

# Tommy Geoghegan

**Full name:** Thomas Patrick Geoghegan.  
**Date of Birth:** 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 1956.  
**Place of Birth:** Dublin, Ireland.

**Sponsors:** I wish, maybe one day.

**Currently Living:** Colyton, Sydney.

**Marital Status:** Married to Maureen (The best thing that ever happened to me, she is my biggest supporter and my rock.)

**Occupation:** State Service Operations Manager with Toyota Material Handling

**Height:** 167cm.  
**Weight:** Currently 67 Kilos

**Shoe Size:** Nine and a half US (9.5)

**Hair colour:** Now skin coloured but was originally reddish brown (when I had it)

**Favourite shoe colour:** Anything that looks fast (I need all the help I can get!)

**Most loved pair of runners:** The first pair of proper running shoes I owned were a pair of Puma Marathon which made me feel like I had made the transition to being a "Runner" as I had been wearing tennis shoes before that. At present Asics Gel - DS Trainers and Asics Gel - DS Racers VI

**Favourite Race:** My top three are The Sydney Morning Herald Half Marathon, City to Surf, and The Sutherland to Surf.

**Your 3 best running experiences:** Make that 5! Winning my first state gold medal with Bankstown Sports Senior Athletics 45+ team in the 2003 NSW 10K Road Championship and following it up with another gold in the 2003 NSW Half Marathon Championships. Finishing the 2004 SMH Half Marathon in a time of 88:24. Finishing the 2004 City to Surf in a time of 56:52. Winning the 45 to 54 age group section in the Sydney Marathon Clinic 10K series 2001/2002 (fastest time of 38:58).

**Personal Bests for your favourite distances:**  
5K - 18:22, 10K - 38:58,  
Half Marathon 88:24, 15K - 61:10.

**Background:** R4YL recently met Tommy on a training camp in Bundanoon. Speaking to Tommy on the phone before the camp, his enthusiasm and passion for running was evident from the very beginning. In person Tommy is unassuming and a great guy. R4YL would like to thank Tommy for participating in this interview, especially given his current difficult circumstances.

Tommy, we believe you are originally from Ireland? When did you land on Australian shores? And in your opinion, what are Australia's highlights compared to Ireland and where does Ireland leave Australia wanting?

My wife Maureen, three children, Thomas, Raymond, Denise and I arrived in Sydney, Australia on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1990, we had never set foot in Australia before then, we sold up everything back in Ireland and moved to our new life in Sydney.

A big chance, yes, but one worth taking for future opportunity and it did not take us very long to settle. The whole family agrees that it was the best decision ever made, as we believe that Australia is such a fantastic country.

While we all have an obvious love for Ireland and are very proud of our heritage, we now call Australia home. The highlights? How much time do you have? I could fill the magazine. I suppose that there are varying perceptions of highlights, but for my mind a lot of the highlights are connected with the outdoor life. Sydney is an absolutely beautiful city and never ceases to take my breath away when I occasionally visit the big smoke from the burbs. Getting back to the outdoor life, I love the climate of this sun kissed land and while the humidity can be oppressive at times it sure beats being constantly lashed by rain, sub zero temperatures and experiencing days when you have minimal daylight. The sporting facilities in this country are first class and give me everything I need to satisfy my passion for running. Some things that I do miss about

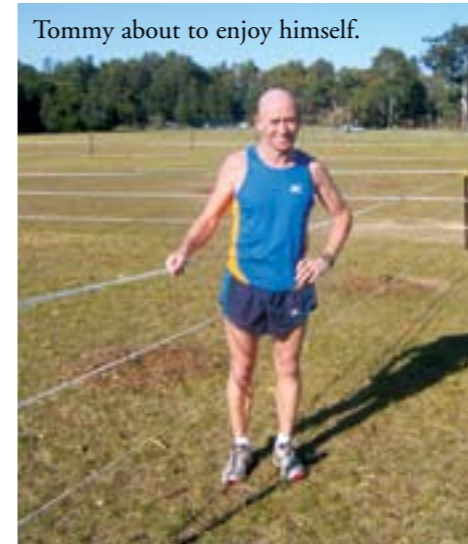


Ireland are of course my family and friends, Christmas time and the atmosphere. (It is great when it snows, but the novelty wears off pretty quickly). As far as running is concerned I miss the winter cross country races when the mud is up to your ankles, the surface is like a skating rink, the going is very heavy but is all good fun mixed with hard work.

