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# TRAILRUN

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Former NZ representative and champion middle distance runner Ben Ruthe steams through the wet stuff on his way to a third placing in The Goat Adventure Run in New Zealand, on again this year 3 December. It was this race that became the life or death motivator for Nick White - read his story on page 86.

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Tell us: would you like one? We would. How much would you pay for one? At this early stage we are planning a limited print run Collector's Edition that will combine the best of Editions #1+2. It will likely be available after the release of Edition #2 in Sept. At this stage the RRP will be AU\$20 depending on costs.

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**SALOMON** 

# Trails and Tribulations

No one laughs at God in a hospital  
No one laughs at God in a war  
No one's laughing at God when they've lost all they got  
and they don't know what for

—Regina Spektor

I'm not religious. But Dan is dead. And I'm certainly not laughing at God. And I certainly wasn't laughing in the hospital at his bedside, two days before he left us. I'm not laughing at cancer and I don't know what it's for.

This edition wasn't supposed to be the misery edition. Promise. Going into spring I wanted the lightness to shine through, the words and images we present inside a reflection of the glowing wattle flower cover. But a glance over the line-up reads like the blackest shade of pale: cancer, car accidents, fires, death.

But read on. Pretend this edition is an ultra: persevere, push past the pain and you'll find a spring of sunshine.

I do admit that I cried just prior to writing this editorial. Tears on the keyboard.

I welled up as I read contributor Duncan Wood's words telling of a journey in life that no father ever wants to take.

Maybe it's because I share a connection of fatherhood with this man I have never met. Maybe that's why I now wipe my MacBook with Kleenex – parenthood both makes and breaks a man.

His is one journey that I hope never to embark upon but feel richer for having read it, for there is a radiance of strength in his story of overwhelming sadness. There is bravery.

There is life peeled back to a core of indefinable pain that brings forth hope, some of it found on the trail.

What has this to do with trail running?  
Nothing and everything.

Trail running is a journey off the predictable bitumen of regimented life. It takes us places that physically hurt – sometimes to places of incandescent pain – and mentally it can take us to tears. Yet we step onto that trail chasing such moments of lowness because we know that they have the power to bring out the best in us; to make us stronger than we were before we reached the nadir.

From the valleys of death we find the power to look up, see the mountain, be challenged by it, be scared by it, but take a step forward up the trail, towards where we can see the sun breaching the summit. And we move despite the pain. Another step. Over another rock. Another tree root. Another rise. Another false summit. And there, there is the pinnacle and the world opens up to a view that not long ago we thought we'd never see, a view that we thought was impossible to reach.

That is the choice we make when we step onto a trail.  
To just keep the fuck going.

The rest – the experience, the moments of realisation, the moments of self, the moments...that is the trail working its magic.

I was going to write about my ongoing battle with a left leg ITB problem. For the last few months it has filled

my world with frustration and even depression. But then I read this edition. It was an easy decision to instead labor again on what was touched upon in my first editorial. But I take the risk of riposte in the repetition because it matters. Dan matters. Duncan's son matters. Kate Sanderson and Turia Pitt, the brave women whose lives are changed irrevocably after the Kimberly bushfire tragedy, they matter.

A bloody dodgy ITB does not matter. Running with it glowing red is not even a light scratch compared to the pain others cop on life's debris-strewn trail.

And so I hit the trail, ITB be damned, in the hope that just as Duncan sees his lost son every time he runs a mountain, maybe I'll see Dan out there. Hell, I might even see God, whatever that is to a heathen like me.

It'd be a good run if I did.  
The three of us can all have a good laugh together.  
Then the prick can fix my ITB.

No one's laughing at God  
We're all laughing with God

—Regina Spektor

**YOUR EDITOR,  
THE ORDINARY TRAIL RUNNER**

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# Keeping It Real



As we reach the end of another winter, one that for much of New Zealand has been a particularly wet and wild one, we can at last start looking forward to some dry trails to run on. While I'm not a big fan of heat and dust I am getting rather tired of cleaning the mud from my shoes (or more precisely tired of the guilt associated with not cleaning the mud from my shoes) after every trip to even the local park.

