



THE WEST AUSTRALIAN MARATHON CLUB INC.

by Gary Carlton

THE remoteness of Western Australia, from not only the eastern side of Australia but also the rest of the world, has historically meant that to survive, Western Australians have had to be independent and able to stand-alone. History has not changed the reality of geography. This is ever most present even today in many forms of enterprise in the West.

So how has a running club that was started by a dozen or so distance runners on 13 July 1970 survived in the most isolated capital city in the world? Not only has it survived the aftermath of the jogging boom and economic crashes of the 1980's, but with 1100 financial members in 2005 it has arguably become Australia's largest and most successful running club - with membership on the increase!

It has achieved all this by being adaptable to change and managed by a dedicated group of passionate runners. Basically, the Western Australian Marathon Club Inc. (WAMC) is a running club, voluntarily managed by runners, for runners. It does this with the assistance of two paid permanent employees who administer the day-to-day office activities. Its early conveners knew that it had to be autonomous and not rely on eastern states runner support and government financial assistance to survive. It is indebted to both the initial and subsequent committees for their passion, courage and foresight. They adopted a philosophy to give runners what they wanted from running. What they wanted was well organised, professional, competitive, enjoyable and social running events. As fiercely competitive, and in some cases elite, as the early dozen were, they were mates who loved a beer and to socialise after a run. Whilst some things have changed at the WAMC over the years, the basic philosophy of running being competitive, healthy and social has not.

With its facilities, membership numbers, broad cross section of membership profiles, financial stability and race programme it would have to be the envy of many athletic clubs across the country. The WAMC is based at its show-piece clubrooms and office on the banks of the picturesque Swan River in Burswood, on the doorstep of the Perth CBD. The clubrooms are a huge, modern function centre with two bars, jointly owned with four water sports groups. All of the groups share in the openness and beauty of the Swan River. It makes a fantastic venue to host many of their events, including the 'premier event' - the Perth Marathon.

The scope of what the WAMC has to offer

the running community does not stop there. It has an Annual Running Programme that includes forty race days organised by the Club. It also has listed another twenty events consisting of races organised by other organisations that may be of interest to members and scheduled training "Mob Runs" organized by WAMC. It is quite an honour and very advantageous for other organisations events to be included on the WAMC Annual Race Programme. Members are kept up to date about upcoming events and race results with a monthly email, a quarterly magazine and a user friendly website.

The WAMC events are varied in both nature and distance. There are road races, track races, cross country, public fun runs, 3000m 'sprints',



WAMC DETAILS:

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Website: www.wamc.org.au

MEMBERSHIP FEES:

Adult - \$30.00

Under 18 - \$10.00

Family - \$40.00

Pensioner - \$10.00

children's races, relays, State Championships, training runs, social runs, marathons and ultra marathons. Most race days host a choice of at least two race distances or a team relay. The distances of events range from 3km up to 100km. Most races stem from traditional events and principals that have evolved from the early years of the Club. Training runs also carry the tradition of "mateship" and the opportunity to socialise with a diverse group of like thinking athletes of varying running ability. Official races and annual Club awards recognize the separate achievements of male, female, open and veteran classifications.

There are a number of regular training groups that offer a wide choice for both members and non-members. With most of the training venue costs being covered by the WAMC it is expected that participants who regularly use training sessions be members or eventually join the Club.

One very popular training group is the "Intervals Session". It is held on Tuesday nights at 5.30pm on Alderbury St Reserve, Perry Lakes. This is a "run your heart out", "give it your all",

"improve your speed" and "beat the person running beside you" training group. All different types of the Perth running community who wish to improve their fitness and speed use it. Olympians, fun runners, triathletes and regular WAMC members use this training session for the many benefits it has for their running and their health. On occasion, up to 80 or so runners have been known to attend this session. Until you do it, you won't realise how exhilarating it is or how it will improve your running.

