at that stage I wouldn't have broken 30 minutes for 10km."

He followed the result up with victory in the Perth City to Surf, and later in the year was part of the Australian team which finished fifth at the Chiba Ekiden Relay.

The results have given Cartwright confidence as he prepares to turn his focus to the marathon in 2007.

His first marathon at the Gold Coast in 2005 was promising, but inexperience at the distance caught up with him over the last five kilometres.



"I remember passing through half-way in 65.40 and thinking, 'This is so easy', but after 'Tommo' [pace-maker Mark Thompson] pulled out I started forcing it."

"At 37 kilometres I was still in front by about two minutes, and I ended up getting beaten by over two minutes. My last five kilometres took over 20 minutes."

His final time of 2.18.13 is one that Cartwright knows he can better, and as he prepares for another

crack at the marathon in 2007, Cartwright's preparations are being assisted by two men and a dog: Rob de Castella, Peter Brett, and Cartwright's new puppy, Hicham (after El Guerrouj), a Border Collie/Kelpie Cross.

"The dog has been a bloody handful actually," Cartwright says of his new training partner. "But he's been good to take out on runs. He can comfortably run an hour at four minute kilometres."

De Castella, arguably Australia's greatest ever marathon runner, has been assigned as Cartwright's mentor in the lead up to the Beppu marathon in Japan on February 4th.

Cartwright was selected as part of the 2006 Prime Ministers running team, which provides him with financial assistance to travel to competitions. The scholarship also assigned Rob de Castella to work with Cartwright, and share his intricate knowledge of marathon running.

"He [de Castella] has been very thorough in advising me on how to prepare for a marathon," says Cartwright.

"It's a completely different event to 10km and even the half marathon. You've really got to learn to be patient"

Cartwright will also take on board the advice of his new coach, former Australian Commonwealth Games representative Peter Brett.

"In 2004 I just thought I stagnated, so I went to Bretty in 2005 to freshen things up a bit. It's worked really well. He's just changed a few things, which you need to do every now and then."

Brett has once again re-iterated to

Cartwright the importance of allowing the body to recover.

"He believes in big sessions," Cartwright says. "But he also believes I run my best when I'm fresh. So we do big hard sessions, but then there's a lot of emphasis on making sure I recover."

Cartwright's main objective in Beppu will be to qualify for the 2007 World Championships in Osaka, Japan in August. He believes the B qualifying time of 2.14.40 is well within reach.

"I think I'll benefit from running in a pack for most of the race in Beppu, compared to the Gold Coast," states Cartwright.

Beyond the World Championships, Cartwright's sights are set firmly on Beijing and earning selection to compete in his first Olympics.

"Obviously the ultimate goal would be to run for your country at an Olympic Games."

When the Beijing Olympics roll around, Cartwright will be 35, an age at which thoughts of retirement present themselves to most athletes. But Cartwright said he is unlikely to discontinue his association with running, which began at age nine, until well beyond Beijing.

"I think I'll continue to run until I no longer believe I'm capable of representing an Australian team."

"So I may run on after Beijing, provided I'm still enjoying it"

Cartwright is now an athlete who can see the long term. As he steps his focus up to the toughest event of all, the marathon, in 2007, he has added patience to his armory to compliment the hunger, dedication and toughness he's always possessed in abundance.