Many kilos of fine Waitakeres mud and west coast black sand have gone down our plug hole over the last few months. Perhaps it's time to give the u-bend in our laundry tub a rest.

But with the change of season it's hard to escape the nagging concern that somehow, through the drying out of things, something of the essential experience of what trail running is all about might be lost. There is a lot of skill in running muddy trails efficiently. There is a lot of joy in getting thoroughly filthy from head to toe. Perhaps running on clean, dry track is just a little too easy? Perhaps the art of trail running is somehow diminished in such circumstances?

Okay, I know it's a rather absurd idea and believe me when I say I am most definitely looking forward to some of my favourite trails becoming truly runnable again. But this line of thought is really taking me in another direction – one that isn't so trivial or inconsequential. It has me contemplating the 'dumbing down' of the trail running experience, not due to the season but due to the occasionally misdirected efforts of those responsible for trail building and maintenance, who can at times seem determined to rid our trails of every rut and root and to replace cambered earth surfaces with level crushed gravel ones.

Most of the trails we run on are walking tracks, some purpose built and others the remnants of past attempts to reach precious commodities such as gold or native timber. They were hacked from the land in a fairly makeshift way, but they served their purpose well.

They also serve the purpose of asphalt-deploring runners perfectly too. So when they are 'bettered' by using substantial chunks of taxpayer money to turn them from being loveably imperfect into something that is hatefully perfect I get very upset. It's like Extreme Makeover Trail Edition except that it makes for boring, repetitive trail running instead of boring, repetitive couch potato fodder.

I suspect that the closer we are to a major population centre the more common this conflict of interest becomes. One recent experience that brought this home to me was a run up the Anatoki Track, just outside Takaka in off-the-beaten-track Golden Bay. This old miners' route clings precariously to the steep, bush-clad hillside high above the raging Anatoki River and is little visited at this time of year. What delighted me about it, apart from the wonderful scenery, was the unkempt nature of it. Built as a well-benched trail it had seen better days but the windfall, the roots, the rock slides and the pig rooting holes only added to the sense of adventure and the accomplishment that was to be had.

In contrast to this experience I know of many kilometres of track in my local playground – the Waitakere Ranges – that until recently offered a similar, technically-challenging experience, but now seem to be little more than narrow extensions of the gravel roads that lead to their start.

Fortunately I don't think those responsible for these well-intended upgrades have the budgets to inflict wholesale reshaping of our trail landscape. For the time being, at least, we can still find endless take-me-as-I-am trails to practice the art of genuine trail running on. Long may it last and long may we continue to risk sprained ankles rather than shin splints.

**MAL LAW, NZ EDITOR**

[www.runningwildnz.com](http://www.runningwildnz.com)

# My Backyard



In the first of a regular series that peers over the back fence and into the wild yonders of where top trail runners train across Australia and New Zealand, we take a look-see at where Kiwi and Team Salomon runner, Grant Guise, pads the kays away.

**Words > Grant Guise**



To say that one single trail location has it all is a bold statement. And one I am not prepared to make. But what I will say is that my backyard, the Castle Hill Basin in Canterbury, New Zealand, and its surrounding peaks and ridges, comes pretty darn close.

It was by default more than anything that I stumbled onto the trails and, for that matter, back into running. After working the snow slopes for 11 straight winters I settled into Castle Hill Village for my first summer in years, keen to make a return to running to help keep fit for ski touring.

A good place to begin my explorations was the Beech Forest trails that start right by the Village. It offered a series of small loops, with small but meaty climbs: enough for an entertaining time, but on its own, while fun, it didn't quite give me the "bug". So I explored further.

I heard about a track that went up to the Sink Hole, a large depression on a small 1300-metre sub peak called Leith Hill, just off the main Craigieburn Range. This was more what I was after: a longer, steeper, more sustained climb that when reversed yielded a fun, fast way down. It was the taste of trail running I was looking for.

Six months earlier I had spent the autumn living in Arthur's Pass, the highest pass over New Zealand's Southern Alps. The term "flat run" does not exist in AP. In fact, you're lucky if any running does at all, so steep and rocky are the trails here. I was working pre ski season at the store, mopping floors, cleaning toilets and giving my very best in customer service. Days off and even after work I would take the opportunity to get high and climb up the steep tracks that darted up just minutes from where I stayed. 1000+ metre climbs up to 1800-1900 metre peaks on rough tracks were the order and for the most part were far from runnable.

