

MY MORNING

Like many of you, I jog of an early morning. It is pretty much a regular routine that to those who don't run appears to border on some kind of self inflicted torture. Why would a supposedly sane middle aged family man get up before the crack of dawn to spend an hour running through the best that each of the four seasons can throw at him?

THIS morning was no different. I woke as usual to the shock of the alarm clock. Dragging myself from the warmth of the bed, another winter's morning run beckoned. Past experience had dictated that I should not listen to my inner thoughts, for I might succumb to these moments of weakness, roll over, and go back to sleep.

I knew from previous occasions that this was not the hour to listen to internal debate. 'Regret' and 'apathy' would be my discomfort for the rest of the day if I did. My reward for greeting the dawn and running through it would be delivered when I hit the stopwatch at the end of the run.

On this particular morning a dense fog had settled over the town. In fact, for much of the previous months it had been a cycle of fog, frost, rain, and biting winds. Each morning offered an alternative to the abovementioned, or a combination thereof. However, the ongoing and prevailing condition was that it was always cold.

So here was an image of a middle aged man wearing his much loved Asics runners, Puma leggings, Brooks shorts, long sleeved running shirt, running jacket, gloves and "Run for Your Life" cap, heading down the road and into the cool morning air.

Within 10 minutes I was heading out of town. Soon the blackness of the bitumen road had turned to gravel and the memory of the warm bed left behind was but a fleeting memory.

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To my left on a slight rise was a steel windmill with half a dozen sheep underneath it blinking back at me as I ran by. Soon my thoughts began to run with me also. I wondered of other runners and their runs, their routines and their rituals.

Several large and heavysset Hereford cows seemed somewhat bemused as I ran past their enclosure. In the distance I could hear the morning calls of birds and, from the many waterways to my right, the distinct croaking of frogs. Oh, how I had loved to catch tadpoles and frogs as a boy. My thoughts again ran with me, sometimes dipping into the past, filtering through to the present, and

RUN

occasionally I would ponder on what the future might hold.

After the 4 kilometre mark I turned northwards into a howling wind. I pulled my cap down harder onto my head and started counting. My heart rate increased and my thigh muscles pumped harder just to keep the same pace.

Alongside a dam were two horses who cantered off. The sun had just risen over the horizon, and its rays were beginning to penetrate through the aged and decaying pine trees and across the grassy paddocks. Fingers of shadows were intermingled with prisms of light. The scene was breathtaking.

Within an instant an all prevailing stench attacked my nostrils. Along a barb wired fence 16 dead foxes hung motionless, strung up by their sinewy feet.

Once over the rise, the dirt road stretched as far as the eye could see.


The vision that lay ahead was similar to one of those perspective drawings taught in a graphics class. The road appeared to conclude in the far off distance at a point. But the reality was that I was to cover the distance on foot. Over the ensuing kilometres my thoughts soon drifted off to the day ahead. Like an uninvited 'pop up' on a web page, there seemed no logical reason as to what thought would manifest next. I thought of my wife, my children, my work, my colleagues, the garden, the cat, the neighbours, and my passionate allegiance to my football team.

At the half way mark I grabbed for my water bottle and checked my current split. How did this compare to the last time I ran this way? I'll have to check my logbook when I get back.

Turning west I left the dirt track and headed along a winding bitumen road. An early morning cyclist came up from behind and bid me good morning. With my chest pumped out I responded in kind. He looked somewhat like my brother.

It was my younger brother by ten years who had reinvigorated my love for running. "I beat Puffing Billy" was his latest boast followed by, "next week I'm competing in a triathlon".

I was suddenly startled and jumped over a copper head snake. A glance back over my shoulder showed that fortunately for me it was already dead. The snake had been a previous road kill. The adrenalin rush, however, was instant, and my heart was racing and would take many minutes to recover. Yet no sooner had my heart found a more inviting rhythm, a thumping grey kangaroo came bounding out. The week before I had come across a farmer's goat.

After running for an hour I was back home. I quenched my thirst, had a quick feed and hit the shower in readiness for the working day. "How was your run love?" my wife called out as she headed out for her morning walk. "Not bad" I said. "I'm looking forward to the weekend when I can go on a nice long run." 



The foxes put out an awful stench