**How have you found the running community and events in Australia compared to Ireland?**

I happily discovered the wonderful euphoria of running in March 1985 and I have to say that I had some of the best times of my life. At races I met up with some fantastic people and made lifetime friendships. Having experienced the solid bond and lasting friendships within the "Irish Running Community" I was of the belief that when I left Irish shores that I was leaving the good times behind and did not expect to have anywhere near the joy and pleasure that I had before I left. Boy was I wrong, not only have I had similar experiences, it continues to get better. The running community in Australia is nothing short of fantastic and I would like to make mention of my two beloved clubs, my number one club being Bankstown Sports Senior Athletics Club and my number two club of Western Districts Joggers and Harriers. Both of these clubs have been very instrumental in my running pleasure and progression.

Tommy about to enjoy himself.



There is an amazing amount of work put in by tireless committee members to make these clubs the great clubs that they are. At a recent training camp in Bundanoon I had the extreme pleasure to be in the company of one of Australia's elite runners, namely, Mark Thompson who, in conversation made the statement that "All runners are great people" and I believe and fully support this statement.

One other thing that I would like to mention in this section, when I commenced running back in 1985 I considered myself to be a pure jogger and I was always very apprehensive about joining up with any running clubs or groups due to a feeling of possible intimidation and being the slowest runner in the club. I would like to encourage all beginners, joggers etc to go and join up at your local club; you will be sharing your passion with like-minded people and make a lot of good friends along the way.

As far as running events in Australia are concerned I cannot remember a bad one that I have run in, generally there exists a very professional organisation level in these events and most importantly a high standard of safety.

**In regards to your running past, when did you start running? And what made you take up running?**

As previously mentioned I commenced running in March 1985 at the grand old age of 29 and the story goes as follows: I never considered myself to be a "Runner" and in fact I actually disliked running. Prior to migrating to Australia I lived in the Irish capital of Dublin where, since a lad (commenced in the under 6 age group) I had played soccer and one part of the training I was not keen on was the

## Truly inspirational

running, as I just wanted to kick the ball around and work on my skill level. Later on in my life, the inevitable happened, showing interest in the fairer sex and following some long and short-term relationships I met Maureen in mid 1976. Maureen and I were married in June 1978 and through working long hours (that old mortgage hold) and due to no soccer and lack of exercise of any description I became a hard working, hard drinking (all work and no play and all that) portly man. This continued for some years and in between I experienced the shock of losing my father to a brain hemorrhage at the very young age of 53 years. He was a very hard worker who enjoyed a drink or two; he was a large man who also suffered from high blood pressure. Post Christmas 1984 I weighed myself on the bathroom scales and took a long hard look at myself in the mirror. I weighed in at 91 Kilos and looked like the Michelin man, I made up my mind that I was going to start running and change my overweight condition.

New Years day 1985, I rose at 5.00 am (unheard of in Ireland, if I had been seen people would have said that I had lost it) anyway I decided that I was going to run for at least 30 minutes, the result? Ran for 2 minutes and stopped gasping, the obvious reason, lack of any kind of running experience and no understanding of pacing.

I decided there and then that I could not do this on my own and the following week joined the Universal Health Club. Two months later following a strict diet and training program (mainly weights and exercise classes) I managed to loose 13 kilos.

While I had to spend a fortune replacing my wardrobe, boy was I a different person, full of life and jumping out of my skin. Here comes the running part: As I previously mentioned I was not an avid fan of running back then but one Saturday afternoon in early March 1985 I was lifting some free weights when I was approached by the gym instructor who asked me if I could do him a favour.

The story was that he had a member who wanted to go for a run and he was uncomfortable for him to go alone (think that he may have had a screw loose or something, no Irish jokes please). Michael