Back in Castle Hill I went looking for a compromise between the walk-inducing steepers of Arthur's Pass and the fun single track of the Beach Forrest trails. I remember hearing about people mountain biking around the Broken River and Craigieburn Ski Areas. I had driven up those access roads countless times and remember seeing green and yellow trail head signs: worth a look I figured.

A steep 500 metre climb onto Helicopter Hill wetted the appetite, while the winding single track that busts out of the beech trees and tops out on



1500 metre Camp Saddle is only topped by the options once on the saddle. Straight ahead and straight down is the steep and run friendly scree and onto the Valley Track – the original access to the Craigieburn Ski Area. Taking a right at Camp Saddle there is a short climb and then one of the best rolling ridges to be found anywhere. When the ridge ends, things just get better and better – a steep scree run, that joins an equally steep and technical single track. This eventually spits you back at the car park. Fear not, there is a cold stream here to sooth your trashed legs that have endured 1500-odd meters of up and down....

While this is all sounding promising and it's starting to sound like the Castle Hill Basin might really have all that a trail runner might want, I was far from convinced at this point in my "discovery" (I say discovery, but it was not at all like I was paving the way, far from it. These trails, while being new to me, have been around a while now).

No, it was not until on a whim I decided to enter the 84km Molesworth Run. Why? I still don't know. I hadn't even run a marathon at that point (and still haven't yet), but the challenge appealed to me and knowing it would force me out the door for a long run appealed even more. At this stage I was driving to run around Camp Saddle, even driving to Forrest lodge to run the Drac Flat trail, as well as the Beech Forest trails around the village. The problem I was having was when I had to drive to run a trail, to me that didn't seem right.

So there I was, in need of a long run and not wanting to drive. Then the penny dropped: run Camp Saddle, but start from home. A few gels and a water bottle that could easily be filled on any number of streams and I was off. A little beech forest, open tussock, more native bush, steep, open scree slopes and almost all on single track, not coming across another person the whole time.

For me this run was a huge moment: a series of my favourite runs turned into more than five hours of dirty goodness. It opened my mind to running long and confirmed my growing interest in ultra-distances.

With a newly opened mind, I looked to the peaks above and started to think as I did in winter when ski mountaineering. I started to explore the peaks and ridges that I normally reserved for when on skis. The result: another five or more-hour run from home, but this time getting out of the valley as soon as possible, spending two-thirds of the run above 1800 metres and summiting three of the bigger peaks in the Craigieburns, all over 2100 metres.



**For a taste of Grant's very cool back yard check out his video.**

Does the Castle Hill Basin have it all? I really am not sure. What I do know it that is has an amazing mixture of options, varied terrain, single track, access road, steep trackless ridges and an endless amount of vertical. There are trails, runs and "link ups" that I haven't even had a chance to do yet! If you don't mind going cross country then things are truly limitless here.

The fact that NZ ultra-running rep Matt Bixley spent a week camping at Broken River and left claiming the area as the best spot in NZ to trail run speaks volumes – and he hardly scratched the surface in his time here.

*Grant Guise lives in the Canterbury foot hills, in the small village of Castle Hill, with his trophy wife. He balances 3 jobs with ski touring in winter and trail running in summer in his back yard – the Craigieburn Range. With support from Salomon Running he has achieved some impressive results in the last year, most recently placing 3rd at the 125km Canadian Death Race.*

[www.grantguise.blogspot.com](http://www.grantguise.blogspot.com)

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# SALOMON XT SKIN 5 S-LAB



"Niiice vest." It's the only time I am happy to take the compliment, not being a typical 'vest' wearer. But this is different. This vest is no black tie penguin suit number; this vest is utilitarian (and makes me feel like some kind of soldier of trail fortune). Given it's been designed with significant input from the Oracle himself – Kilian Jornet – it should be better than good. And it is.