The most utilised combined social and training run is on every Wednesday night at the WAMC Clubrooms (Burswood Water Sports Centre) Camfield Drive, Burswood. It starts promptly at 5.30pm. Regular distances run are 6km, 10km, 14km and 20km. The courses are all on the flat dual-use paths around the Swan River but sometimes also include undulating Kings Park. The runners break off into groups that suit their speed and the distance they wish to run or even walk. The cross section of people attending this session is enormous. There are beginners, seasoned regular runners and even the elite, all doing their preferred workouts. Back in the Clubrooms, after a run and a shower, you wouldn't know the elite from the beginner as they all mingle together in a friendly, social atmosphere over a drink and a barbeque. It's a great way to share running knowledge, keep fit and socialise in an idyllic river location.

Typical of Perth, on a Wednesday night the WAMC has that cosmopolitan feel about it when you hear all the different accents. One very prominent accent other than Australian is South African. It is said that Perth has one of the largest South African communities outside of South Africa and it seems that most of them run and belong to the WAMC. Conversations about which country



is better at rugby and cricket are often heard as well as the usual running stories. Needless to say that a very large contingent of WAMC runners travel to South Africa each year to compete in the two world famous ultra marathons - Comrades Marathon and Two Oceans Marathon.

Another training group that caters for the marathon or ultra marathon runners is the Hills Training Group. Every Saturday morning at starting times varying between 5.00am and 7.00am, a hardened bunch of up to 35 runners at a time head for the Hills in the Darling Escarpment just east of the Perth CBD. Starting times vary depending on the heat and the time of sunrise. These runs are on good gravel trails and tracks through the natural bush but require daylight to ensure that nobody takes a fall in the dark. The regular starting points are Helena Valley, Darlington, and Hovea, with the courses taking runners through the hills of the State Forest around Helena Valley, Mundaring, Mount Helena and John Forrest National Park. Distances covered vary between 20 kms and 50 kms. The speeds of the runners vary also. Great friendships are made on these long runs as runners spend many hours together over training periods of up to six months for races like the Comrades Marathon, Two Oceans Marathon or even the WAMC events such as the Perth Marathon, Rottnest Marathon, John Forrest 40 Miler and Perth 100 kms.

There are other regular training groups that cater for the shorter, faster races as well. These are the Point Walter 8kms time trial on Monday nights at 6.00pm and the Kings Park run, also on Monday night but at 5.30pm, for 12 kms and beyond. There is a Northern Districts Running Group who train around Joondalup, a very northern suburb of Perth, and the Dunsborough Running Group who train in Dunsborough, a country town about 3 hours drive south of Perth. All members of these training groups are

members of the WAMC.

The WAMC doesn't just see itself as a Perth running club, but considers it to be the main promoter of distance running in Western Australia. Its club motto of "Run for fun and fitness, any pace, any distance" extends to the towns of Esperance and Albany on the south coast of Western Australia, and the cities of Bunbury in the south west and Geraldton in the north. The Annual Race Programme is arranged to promote the regional 'sister club's' main events. The Geraldton Marathon and Half Marathon, Esperance Half Marathon, Bunbury Marathon, 50 kms and Half Marathon, Bunbury Six Hour

