

# David Waugh: Trailblazer

Name: David Waugh  
Date of Birth: November 16, 1971  
Place of Birth: Sydney

Sponsors: My New York agent is currently in negotiations with a number of German Brewing companies... in reality, like all ultra runners, I'd just love cheap running shoes!

Currently Living: Sunrise Beach, Queensland  
Marital Status: Married to Rachel  
Occupation: Graphic Designer

Height: 178cm  
Weight: 69kg  
Shoe Size: 10.5  
Hair colour: Brown  
Favourite shoe colour: Anything other than white, and not those ugly triathlon fluoros either  
Most loved pair of runners you have ever had (brand and style): Asics Empire  
Favourite Race: Great North Walk 100 despite (or maybe because of) getting lost multiple times.

Top 3 running experiences/performances:  
Glasshouse 100 Mile 18.17  
Glasshouse 80K night 7.42  
Wilsons Prom 100K 12.20  
Personal Bests for your favourite distances:  
100 mile trail 18.17

David Waugh appeared on the ultra scene at the 2001 Cradle Mountain 85K trail ultra in Tasmania, where he came fifth in stiflingly hot weather. Last year he came first at the May 50K trail race at Glasshouse Mountains (QLD), second at the July Glasshouse 50K, then DNF'd in the Glasshouse Trail 100 Mile race in September, whilst his wife Rachel finished the 100 Miles in 25 hours. In 2005 David returned to running after injury with wins in the Glasshouse 80k and Tamborine Trek. In September he returned to the Glasshouse Trail 100 Mile race and ran away from all other competitors to finish in 18.17, only the second time a runner had broken 20 hours there and very close to Jonathan Worswick's 2001 course record of 17.43. David followed up this performance at the inaugural Great North Walk 100 Mile race on the NSW Central Coast in November with a 26.18 win, almost six hours ahead of second place. So what is the story behind Australia's dominant long distance trail runner?

*David, please tell us about your athletic background. What sports were you interested in, and how did you get into (ultra) running?*  
I was living in New Zealand and frustrated that I never had time to do the

Written by Sean Greenhill

bushwalks I wanted to do. One weekend I decided I'd do a '5 day walk' in 2 days by carrying a small pack and running as much as I could. That's how the ultra running started. I have always been a passionate cycle tourist and love bushwalking, climbing and a bit of caving. During school years I played soccer and tennis religiously every day.

*Do you still do any other sport, apart from running and cycling?*

Running and cycling accounts for about 99% but I am hoping to get back into some climbing soon. I play the odd game of tennis and like to kayak when I get the chance.

*What place does running occupy in your life? Is it the dominating force? Please tell us a bit about your lifestyle and how running fits into it?*

I guess I am what would be considered a low mileage runner and devote more time just commuting. Basically I will do anything to avoid being in a car and get around by bike, running or canoeing. I think next year I might try and devote a bit more time to running although it might be difficult with our first baby due in a month. That said, my wife Rachel is an ultrarunner and we're both looking forward to giving it a go in 2006 and can't

wait for the baby to grow up a little bit so we can hoon in the jogger!

*Any particular eating or dietary habits?*

I have never paid too much attention to my diet but I think I have always eaten fairly well – as much raw food in possible with plenty of fruit and vegies. Everyone says I eat too much bread but it's my passion... I just love bread and maybe in another life I'd be a baker. I was a vegetarian for about 5 years but now I am too lazy. I don't eat too much meat however and get most of my protein from tofu, tahini, and dairy.

*What sort of training do you do?*

I have never been a fan of specific training regimes although I make sure I do at least one big run per week - usually something around 60kms that's "out there" a bit. I run on average about 100 - 130kms per week and cycle commute on top of that. My speed work is playing ultimate frisbee.

*Hub? Ultimate Frisbee? Please explain, David...*

Ultimate is basically a cross between basketball and soccer that uses a Frisbee. It's insanely fun and I figure it counts as a speed session. I really do need to do some more higher intensity work but have a real problem with a track... indoor soccer, volleyball, frisbee, skateboarding, basketball and tennis are all great alternative high intensity training sessions.