This puppy clings to you like a flattened baby chimpanzee scared to let go. But it also moulds and stretches according to your body and thanks to clever engineering, spreads the weight load as evenly as possible. The Source hydration bladder stowage system is easy to use and stash and the hose is routed from under the arm, eliminating annoying over the shoulder set ups. There are enough odd pockets here and stash-aways there for the essentials of a longer run and the ability to match to extra clip on Salomon water bottles (the bladder is only 2L). Importantly, it's been designed specifically for the trail where upper body movement is more prevalent. Whereas many hydro packs tend to sway around annoyingly, this is so slimline to the body there is no slosh or slip. The soft, breathable fabric design means there's no rub, no chafe and not much sweat pooling, either. Stretchy zig zag chest straps allow good motion on the most rigorous of runs. Bonus: there's a space blanket hidden away in the back for emergency situations and extra insulation from back heat. In terms of trail hydration set ups – like Kilian himself – this is a stand-out.

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# 720 ARMOUR A-TRACK SUNGLASSES



## TARGET AND CROSS

If you were one of those who liked to begin small talk with boastful statements, you'd kick off with: "Did you know that the technology used in the Space Shuttle is also used in these sunglasses?" Of course, the response would be: "really – I don't see any liquid hydrogen/oxygen thrusters on 'em?" Yet that's the claim of this pair of 720s, the Cross (white) and the Target (grey), both culled from 720 Armour's A-Track range of sports sunglasses. There are no thrusters, but there is the 'double impact' polycarbonate lenses which legitimately share commonality with the Endeavour. The lenses on these have been treated with silicone crystal film technology that provides protection against scratching, apparently. And true, the Targets put up with a belting on test running in the Himalayas, but the Cross and their fancy golden lenses did suffer somewhat simply from chafing inside their case. Hmmm.

What is more impressive about these sunglasses is the quick-fire lens release system. Magnetic corners hold them in place but are easy to click out (for when you need to replace the lens because they have chafed up!).

The seemingly fragile nature of the golden hued lenses was my one and only niggle, however, as otherwise both glasses were comfortable and functional providing excellent protection from the harsh light of a high altitude Himalayan running adventure. My preference would be for the Cross in terms of eye coverage, the Target's being a bit airier and sitting a little further away from the face. If I can swap the lenses to a hardier pair that will mark less, the Cross are an awesome pair of goggles.

[www.720-armour.com.au](http://www.720-armour.com.au)

# THE NORTH FACE GTD CREW SHIRT



Flat out honesty: these days there's not much any reputable brand can get wrong in a running top, so let's not gild the lily overly. Suffice to say that this breathable top ticks all the boxes for a regular-wear running top that feels like your preloved fave the moment you slip it on. It breathes like an Alsatian after a long beach run and the mesh underarm panels enhance breathability to keep you cool as you peg it down singletrack or on long firetrail runs. It's also super comfy against the flesh with wrapped seams working to eliminate abrasion. For my liking it is a good cut – fitted enough without risking being a compression garment for those determined to stick to their usual sizing. What I especially like about the this crew is the weight – it's not so super thin as to lose all warmth quality but not so thick you need to disrobe as your core temperature rises. A great bit of kit that's a wardrobe staple for spring to early autumn trail excursions.

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# SMARTWOOL PHD RUN ULTRA SOCKS

