

# 100K IN A WORKDAY

by PAT THOMAS

Arriving home from a weekend away in Melbourne, head in the boot of the car, Wayne rolls up telling me that Mat could not do the charity run with him as he had recently sustained an injury. He asked if I was interested in joining him in place of Mat. Turning to him casually I said, "Oh I suppose so." "Yes", said Wayne, gleefully rubbing his hands together. As he sped off laughing, I stood up and contemplated what I had just agreed to.

**100** KM in a day was the plan. At least I had four weeks to train for it! Luckily we had just completed a winter marathon program and had completed the Gold Coast marathon two months before. Wayne was younger and fitter than me. He beat me at the Gold Coast by 13 minutes running 2.42, and was only 30 years old. At 44, I was starting to feel the effects of a solid winter and to get used to sleeping in for a bit. Even more difficult than running the race would be telling my wife Gail of the plan. "Just another hair-brained scheme to wreck yourself," she responded. The upside was that we were doing it for the charity Legacy.

**Even more difficult than running the race would be telling my wife Gail of the plan.**

After a lame four weeks of training, we decided to go into the run 'fresh'. We took a few days off beforehand. The Army Logistic Training Centre in Wodonga supported the run. The Army Physical Training Instructors (PTI) would be our support crew. They were also the main logistic organisers for the run, which was great, as Wayne was currently working as a PTI, and I used to be one, so we had great camaraderie throughout.

The planned route was West Wodonga to

Tallangatta via the rail trail, which was 50km. This would be followed by a 20km out-and-back route around Old Tallangatta back to Tallangatta. We would finish the last 30km back along the trail to the finish line at Bonegilla, where the Army base is situated. The trail only has 16km on the tar road. The rest is from the past railway line, which means it's fairly flat and now soft underfoot.

The big day arrived. We had a 5am run start, so I was up at 4am tip-toeing around the house trying not to wake the kids. A bowl of porridge, some jam on toast and a litre of water, and I was ready. The cool morning allowed me to start the run in my skins, which was a bonus. I jogged up to Wayne's house, which was about 600m away and the start point for the run. As I was jogging along I was wondering whether I could pull up 600m from the finish. Not likely!

There was a cast of thousands when I arrived. We had our support crew, which consisted of several mountain bikers with food and drink and a vehicle with flashing lights and the runners sign on the back.

5am arrived, and off we went. We often run



together in the dark of the mornings, so this seemed like any normal day. About 3km into the run we ran into a fellow Wodonga Athletics club runner Des Rees. He knew we were on the 100km, so he asked to join us for about 5km. After he left us, Wayne commented on the pace. We were travelling at about 12kph, but it felt very comfortable. The legs felt fresh, and the morning temperature was perfect.

At just over 20km, Wayne handed me a Powerbar with chocolate chips in it. I don't normally eat those things, and when I bit down on it I managed to break a tooth. Just my luck, what to do? Our riding support crew rang forward, and at the next checkpoint, about 25km, they gave me some Extra sugarless gum to patch it up. So for the next 75km, I was talking with a lisp. I had to replace the gum every 10km. It worked a treat but made it hard to eat and drink.

At some stages from 20-40km, we were travelling at 13kph, which was well above what we anticipated. We went through the first marathon in 3.30 feeling very fresh, with now only 8km to Tallangatta. This seemed a good time to rip the skins off and run in shorts and singlet. All signs were good: there were no blisters on our feet from our trusty Asics or chafing for either of us.

When we arrived at Tallangatta, the Legacy volunteers had made scones and put on tea for us; this was too good to pass up. We had only been going a bit over 4 hours, so we decided to put the feet up for a spell. Mat, the injured runner, had set up a massage table and gave each of us a 5-minute leg rub. After about 20 minutes, we decided to

Pat and Wayne on the road



head off. A very worthwhile pit stop. This also gave the support riders a chance to resupply water and food. Our main fuel source was bananas and a "Hammer" carbohydrate powder "Perpetuem", which mixed up didn't look the best, but was working great.

We had a couple of runners join us from Tallangatta to run the next 20km leg. It was a bit of a struggle to get running again, but we managed to get into a jog very slowly and eventually back on pace after a few kilometres. The route through to Old Tallangatta was very scenic, cutting through the mountains and over streams.

Once we arrived back in Tallangatta, another massage, tea and scones awaited. The weather was warming up, and we were feeling the pinch. A 15-minute stop and we were back out on the trail again for the last 30km. Almost home!

The last section was very tough. The Perpetuem was keeping us going along with some bananas (we didn't care how much they cost). We decided to walk during different sections throughout the run, and I probably took a few more walks than

I anticipated. Wayne was looking good as always. If he was in pain, I didn't know about it. With about 10km to go, we could really sniff the finish line. 25 laps of the track Wayne would say. Well, that's better than 250 laps. With 2km to go we had a pit stop, changed into a fresh Defence Athletics Club (DAC) outfit and headed for the line. What a great feeling running up toward the finish, which was the flagpole in the barracks. Many soldiers lined the road as we came in. I saw my wife and daughters there, which was a sight for sore eyes.

We finished the 100km in 10 hours 13 minutes – starting at 5am and finishing at 3.13pm. We handed a

cheque for over \$7000 to Legacy, which was raised by members of the Army, local residents and other interstate friends. This will go down as one of the best running experiences of my life.

As Wayne dropped by later that night he said, "See you at 6am for a run?" "No problems mate, see you then." Of course we never did.