*Does this training regime vary much, for example in the weeks prior to a 100 miler?*

I would usually take it pretty easy two weeks prior to a 100 mile run and I figure it's more important to eat well and not get injured. Perhaps a 45 minute run each day.

*What sort of terrain does most of your running take place on? Roads? Trail? Flat? Hilly?*

I train about 70% on trails, 20% on the beach and the rest road. I get pretty creative trying to find a route that avoids bitumen.

*The other night I had dinner with a friend who ran the 800 metres when in school and is now getting back into running and was saying he had trouble getting his head around doing a 5K race- he couldn't imagine staying*

The start is a mad dash for the first 500m.



*pumped up for that duration of time. What would you say to someone who is just getting into 5 and 10K running if you were describing how you got your brain about running for 100 miles? What sort of mental preparation do you do, if any?*

It's funny because people think running for a day is totally weird but wouldn't think twice about doing a 3 day bushwalk with a pack. I treat ultras as a long bushwalk and the running evolves from there. I don't want to pretend that you can just go out one day and run 100 miles, but with preparation over many years you build up the endurance and mind set. The biggest barrier for most people is taking it easy - I've seen so many runners go out at marathon pace at the start of an ultra and by the half way mark, they have forgotten their name.

*Oh yes, I've felt that rush of blood myself.*

*How do you curb the instinct to push it?*  
My aim during a 100 mile is to feel fresh at the half way mark. In training, I'll always do as many 80k runs as possible and make sure I feel okay after them. For me, I didn't feel comfortable attempting a 100 mile until I knew I had at least a dozen 80ks under my belt.

*At the start of a big ultra, everyone turns up in their best physical shape; but that doesn't guarantee a good race. Some people come unstuck and finish hours behind their goals, and some others 'carry on' and have blinders. Have you observed any patterns or characteristics in those who run strongly through the night, and those who don't?*  
Preparation. I honestly believe that fitness

accounts for less than 50% of a successful ultra. It's usually things like blisters, inability to eat, dehydration and psychological factors. You have to enjoy the good times during the event by running when you can, and surviving the low times by keeping some kind of momentum, even a slow walk. Night running is different and the only way to train (surprise, surprise) is running loads at night alone. It has to be solo because in a 100 mile race, most likely you'll be alone. Some people just don't like that and I think you need to force yourself to be comfortable with it.

*What's the key, number one component in running a successful ultra?*

Enjoying yourself as much as possible by relishing the fact you're out there running in the bush. I think we can forget this sometimes.

*It really is a mental game, isn't it?*

I totally agree – it's not the training, the shoes or the heart rate monitor.....it's the stuff between your ears. And that's brains, not guts! The gutsy people I really do admire, but often they can also be the people who simply didn't run a very smart race. I remember a piece of wisdom from Paul Every regarding Glasshouse: he said the person who has the best final 50ks will always win. For those of you who know the course, the final 50 is pretty easy going and almost 100% runnable. If you're toast by this stage then you are going to lose loads of time.

*In my own 100 mile races, I've noticed I tend to have bad patches after a certain distance or*



The start is a mad dash for the first 500m.



*time; there tends to be a pattern. What low points do you encounter in ultras? Is there a pattern for you? Can you use these bad patches to your advantage or empowerment?*

This sounds clichéd but bad patches always lead to good patches no matter how far you are going. This may seem like a contradiction to what I said earlier about preparation, but you also need to relax sometimes and not be too analytical. I am pretty new to all this and compared to your exploits, I'm just a beginner. Perhaps that's an advantage - you never know what you're in for! Personally there are no patterns for me - just a regular roller coaster of feeling good, then bad. I just try and keep momentum always.

*So, you're in the bush, its midnight and you're slipping down the roller coaster. What are you saying to yourself?*

I am so stupid but I love it! Yes I really do... this is fun... wow I love the sky... and that moon... it works sometimes.