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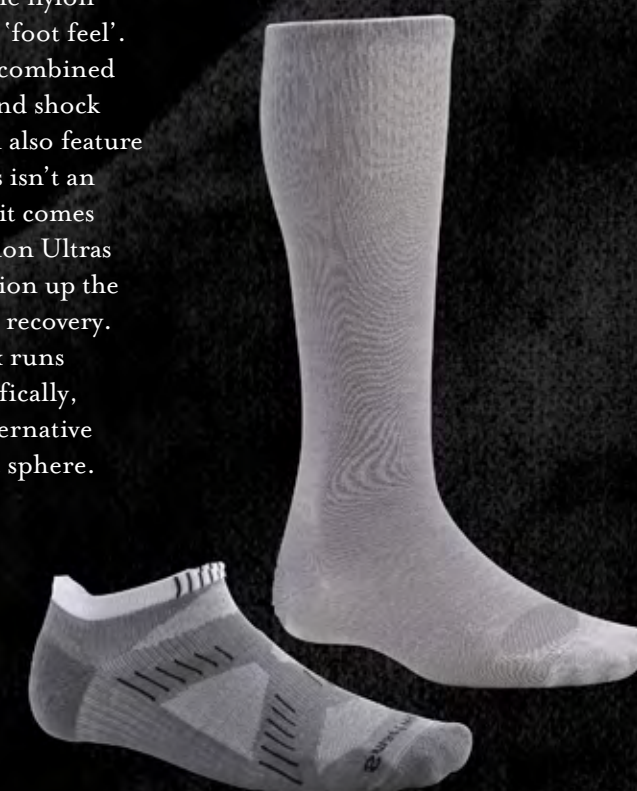
Trail runners don't need a PhD on paper to know that socks matter. We might all need a PhD to figure out why they are so expensive these days, but that's another story, even considering the space-age design that goes into them these days. This pair of Smartwool items are admittedly at the smarter end of the sock spectrum, their grey matter powered by a balanced blend of Merino wool (67-73%), Nylon (30-24%) and Elastic (3%). The sheep follicles are what keep your foot lower on the stink and happier on the comfort scales, the nylon and elastic working in unison to further improve the fit and 'foot feel'. The design incorporates padded zones in heel and forefoot combined with breathable zones where there is less need for abrasion and shock resistance, like the arch and top of foot. The Micros – which also feature a comfy ankle cushion, are better used on trails where debris isn't an issue, as they will collect if sprinkled with bits of bush. When it comes to head of the class in the Smartwools though, the Compression Ultras are this teacher's pet. The weave features graduated compression up the calf, which adherents will argue lessens fatigue and improves recovery. They are tight and unwieldy at first put-on, but on test (six runs between 5-18km), they did, anecdotally rather than scientifically, feel great during and after the trot. A great merino mix alternative to other better-known brands in the compression garment sphere.

**RRP > \$23.95 (Micro)**

**\$56.95 (Compression)**

**[www.seatosummit.com.au](http://www.seatosummit.com.au)**

**[www.smartwool.com](http://www.smartwool.com)**



# SUKKIE SPORTS DRINK



I love a product this good that has a great grassroots backstory borne from-the-field-of-experience. Melbourne based Leon Harvey, a keen cyclist and runner with a scientific background in water biofiltration, developed Sukkie hydration drink powders after a two week charity road ride had him in the dentist chair with badly eroded teeth. The dentist put it down to all the sports drinks he'd consumed over years of sports activities.

"Large amounts of acid in sports drinks is not necessary," says Leon. "Acid provides a profit margin for manufacturers by giving a product a longer shelf life. The down side to putting lots of acid in is a harsh sugary flavor."

He notes that endurance athletes are more prone to teeth problems from high-acid electrolyte solutions. "The effect of acid is more severe when breathing and sweating heavily because the mouth is dry and your natural acid buffer saliva cannot protect your teeth from acid."

So Leon developed a hydration powder that protects the teeth from acids that cause dental erosion\*. Sukkie contains 100 times less acid and half the sugar than regular sports drinks and is fortified with calcium.

A quick squizz at the Sukkie fanatics page [www.sukkie.com.au/sukkie-fanatics](http://www.sukkie.com.au/sukkie-fanatics) tells you that the product seems to throw way fewer, if any, cramps your way and is much easier on the gut – which reflects my experience on some mid range runs. Comments seem to pass over the fact that the taste is 'soft' – there's no sugar bang on the tongue. But that's part of what's saving your teeth. In terms of helping hydrate, it definitely does the job, although we haven't put it to the full endurance trail test just yet. Bring on the GOW100...then we'll see if I can legitimately add my name and become the first trail tester on that fanatic's page...

*\*'Erosive Effect of a New Sports Drink on Dental Enamel during Exercise' MICHELLE C. VENABLES (2005)*

**RRP > \$29.95 plus delivery**

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# MONTANE SLIPSTREAM JACKET

What kind of jacket weighs 70 grams? A damn light one, that's what kind and the Montane Slipstream in particular. But just how lightweight is 70 grams? What is it equivalent to? In my hunt around the house to find a comparison I went first to the bathroom and put a tube of toothpaste on the scales: 180 grams. Huh! That's more than double. OK, what about a moderate sized apple, they don't weigh much and the jacket is about the same size as an apple: 165 grams. Wow... OK, how about a mobile phone (Blackberry): 120 grams. WHAT – this jacket weighed 70 grams – is it the lightest bit of adventure kit on the planet? Empty 750ml bike bidon: 79 grams – still heavier! In fact about the only thing I could find that weighed less than this jacket was my watch (Suunto Core) and that was only just, at 65 grams.