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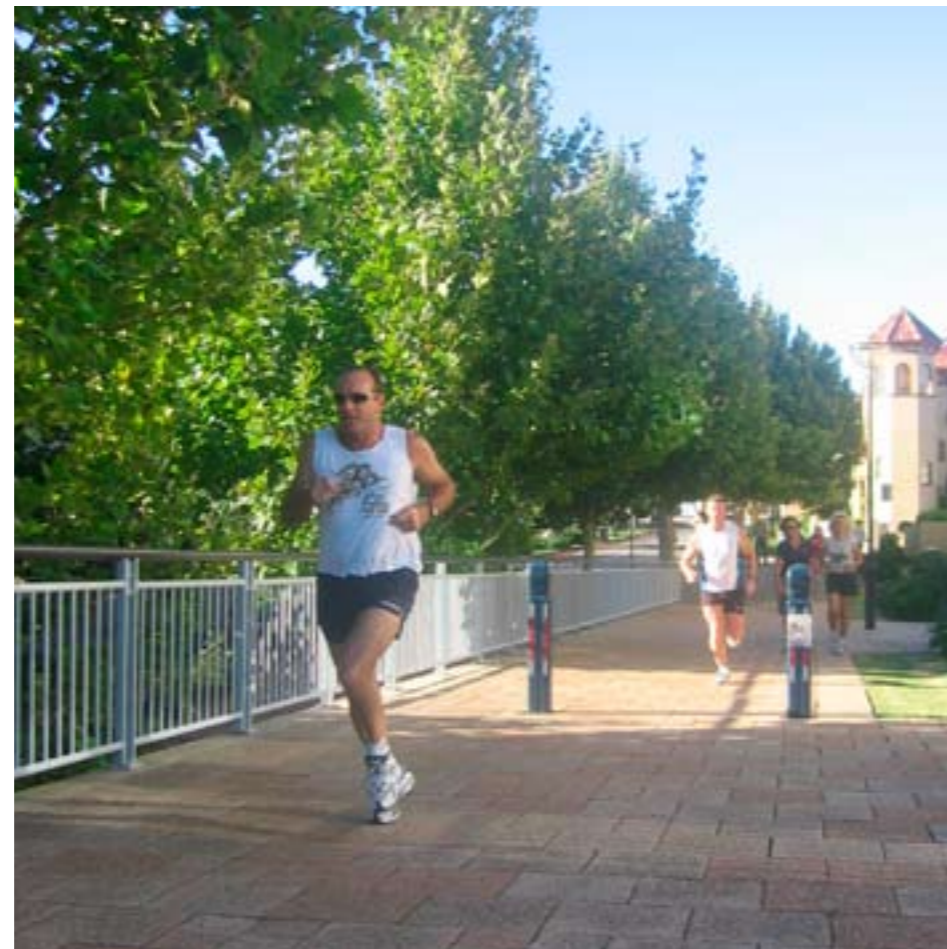
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Track Challenge and Albany Half Marathon are all on the WAMC's Annual Race Programme. Programming ensures that there are no clashes of dates with these events. In addition, the WAMC regularly organises coach trips to support regional events whilst giving a social dimension for Club members. The extra boost of 40 or so runners in an event in a country town often makes the event viable. The coach trips don't just stop at the Western Australian border either. In 2004 WAMC ventured to the Alice Springs Marathon and this year has a coach trip planned for the Adelaide Marathon.

Back on home turf the WAMC also organise eleven Special Events. These events are promoted as public events and include six fun runs and the longer events like the Perth Half Marathon, Fremantle Half Marathon, Perth Marathon, Rottneet Marathon and Perth 100km. The fun runs are very popular with the public and are timed with the Club's new DAG electronic timing system. The Asics Bridges Fun Run attracts the largest number of participants. The 5km or 10km choice will lure about 3000 runners out on Sunday morning the 2nd of April 2006, to run around the Perth and South Perth foreshores of the Swan River. They will cross the river twice using the Narrows Bridge and the Causeway Bridges. The City of Perth is a major sponsor and welcomes the start and finish of the event within its boundaries. All the fun runs are used to raise money for charity. The Asics Bridges Fun Run raises money for Channel 7 Telethon. This year should see the total amount donated by the WAMC to Telethon over the last 20 years rise to over half a million dollars. Channel 9 Appealathon, as well as numerous other charities, is also a regular beneficiary of sizeable donations from the WAMC.

Another very special fun run is the Women's Classic, raced over 5km or 10km. It is organised for Mother's Day 14 May 2006. It is not unusual to see several generations of ladies from the same family participating. Proceeds from this popular ladies-only race go to Breast Cancer Research. There is never a shortage of male volunteers to help out at this event.

