

# Martin Dent **Man on Fire**

Name: Martin Dent  
 Date of Birth: 8 February 1979  
 Place of Birth: Chertsey, England  
 Sponsors: Prime Ministers Marathon Team, 2XU.  
 Currently Living: Macquarie, ACT  
 Martial Status: Married to Kathie  
 Occupation: Public servant in the Dept of Finance and Administration  
 Height: 180cm  
 Weight: 69kg  
 Shoe Size: 9  
 Favourite shoe colour: Green  
 Most loved pair of runners you have ever had (brand and style): First pair of sports brand shoes – Saucony when I was 12. I ran every race for the next year in them.  
 Favourite Race: World Cross Country.  
 Top 3 running experiences/performances: Canberra Marathon 2004 win – I went in hoping to break 2.20 and ran 2.15.  
 City to Surf 2005 3rd – my result was completely unexpected.  
 U15 National Cross Country win – first Australian title: I had been waiting 2 years to run this race and to come away with the win was great.  
 Personal Bests:  
 3,000m: 7.59  
 3,000m steeplechase: 8.30  
 5,000m: 13.51  
 10,000m: 29.16  
 Half Marathon: 63.49  
 Marathon: 2.15.12

*Martin, you had been a distance runner since a very young age and tasted many great successes as a junior. What would you class as your three most outstanding efforts as a junior athlete?*

1. Breaking the Australian U16 2000m Steeplechase record (5.59) at the men's height.
2. Placing 11<sup>th</sup> at World Junior Champs and on the way running a PB in the heat and another in the final.
3. Winning a National Schools 1500m title in 1995.

*Even considering your success as a junior you had what would be termed a 'superb' entry into the senior ranks. Can you enlighten us on that first year and the rocky road that was associated with it?*

Early 1999 was my first year in the seniors and was a successful year for me. I ran four or five consecutive PBs over the steeple, finishing the season with 8.36 and winning the National Open title. Subsequently, I was selected to compete in the World Student Championships. I didn't make the final, but it was a great trip. Then at Zatopek I ran an 8.31 steeple to win, and followed this up with an 8.30 steeple at Hobart GP in January 2000. Things were looking good for a spot in the Olympic Team. However, from then on it was pretty much downhill with



ordinary runs at Melbourne Grand Prix and Nationals. I struggled on with a hamstring problem and competed in the Olympic trials, without success.

*Your progression through the steeplechase ranks in the 1999/2000 season, set up an exciting battle between Chris Unthank, Stephen Thurston and yourself for a spot in the 2000 Olympic Team. What was it like coming so close to making a home Olympics and how did things work out for you in 2001 after such a near miss?*

The Olympic Trials were very disappointing, especially knowing that if I had been in the shape that I was in nine months earlier, I would probably have made the team. My hamstring problem,

had by that stage been bothering me for over 6 months. After my failed attempt to train through it, I finally took the opportunity to have it fixed and underwent surgery that October. I got married in December and did my first run on my honeymoon. By April the following year (2001) I was beginning to get into reasonable shape again and started racing on and off for the year. I also began working fulltime and so had to quickly learn how to balance work and training.

*You had a relatively quiet time with regards to performances between 2001 and 2002. We know that you ran your first marathon in 2002. How did you find training for your first marathon, and how was travelling to Japan for your debut marathon?*

The training wasn't much more extensive than what I had already been doing. I have always run lots of miles, so I just increased it a little. I did quite a few hard efforts on the road, which was tough. I was probably ready to run a marathon two months before race day and found it difficult to keep training hard in the lead up to the race. I headed to Japan two weeks before the marathon, running the Chiba Ekiden eight days before the marathon race day. I was looked after very well by the Japanese and received plenty of support out on the course during the race. After a controlled first 10km, I decided to pick up the pace,



but by 26km I was hurting badly. I ran myself into the ground to finish in just over 2.20.

*In 2004 you started to reap the rewards of several years of hard work, winning the Canberra marathon in close to record time and then backed it up with another fine marathon performance in Chicago. How did these marathons differ from your debut?*  
 Canberra was a big breakthrough for me. The plan was to go out easy and hopefully break 2.20 if all went well. The first 10km felt really easy and so once I reached 16km I couldn't hold back any longer. I increased

the pace from 3.15kms to 3.05kms and by 24km I had caught the early leader. I kept pushing after this and was feeling relatively good even in the last few km. I finished with a 5min PB and had run a 90 second negative split (compared to a 7 minute positive split in Japan). To finish so strongly made the experience so much better and I was fired up to take on another marathon.

In October I headed to Chicago hoping to run a couple of minutes faster than I had in Canberra. The race was great and we had a strong pack of seven runners still together at half way, including my training



Leading out 55,000 others in the 2004 City to Surf



Final preparations with ACT team-mate, Julien Wicks (both in blue), before capturing the 2004 Australian Half Marathon title



The winning celebration at the 2005 Burie Ten



Martin competing at the "wayward" Gundaroo Bush Races

partner Scott Westcott. I was feeling strong and 2.12 was looking good. There were still three of us together at 35km, but it was here I began to struggle. I slowly lost ground over the next 5km and by 40km I was completely gone. I managed to make it home but finished 30sec slower than my time in Canberra. In Chicago I had run the first half of the race in almost the same time as I had in Japan, but I had kept the pace going for a further 10km.