OK, so this jacket is damn light, but does it work? The Slipstream is designed to fit over a base layer and provide basic protection from the elements. Made from Pertex Quantun, it is water and wind resistant. After wearing the jacket for a couple of runs around home in the Otways (notoriously wet) I found it provided a good protective shell from the soft elements around me. Given a heavy downpour you'll soon be as wet as a cup of English Breakfast tea, but if it's mist, a light shower or fog you want protection from this works a treat. Note that these types of jackets (on par with The North Face Verto jacket reviewed last edition) does not qualify as 'wet weather' gear for any ultra trail running event's mandatory gear requirement. It's more for shorter forays where a Race Director isn't rustling with a scowl through your backpack. The jacket breathes well to a point, better than most in fact. It features articulated arms, full length zip, drop tail and elastic hem and comes with a neat little stuff sack (7 grams!) to pack into. If you want a light and (want to be) fast jacket and need a small shell to protect you from the elements, then this is it. Remember: it'll only burden you with as much weight as your watch. And it'll keep you drier. Review courtesy Sam Maffett / Rapid Ascent.

**RRP > \$116**

[www.mainpeak.com.au](http://www.mainpeak.com.au)

[www.montane.com.au](http://www.montane.com.au)



# BROOKS HVAC SYNERGY

## BROOKS HVAC SYNERGY SS TEE AND BROOKS HVAC SYNERGY SHORT II

It looks like a straightforward tee, but this bright blue number boasts a few flashy features: its super lightweight material crows about HVAC technology – High Ventilation Air Conditioning. Hmm – fancy speak for being breezy in the right places more so than there being an A/C unit strapped on your back. Marketing nomenclature aside (marketing bods love it – I’m unconvinced the buying public are sold on it alone), it works – there was something about this tee that just gelled on my 10-15km trail test runs. It was like a second skin – I barely knew it was there thanks to flatlock seams preventing any chaffing (with a hydro pack on) and mesh in areas prone to highest moisture and sun exposure. Balmy night running is safe courtesy of 360 degree-reflectivity and for runs in the sun there’s strategically placed UV protection rated 40+. Down below I teamed the tee with the Mk2 Synergy short – a traditional high hip cut running short that keeps things breezy. Super lightweight, they are like the tee: heavy on the ‘technology’, the thermoregulating (read: they ventilate well), odour-banishing HVAC system played out in a stylish, functional mesh detail design. Night running is covered with reflectivity and small dual holster pockets are good for small essentials.

RRP > \$80.00 (short)

RRP > \$80.00 (tee)

[www.brooksrunning.com.au](http://www.brooksrunning.com.au)



Spider’s eyes. That’s how you tell a good beam from a half-arsed one. Forget lumens, just count the number of eyes that stare back at you like lost diamonds in the dust when you’re running on a trail through the dark with your headtorch on, and check out how far away you can see them from.

If you subscribe to my theory (at least try it – those mystery moving gems really are eight-legged beasts you know), and have even a hint of arachnophobia, then these Ay Ups are not for you. They are the ultimate incy wincy spotters and you’ll never leave the house again once you realise how many walk among us.

For those who like to pretend they understand the more technical talk, each one of these double-barrel lightsets outputs over 400 Lumen (7500-8000 lux at 1 metre) when on full-blaze mode. They utilise CREE X Lamp high-powered LEDs, set in cool white tint, and offer narrow, intermediate and medium beam angles.

All I know is that when I first started using them, cars started flashing me on remote roads, thinking I was a vehicle in the distance high-beaming them.

The advantage of the double barrel set up is that each light can move independently of the other, like a chameleon’s eyes, which really better the Cyclops-like design of virtually every other headtorch on the market. It means you can have one angled towards your feet and the other pointing mid-distance at the upcoming trail.