The social aspect of the Club flows through to



aces. All races, both Special Events and normal Club races, always have a social side to them, particularly after you finish. To highlight the importance of the social aspect about a quarter of races provide a healthy banquet of food and drinks afterwards. The most significant race of this type is the Perth Marathon.

The Perth Marathon and Relay would have to be Australia's best kept running secret. It starts and finishes at the WAMC Clubrooms but it is briefly interrupted by 42.195 kms of the stunning scenery of Perth and the Swan River. Run entirely on dual use paths, it follows the meandering Swan River down to Attadale and back again. A scenic, fast and flat course has given many runners a PB. The easy access ensures that there is always support from spectators along the route. The feast to replenish depleted carbohydrate stores is also something to look forward to. This race has often been featured in running magazines and club newsletters across Australia to rival the best of the nation's marathons.

Whatever is your preferred distance, pace or terrain, the West Australian Marathon Club can provide it for you. Their doors are always open for a new member, a traveller looking for a social training run or someone who has targeted an event. Even though membership includes many elite runners, most importantly, you don't have to be an elite athlete to participate. Just do what the WAMC do, "Run for fun and fitness, any pace, any distance".

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TRAINING GROUPS

Point Walter: 8km time trials, 6.00pm every Monday. Pt Walter Kiosk. Dick Bloom (08) 9337 7796

Kings Park: 12km +, 5.30pm every Monday, meet at The Palms (cnr Nicholson Rd & Thomas St, Subiaco) Jo Youd 0402 987 990

Intervals Session: 5.30pm every Tuesday, Alderbury St Reserve, Perry Lakes. Cost \$2.00 per person per session payable to coach Jon Kappler at session.

WAMC Clubrooms: Burswood Water Sports Centre, Camfield Drive, Burswood. 6km+: 5.30pm every Wednesday. Bob Braid (08) 9227 7281

Joondalup: 5km to 15km, Northern Suburbs Running Group Chris Kowalski (08) 9300 2542, Leo McGregor 0424 638 264

Novice Runners Sessions: 5.30pm every Wednesday WAMC Clubrooms & Joondalup, Northern Suburbs Running Group

Western Australia Marathon Club Favourite Run



Every Tuesday night, for the last eight years, Jon Kappler has been coaching the WA Marathon Club interval training sessions. On one of the many sports fields adjacent Perry Lakes Stadium, home of the 1962 Commonwealth Games, John conducts speed and endurance sessions that are designed to 'help people run better'.

JON, a highly respected runner himself, says the sessions are designed to give people who don't understand the purpose of intervals an opportunity to learn how to run fast, and experience the discomfort involved in doing so.

The sessions start at 6:00pm and are attended by 60 to 80 runners each week, with ages ranging from 16 to 60. The sessions usually consist of 4 - 5k of effort with Jon working on a 4-week cycle. Over the course of 4 weeks, Jon aims to expose the training runners to efforts ranging from 200m up to 1k, working on both speed and endurance.

Even though the WA Marathon Club runs the training sessions, they are open to anyone who would like to participate and improve their fitness. This welcoming approach attracts a broad range of attendees - world class boxer Danny Green and Commonwealth and Olympic runner Susan Hobson, AFL footballers and top level triathletes have all enjoyed the benefits of the WA Marathon Club interval sessions. The sessions are suitable for all levels of fitness and with the large number of runners each week it is easy to run with a small group at your own pace.

For Jon, his enjoyment comes from seeing the improvements made by new runners as their performance improves. As there are always plenty of WA Marathon Club race programs on hand, it is normally not long before a new runner has joined the club and is participating in the club races.

The WA Marathon Club interval sessions are held at 6:00pm every Tuesday at Alderbury Reserve, Perry Lakes. The cost is \$2.00, payable to the coach, Jon Kappler.

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