

# RUNNER'S SOAPBOX

## The London Marathon – Race or Fun Run?

by Elizabeth Bennett, ACT

The London marathon is an event that tries to be both a serious international race and a fun run at the same time. In theory that's fine, but it means runners need to take a different approach to it compared to other events.

EVERYTHING about the London marathon is big. 32000 runners, 6600 volunteers, 950 porta-loos, 134 metres of urinal trough, 40kg of Vaseline, 800,000 water bottles, 1200 ambulances, 300L of blue paint marking the course, 100kms of barrier tape and 77,650 cable ties. It has to be experienced to be believed - It is truly an amazing event!

However, the magnitude of the production means that all the vari-

ables that can affect runners are accentuated. For example, with most marathons you need to get to the start early, but at the 2006 London marathon those of us who went with TravellingFit were at the start line 2 hours and 15 minutes early! From the organisers point of view it's essential to have runners and traffic arrangements sorted out well before start time, but 2 hours and 15 minutes is a long time to hang around in the rain and cold.

The number of runners and the size of the crowd can also be a bit of a mixed blessing. There is certainly great camaraderie and spirit among the runners, and the crowd (10-15 people deep along the entire course) is vibrant and encouraging. We were cheered on by brass bands, bagpipers, pub DJ's, charismatic church choirs, and the general public. For some - particularly the spectators and media - it's a 42km party, but for the runners there are times when it can be just too congested. At any point along the course

most competitors are within touching distance of 6-8 other runners, and on the narrow sections of the course the thick crowd on both sides of the road can have a claustrophobic feel.

In the latter stages of the event the London marathon is like any other marathon. 42km is 42km and from about 35km onwards most runners start to feel the pinch. At that point, having lots of other competitors around can help lift your spirits and performance, and the crowd can get you over the line. For others though, the congestion at this point can add to the exhaustion, and not even the crowd, Big Ben or Buckingham Palace can necessarily dull that.

To run the London marathon is a unique experience and any runner who gets the chance to do it should

seize the opportunity. But perhaps more so than any other marathon, runners would be wise to go into the London marathon with less specific race goals than they would normally have, and depending on how the event unfolds, be prepared to alter their expectations on the day.

After running the 2006 London marathon my recommendation would be for marathon racers and marathon fun runners alike to go into the London marathon with a "run as well as I can" attitude.

**Editor: Liz, thanks for the insight and sharing your personal experiences of the 2006 London marathon and congratulations on taking home the New Balance shoes for this issue.** **R4YL**

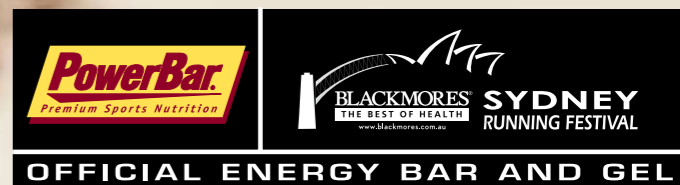


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# TOP AUSSIE PERFORMANCE

OVER the past two months we have again had many outstanding performances by Australian athletes, including Craig Mottram's near record breaking effort at the New York Healthy Kidney 10km, Benita Johnson's win at Friehofer's Run and Eloise Poppet's fantastic 3000m performance of 8.46.37. But this month R4YL has awarded the Top Aussie Performance to Sarah Jamieson. Sarah has transformed her red hot run from the Commonwealth Games into a string of outstanding performances that has seen her run under her old personal best time of 4.04.73 on three occasions. Early in May, Sarah competed in Japan at the Osaka Grand Prix and convincingly ran away from the field to win by over four seconds in a new personal best time of 4.03.51. A highly competitive field was present when Sarah contested the Prefontaine Classic in Eugene, Oregon. Sarah again performed admirably finishing in fourth position and running yet another personal best, 4.03.13. Then at the beginning of June, competing in the Reebok Grand Prix in New York City, Sarah had another comfortable winning margin, this time close to two seconds, running 4.04.57. Margaret Crowley's Australian record of 4.01.34 is now well within sight and it may only be a matter of time before she claims it as her own. R4YL wishes to congratulate Sarah Jamieson for her efforts and are extremely pleased to announce Sarah this editions TAP. **R4YL**

Sarah Jamieson competing in the 1500m heats at the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Image by Daniel Green



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Haile Gebrselassie

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