Anyone that’s done any night mountain biking will tell you how much of an advantage having two sets of lights gives you when in motion on technical terrain. On a bike you go the twin helmet-and-handlebars approach in order to reveal undulations that are flattened by a single beam, and this is the nearest equivalent for runners.

# AY UP ULTRA LITE KIT

The pay-off for the extra power is that a separate battery unit is unavoidable. I initially thought that the battery unit would bounce around all over the place when running, annoying the bejaysus out of me, but the supplied headstrap in this kit keeps things a lot more static than you’d think. (Although the instructions and amount of stuff that comes with it all seems a bit unnecessarily complicated).


Available in two sizes (mega and half-mega) the stats quoted here relate to the smaller battery unit – because only a damn fool would entertain running with the big bugger.

The rechargeable lithium batteries can be re-juiced 500 times or more. They are encased in a watertight, tough plastic container, measuring 68mm x 38mm x 20mm, and weigh in at 80 grams. Fully sealed and waterproof to a depth of five metres, you can run through rivers in this rig, if that’s your bag. The lights themselves are practically indestructible (Ay Up say: ‘You break it...we want it back’). You can recharge them in your car on the way to the trails (via a 12v adapter that’s provided) or at home with 110-240v adapter. They will be fully recharged within 3 hours. Burn time on high beam is 3 hours, on low it’s 6 hours, and, like a dodgy bloke in a dirty mac washing Viagra down with Red Bull, they can pretty much flash all night (at least 12 hours).

Once warning: once you’ve got a set of these bad boys, there’s no longer any excuse to fit a run in, no matter what time of day it is. Dark is the night no more.

RRP > \$231

[www.ayup-lights.com](http://www.ayup-lights.com)



*For someone who only took up running  
five years ago, Aussie Beth Cardelli  
has come a long way...literally.  
The rising ultra star took out The North  
Face 100 in 2010 and is the newest recruit  
of Team No Roads. She talks to TRM  
about snow, spew and staying motivated.*

*Interview > Emma Francis  
Photos > Aurora Images  
[www.auroraimages.com.au](http://www.auroraimages.com.au)*

# *Beth foot forward*







*“I was very conscious that, if I were caught throwing up at a checkpoint, I would be quizzed about my ability to continue the race. So I made sure that I spewed before or after a checkpoint, but never at a checkpoint... As far as I’m concerned, it’s an endurance event, you are torturing yourself, and the only person who should pull the pin on your efforts is you.”*

***How did your passion for ultra trail running come about?***

I was driving past the Explorers’ Tree in Katoomba NSW in 2001, and I noticed a lot of cars and people in tracksuits. I continued my trip around to Jenolan Caves and was surprised to see people setting up something like a fete. I did a short cave and by the time I emerged a finishline banner had been erected and an announcer was calling runners’ names as they came down the hill. After asking around I discovered that these runners were competing in the Six-Foot Track Marathon.

The runners all looked very fit and I was in awe of their ability. I did another cave and this time emerged to see some more ordinary looking people, mums and dads, trotting down the hill towards the finish line, being urged on by what had become an enthusiastic and vocal crowd. I left the area with a great admiration for what those people had achieved.

In 2007 I started running for exercise. I joined my local running club, Berowra Bush Runners, and it wasn’t long before their epic tales of the Six-Foot Track Marathon inspired me to give it a go. So I worked on qualifying (Beyond The Black Stump) and then fronted up for my first ever trail race: the 2008 Six-Foot Track Marathon. It was the longest run I had ever done and, although it was challenging, I loved every minute. I have not looked back since.

***You recently succumbed to that bane of endurance runners – a dodgy ITB – and made the tough decision to pull out of your pet event, the North Face 100 (TNF100).***

***How did you cope with the disappointment of your first DNS?***

Although I got my injury a month before TNF100, I still managed to race in the 45km Mt Solitary Trail Race in the Blue Mountains in April. Being ignorant of my injury at the time, the race didn’t do me any favours. With TNF100 looming closer every day, I focused purely on getting my injury under control, and I left the decision on whether to race up until the Friday morning before the event. I went for a short, slow jog and it didn’t take very long for me to realise that I would not be racing the following day.