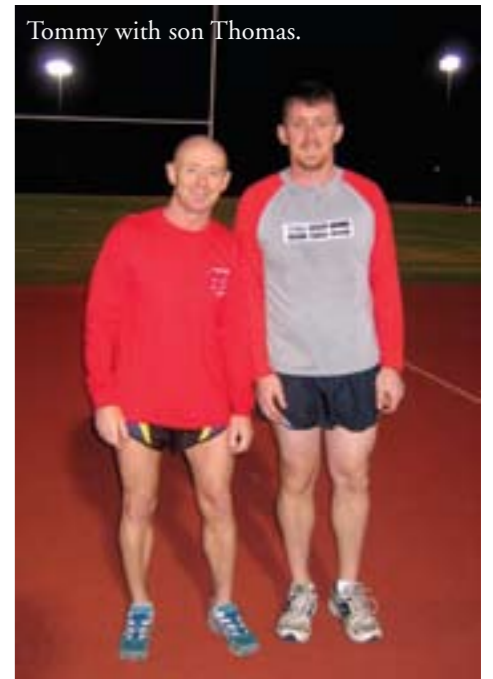
the instructor was unable to go, as he was the only one on duty. Following some further pleading I agreed to go, so out we went and headed for the Phoenix Park a little over a kilometre from the club. I informed my fellow runner that I would run to the park gates with him and then head back to the club. When we arrived at the park gates he asked if I would go a little further into the park, under duress I agreed and then I could not believe what happened next. Further into the park I felt the strain and told him that I had to stop for a while, he nodded his head and then ran away and left me. This made me angry, so after composing myself I took off after him, it took me a while but I eventually caught and passed him. Following a full circuit of the Park's perimeter I was back at the club about ten minutes before him. When he arrived I asked him if he knew what distance we ran and he informed me that we had run 11k, I was so thrilled and excited with my achievement (very sore also).

Next club night on Tuesday I was jumping around asking everyone if they wanted to go for a run, that was the beginning of my "Running passion"

**We understand that you have quite a demanding position at Toyota, what exactly is your position. How do you find running fits in with your working life?**

I hold the position of the State Service Operations Manager at Toyota Material

Tommy with son Thomas.



## “Out of all sporting activities running keeps you sharp physically and mentally”

Handling New South Wales with offices at Chester Hill and Wetherill Park in Sydney and branches at Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Newcastle, Orange and Canberra. My role is highly demanding but I really enjoy the fast pace, when I have a challenge to conquer I sometimes draw similarities to my running challenges and take a systematic step-by-step approach, which rarely fails me. As far as getting time to run, I make the time to have my routine runs because I believe that pursuing my passion is a hugely important ingredient in striving for excellence in my work performance. Of course there are the occasions that due to some work commitment I just cannot get to run but I do not make a habit of this. I am convinced that out of all sporting activities running keeps you sharp physically and mentally.

We believe you have a family, how old are your children? What does your family think of your obsession with running, if we could call it that? Do they understand? Do any others members of your family participate in running or any other sports? Yes along with my beautiful wife Maureen I have three fantastic children, Thomas who is almost 26, Raymond who will be 25 in December and Denise who will be 20, also in December. Through all the



Bankstown Sports Tuesday night race.

years that I have been involved in running my family have been very supportive and yes you can call it my obsession. Maureen has been nothing short of fantastic, even when the children were very young I was off racing all over the country on Saturday, Sunday and training midweek, she very rarely complained. Thomas and Raymond ran in the school carnivals and were both age champions and ran regionals. Thomas joined up with little A's but gave it away because all he wanted to do was to run. He ran with me for a while and then got involved in triathlons. He got married three years ago and somewhat like his dad stopped training for a year or so. Then he commenced playing Basketball, while he still plays Basketball he recently made a return to running and has joined up with both Bankstown Sports and Western Districts and he loves it again. Raymond plays NSW Federation state soccer or should I say football, to be politically correct. He has been playing with Mount Druitt Town Rangers for quite a number of years now he is very dedicated and loves his training. He also has a very relaxed running style and appears to be a bit of a natural as he lopez along. I think that he will take up running when his soccer days come to an end. Raymond is getting married next year so in the spirit of family tradition maybe that will be the beginning of his eventual transition to our great sport of running. Denise was involved in netball for a while but has since stopped playing, she has been dancing since she was very young and really enjoys that. She recently joined up at our local gym and is getting right into the fitness mould.

Maureen is now more of a walker, but has run when we lived in Ireland, She once ran in what we call “The Evening Press Mini Marathon” which is an all women's 10K, she trained very hard for it and I was so proud of her when she crossed the finish line that it brought a tear to my eye. “You go girl”

**What is your favourite running session?**  
I would have to say that my favourite session is 15 x 400m track repeats at 90% effort with a 200m recovery. This is a hard but very rewarding session; you know you had a workout and sleep well after it. I also really enjoy my long Sunday run with the guys when we can also catch up on the goss and talk about our mutual passion for running.



NSW state relays.