*Do you have a pre set race plan to follow? Do you "break down" the race at all, mentally?*

*Do you have an eating/nutrition strategy? What do you think of support crews or pace runners?*

I certainly have my eating and drinking system organised and I train with the same food and drink. For me it's half strength 'Replace' electrolyte for as long as I can bear it, GU sachets, Promite sandwiches, licorice and salty soup. A support crew is wonderful as long as they are committed but I will never have a pacer and feel quite strongly about it. Personally I think it could put you in a poor mind set by highlighting just how crap you really feel at the time. Independence is paramount. Seeing your support crew at aid stations is more than enough.

*Pacers originally evolved in US and British races as a safety feature. Do you thrive on the responsibility of having to completely take care of yourself?*

Are you safer going into the bush with a

GPS? Not always – often it can lead to complacency and you don't think about navigation in a holistic way. Now that's not the perfect example but I think the same philosophy can be applied to running. Let's face it, if you're at a checkpoint and you can't think straight, then your crew or the organizers should recommend you don't continue. If you have got to the stage that you need a pacer then perhaps the runner should consider the option of not continuing, as difficult as that might be. Maybe that's harsh... um, let's just say the individual responsibility is paramount to me. Everyone is different and that's the beauty about this sport. In a 100 metre run there's one way to win... go flat out for 10 seconds. In an ultra there are so many ways to get to the finish... and that's the important thing. Maybe I am jealous that no one has ever offered to pace!

*You've seemed to run alone during most of your races (they're all behind you) - do mostly train alone, or with a group or club? Do you run with Rachel?*

With the pregnancy, Rachel has just been walking, as you'd expect! For the last year, I don't think I have ever run with anyone... it's all been completely solo but I quite like it. I would however love to have some mates during the odd long run, and I do look forward to being able to run with Rachel again (my Mum said she's happy to babysit!)

*How important is it to know the course beforehand? You knew the Glasshouse course, having run on it before in various events- did you know anything about the course at Great North? Tell us about it.*

Yes, I think it does help although it's more fun when you go in oblivious. The GNW was a fantastic event because there was a little bit of navigation involved and we were all in the same boat. I lost loads of time getting lost and often backtracked just to make sure I was on course. If I manage to do it next year, then it won't be like that - I would think the event would be much more straightforward from a navigational perspective. That said, the course is tough and I found it difficult to be forced to walk so often. I definitely need to improve my technical mountain running!

It's a very different event to Glasshouse – more remote and less aid stations, which means carrying more gear. Most of us had at least 2-3 litres of water at all times. I

love both Glasshouse and GNW for different reasons but I must say the point-to-point, more remote nature of the GNW is very appealing. I love the terrain at Glasshouse Mountains as well – in fact the area in general is so underrated. If I can plug it a bit, it's brilliant for mountain biking and hardly anyone goes there!

*So what's coming up next year? Any plans or expectations? And, just quietly, what's your wildest dream about running?*

I actually feel like giving it a bit extra this coming year. Not sure if I will get to do many more events, but I would love to shave some time off my 100 mile time. I may really regret saying this but I have a deep desire to do Glasshouse in under 17 hours. Just as likely that I'll be the one forgetting my name at the half way mark! One year I would love to do the Leadville 100 mile mountain bike and run double.

*There's a run from the sea to Mt Kosciuszko on too...*

Yes, and that one of course! I think it's a brilliant idea and I have no doubt it will become a real iconic event on the calendar and there's huge marketing potential. I am a definite starter for 2006!

*This year we had a second 100 mile trail race (Great North) start up in Australia. But as you know in the USA there are over 30 100 mile trail races, some with hundreds of participants. Knowing about the highs, lows, suffering, achievement of running 100 miles, what would you say if you had to "sell" a 100 mile race entry to someone?*

It's the deepest bliss possible the moment you cross that line. No drug could come close.

*Gives you chills?*

It's just sensational!

**R4YL**

