

# The Toilet Roll

Written by Trent Harlow

## What makes the elites tick?

The eternal question of how to race well rings in every runner's heart and mind. And that is where the basis of this question lies too – does one reach the zenith point of their own personal performance by being analytical, calculating and strategic, or by letting the enzymes flow and the legs fly, uninhibited and with no real thought but to hit the tape as quickly as possible??? ... mmmmm... the heart or the head? That should have been Einstein's question! Over the years I have been fortunate enough to train with and compete against some unbelievable athletes. From guys that have run 3.32 for 1,500m through to 2.06 for the marathon, and one thing I've noticed is that everyone's wired differently. Darren Wilson, super talent, enigma, likes a beer, good at adding up skin folds, could run a bit (27.37, 60.02). What defined

response was clinical and hard lined, "I gotta learn to go hard, or go home". This attitude is right throughout the Victorian running scene. The hard man attitude breeds fear into opponents and confidence in the athlete carrying it out. Troopy sets his brain to repeat, circulating with the anger that the Anzacs showed when jumping off the boats at Gallipoli. Shaun Creighton, steeplechase and 10,000m Aussie record holder, perpetual tertiary student, likes a beer, has a comfortable skin fold, product of the famous 'less is more' Clohessy philosophy, could run a bit (3.38, 2.10). What defines Shaun's approach to racing? Shaun used to tell me stories of his European racing adventures each summer as we jogged



routes from any one point to another based on traffic light stops, wind direction, mode of transport, star alignment, vector displacement theory etc. He should probably work for NASA. And with this totally analytical approach to racing, Marty will calculate splits and formulate strategies that he sticks too like a Swiss made watch.

Darren was wired in such a way that analysing anything was a total waste of time. He just needed to know he was 'racing' and then he would inevitably deliver super human performances.

'Dazzling's' approach to racing? I once heard Darren was running in a road relay in Victoria. The story goes that he was just ambling along at a sedate pace with what was described as a glazed look on his face. At which point the club captain yelled at Darren 'what the hell are you doing, you're in a race?!' Darren proceeded to snap out of his lull and run through to take a record time for his leg. The point ... well, Darren was wired in such a way that analysing anything was a total waste of time. He just needed to know he was 'racing' and then he would inevitably deliver super human performances. He more or less ran with heart and legs and left his brain on the shelf at home.

Lee Troop, marathon man and Mona prodigy, Geelong legend, likes a beer, has no skin folds, could run a bit (13.14, 2.09). What defines Troopy's approach to racing? I've raced Troopy for many years and believe the scene was set when back in the very early 90's we raced a schoolboy's national 5,000m race. Troopy was in the mix until late at which point a few guys got away leaving Troopy to finish outside of the medals and very upset with himself. When I approached to console him, Lee's

through the Canberra trails in preparation for his next assault. He'd tell me how fast the pace was over there, with rabbits and world record holders, and how the only means of survival was to use everyone weapon in your arsenal, including your brain. Shaun became notorious for starting races at the back of the field and running an even pace to move through and finish high up the order. A tactic he and Clohessy had strategically employed for Shaun to get the most out of himself. Without using calculated race strategies it is unlikely Shaun would have competed as well as he did. Shaun's brain was switched into chess mode ... calculate strengths and weaknesses, and play the game accordingly. Martin Dent, current national x-country champion and road king, orienteering dabbler, likes a beer, skin folds – who cares, exponent of the infamous 'more is more' training methodology, rated hard as iron ore on the running tough nut scale, and can run a bit (dominated last year's road season and just finished second in the Zatopek 10,000m). What defines Marty's approach to racing? You only have to ask him for directions to see how this guys mind works. Marty knows the three fastest

The only thing he needs his heart for is to pump at an average of 179 bpm, with a left ventricular flow rate of 4.769352 ml/sec, once he has consumed 253 ml of standard black coffee and no glucose pre race! So, I guess if we are to use these elite runners as a guide there isn't really an answer. Each person has to race with the personality they were born with – racing is basically just an expression of your self, your mind, your heart, and YOU! So if you're a 'whipper' head and naturally do things without thinking, maybe that's how you should race – full of heart and free striding. If you like to calculate large algorithms in your spare time, you should race with an analytical and detached view. As long as you are happy and comfortable when you stand on that start line there's a good chance you'll come up with a great result. As Cathy Freeman use to say (in the third person for some reason, but that's a topic for discussion some other time), 'A happy Freeman is a fast Freeman'. There is one universal truth that we can take out of all this – the elites like beer! I think there's something in that for all of us, don't you?

**R4YL**



forget  
artificial  
stimulants.

Run on 100% pure Adrenaline.



Available Feb 2006



Available Now

Feel the rush with new Brooks Adrenaline GTS 6. This update offers the fantastic combination of comfort, cushioning, durability and support you would expect of an Adrenaline, with the addition of improved energy return to maximise running efficiency. Awarded 'Best Update' (US Runner's World Sept. 05) For more info please call AUS (03) 9338 5099 or NZ (09) 980 1006.

**THE NEW ADRENALINE GTS 6**



runhappy.com.au