What does a standard week of training look like?  
**Monday** – rest day or a session on the wind trainer  
**Tuesday** – AM: swim session, PM: race at The Crest, Bankstown  
**Wednesday** – AM: swim session, PM: easy 10K or wind trainer session  
**Thursday** – AM: swim session, PM: session at The Crest, track or road  
**Friday** – AM: swim session, PM: Rest  
**Saturday** – AM: 10K with The Western District Joggers and Harriers.  
**Sunday** – AM: long road run between 18K and 25K

Tommy, we are aware that some months ago you were diagnosed with prostate cancer. Can you inform us of the situation surrounding this?

Well here is a real message for us all to be highly proactive when it comes to our health. My first and only reason for taking time to visit my GP was excessive tiredness and lethargy. I live a very busy life, up at five every morning, swim training, busy work schedule, run training and most nights not getting to bed until after midnight equating to 5 or 6 hours sleep (if I am lucky). Well most people's reaction to that would be to say “no wonder you are constantly tired”, yes normally I am tired but this time it was something different. I would wake in the morning and sit on the side of the bed thinking that it can't be morning already.

Anyway, my GP conducted all the usual tests and everything came back good, he did show some concern at my resting heart rate being as low as 40 bpm but after some further checks agreed that it was due to my fitness level.

Following some discussion on my sleep pattern it revealed that he was unaware that my 5 to 6 hours sleep was being interrupted each night for a toilet visit. This had been a normal thing for me for as long as I can remember, some more detailed questions prompted him to check my prostate gland which he found to be slightly enlarged but nothing to be alarmed about. The next concern was unveiled when a specific blood test was conducted known as a PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen). This showed a borderline result, so my doctor decided to be cautious and referred me to an Urologist at Westmead Private Hospital.

After some physical testing of the prostate gland the urologist looked puzzled as to why I should be there at all but when another blood test was conducted it appeared that the PSA level had increased even further. The decision was made, once again for cautionary purposes, to book me in for a biopsy. One week after my biopsy I was diagnosed with having Prostate Cancer, which is highly unusual for a man of 49 years of age, talk about being numb and feeling like my whole world was falling apart.

Obviously my family, were very distraught so it was up to me to be strong as I knew if I was strong then they would be also. When we all got together I told them that what I had could be fixed and it was not like I had an incurable condition, I was going to beat this. From then on Maureen and my family were very strong and became a very effective support mechanism for me when I occasionally faltered.

We understand that you have had an operation for this condition. What was involved in the operation?  
The operation was a “Nerve Sparing Radical Prostatectomy and Lymph Node Dissection” which involves the removal of the of the prostate gland, part of the urethra (the tube through which your urine passes and which runs through the prostate), the seminal vesicles next to the prostate, and a small part of the vas deferens which joins to the prostate. I also

had a Lymph Node dissection to check for cancer content and the surgeon spared the nerves, as there was no cancer detected near them.

The end result was excellent for the fact that the all the cancer had still been contained within the prostate gland but the scary part was, when they dissected the prostate gland post operation the cancers measured 16mm in diameter. The recovery process was quite painful due to the inability to be active but as soon as I was able I was out walking every day making steady progress. Five weeks later I was back at work, back swimming and some slow running. Believe me it takes a lot out of you and when I first left the hospital I could only shuffle along. I still get very tired which is to be expected which will get better in time, but I know that I am very lucky. I would like to thank all my family, work colleagues and friends for all their kindness, well wishes and support during this challenging period for Maureen and I.

Even though you had already known about the prostate cancer for many weeks, you still competed in the recent SMH Half Marathon. To get a bit more insight, why did you still want to compete given the current situation?

The main focus for me was to retain and where possible improve my running fitness as I knew it would be very beneficial for me post operation. I had already discussed this with my team of professionals whom gladly supported it. I also wanted to be able to draw from something in the base bank when I was cleared to run competitively again.

You have mentioned that the recovery from your operation is going to be reduced to somewhere around 3-4 weeks given your level of fitness, which is obviously one benefit of keeping fit and healthy?  
There was an obvious benefit of being fit and healthy pre operation for the simple fact that I was able to get out and exercise quicker than most. The early walking sessions made all the difference to the normal recovery period of 6-8 weeks. As with everything, a positive attitude will achieve the desired results and that is how I remained all the way through. This is where my “Running Experience” came into play with having the power of positive



Enjoying a chat post race.

thinking and the will to “Win”. I have been given a second chance and I intend to make the most of it by being the best I can possibly be in all facets of my life. As far as my running is concerned I still believe that I am no way near to reaching my full potential and expect to improve and achieve at a higher level. I know that this will take a lot of consistency and hard work and I intend to enjoy the experience of preparation. Remember, age is a state of mind.

# R4YL

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