R4YL is aware that you have suffered from achilles problems over the past 15 months and that you actually missed around 6 months of training through this period due to this injury. Yet given this time off you are now running at your best. You have been unbeaten by an Australian in the City to Surf, Adelaide City to Bay, Burnie Ten and



Romping down the home straight in the 2004 City to Surf

*Noosa Bolt. How have you managed to be running your best ever off an ongoing injury?*

My form this year has been a pleasant surprise. I was happy just to be running and training again. The period of little and no running was a long over due rest and recovery period for my body, after almost ten years of ongoing training. When I started training again, I quickly found myself in much better shape than ever before. I also began training with a new coach, Hugh Ford, and I think the combination of forced rest and a change in training has really made a difference. I am now focussing on higher quality training sessions and much easier recovery days.

*Given that over the past 6 years you have trained for relatively short track events, road races and marathons, what has your training been like when preparing for this wide range of events?*

Up until this year my training was largely the same for whichever event I was preparing for. I usually ran 12 or 13 times a week, doing a typical training program of three hard sessions, a long run, some medium runs and second runs of 30min or so. When building up for the marathons I was getting through 35km on a Sunday, rather than the 20km I might have run for the steeple. I also did specific hurdle sessions when getting ready for steeple. This year I have only been running once a day and feel much fresher. I think this has also contributed to my better performances lately.

*You have also proven yourself as a very handy orienteer over the past two years. What made you start orienteering and do you have any aspirations for orienteering in addition to your running?*

When I was trying to get fit again in early 2001 I didn't want to race on the track, instead I decided that I would give orienteering a go. From the beginning I really enjoyed it, getting out in the local bushlands around Canberra and hammering through the bush as fast as you can is great fun. I have since run in some of the bigger orienteering races in Australia and am amazed how quick the top guys can get through the courses, particularly in thick and hilly bushland. I had a particularly tough day, out on a course for well over 3 hours, in a race that was won in 90 minutes. In the future I

Marty on his way to winning the 2005 Australian Cross Country Champs



plan to get out and orienteer whenever I am on a break from my running training, but to be competitive with the top guys, on the hard courses, would takes years and years of specialised training, particularly in map reading.

*The Commonwealth Games are nearly upon us. Due to your injuries you have missed your chance to get into the marathon team. What are your plans now to try and force your way onto this team?*

After finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Commonwealth Games 10,000m trials at Zatopek in December, I am now heading to New Zealand to attempt a qualifying time. I need to run at least 28.25 and if things go well I think I can get there. I was considering going back to steeple but decided that at the moment the 10,000m is the way to go, but who knows ...

And to finish off, exactly what type of timber are your legs (a.k.a. tree trunks) made from?  
Hardwood.

**R4YL**

## A brief chat with Kathie Dent

*Kathie, exactly how long have you been Martin's girlfriend/fiancé/wife, and where did you guys meet?*

We met at high school and began going out after finishing Year 12. We had our 5th wedding anniversary in December – Martin was altitude training in Falls Creek!

*How has all the time you have spent with a distance runner and around distance running influenced how you exercise?*

It has definitely encouraged me to get out and go for runs myself and to participate in Fun Runs. We also have a great group of running friends in Canberra, and so most of our social life revolves around meeting up for runs and eating afterwards – Pancakes after a Sunday run is a favourite!

*How often do you accompany Martin for a run and does he wait for you or do you have to wait for him?*

I generally go running by myself or with other friends. I used to be able to keep up with Martin on his slow second runs of the day, but he doesn't tend to do 'junk

miles' anymore and so he runs every run way too fast for me. Accompanying him on a warm-down after he has had a hard training session is a good confidence builder though!

*What would you describe as the worst habit or trait that Martin has developed from being a distance runner?*

Martin has many interesting traits! However, I think they are most likely a cause of him becoming a distance runner, rather than an effect of being one. I think it takes a certain type of person to become a distance runner and sustain all that training!

*Do you have a threshold for the amount of time spent at a running event before you start looking for the car keys?*

Not really, I have been around long enough to get to know lots of other runners and their partners, so there is always plenty to watch or people to catch up with at an event.

*What is the most exotic and the most wayward destination that you have travelled to with Martin for a running event?*

Exotic: Valencia, Spain for the European



The Beautiful Kathie Dent

Club Championships in 2003 while Martin was running for the UK athletic club Belgrave Harriers. Wayward: The Gundaroo Bush Races just outside of Canberra.

*Who is the head chef of the household and are there strange requests for specific meals when in full training?*

Martin is definitely not the head chef! Martin prefers efficiency over all else, including taste, when cooking. One of his many nick names is Slow Lane Chef – but that is another story. In full training, Martin is happy to eat anything and everything!

**R4YL**

**Elmore Oil™**  
- for naturally good pain relief

**SPORTS**

FOR FAST RECOVERY

Phone 1800 330 681  
www.elmoreoil.com.au  
If symptoms persist seek the advice of a healthcare practitioner.

**PENETRATES SOOTHES & RELAXES**

**BACK PAIN**

FOR FAST RECOVERY

**RECOVERY**

FOR FAST RECOVERY

**For fast recovery from**

- SPORTS INJURIES
- NECK & BACK PAIN
- MUSCLE STRAIN

**try Elmore Oil**

**- for naturally good pain relief.**

**Effective for both joint pain and muscular soreness.**

**PENETRATES QUICKLY • FAST ACTING • LONG LASTING**