Usually, leading up to races, conversation with my husband revolves around target times, crewing duties, other runners and so on. Before this race, however, there wasn’t any of that, partly because I felt that my injury could result in a DNF, so not starting was always at the back of my mind, even before I made that final decision.

After the decision was made I felt awful. It was that feeling of letting people down... uselessness... just about every negative emotion that I could think of. I knew it wasn’t the end of the world, but, at the time, it may as well have been. I still turned up for the race and watched my friends out on the course. The highlight of my day was watching Julie Quinn take out the female title and course record.

### How did you overcome your injury?

I can't say that I'm totally rid of my injury, but I now know how to better manage it. Every night I go through my routine of stretches and, so far, it has been kept at bay.

### You came 12th in the 100-mile Western States Endurance Run (WS100) in California, which you didn't have the ideal lead up to thanks to that ITB injury. How did you feel, physically and mentally, at the start line?

At the start line of WS100, I felt very intimidated. My training for the event had been next to nothing, with only one 100km-plus week. Physically I was full of energy, but at the same time I knew my fitness level was well below par. Also, in the week leading up to the race, I had been exploring parts of the WS100 course, which included snow and altitude, both of which were unknown quantities for me. Two days of playing in these conditions just reinforced in my mind how tough the first part of the race was going to be. The first day of training, I took it easy going up to Emigrant Pass, which is the highest point on the trail at 2667 metres, and I had no problems. The following day, I pushed it a little harder and noticed that I felt light-headed and that my hands were pulsing.

### What's the trickiest thing about running in snow? Any tips?

In Australia, we lack races where you would be expected to traverse deep snow. I think the WS100 race organisers would have preferred it if they had no snow either, but a record snow fall on the first few legs of the course added a little more character to this year's race. The snow on the course was pretty wet and heavy, so you didn't sink very far into it – just up to your ankle. I found kicking the toe of my Salomon Cross Max into the snow helped with the grip and, so

long as I didn't push off too hard with my stride, my foot wouldn't sink any further. The difficulty was doing this for 16 or so miles. I managed to find a few icy spots on the trail and fell down a few times and grazed myself, but at least I didn't break any bones like some other unfortunate runners. At one point I was following three guys then, the next minute, they were on the ground and I was in front. It would have been very funny if it weren't so serious.

### You succumbed to nausea several times during the race. What was going through your mind when this was happening?

I was very conscious that, if I were caught throwing up at a checkpoint, I would be quizzed about my ability to continue the race. So I made sure that I spewed before or after a checkpoint, but never at a checkpoint. I found this to be the most challenging part of the whole event as I was doing it, on and off, for about 100 kilometres. All up, however, I managed to keep my weight fairly consistent throughout the entire race. As far as I'm concerned, it's an endurance event, you are torturing yourself, and the only person who should pull the pin on your efforts is you.

### At these low points during an ultra, just how important is mental and emotional endurance, and how do you 'train' your mind for those moments?

By nature I am an extremely stubborn person – just ask my mum. When I set my mind on something I am determined to see it through. At the moment, I turn this attitude towards running. In ultras I focus on sticking with someone, staying ahead of someone, catching up to them, getting to the next checkpoint, all with the purpose of reaching the finish line knowing I've given it my all. The next day, though, I always feel I haven't given it my all, and so I try harder next time.

# HEAR NOTHING BUT BREATH FEEL NOTHING BUT HEARTBEAT



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Richard Bowles, professional trail runner and Vasque wearer:

"So far, the Mindbenders have been tested in all sorts of weather on all sorts of terrain, and they have been a massive success in my eyes! With the combination of those and the Smartwool PHD running socks I'm having plenty of fun out there doing what I love most. Vasque rocks!"



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**Speaking of your mum, she was part of your support crew for the WS100. What do you think goes through her mind when she sees her girl come into a checkpoint looking a little worse for wear?**

Mum still does not understand my chosen sport. She is supportive and proud of my achievements, but doesn't understand the appeal of running continuously over difficult terrain for long hours. When she first saw me at Michigan Bluff (55.7 miles into the WS100) it was pretty hot, I had just climbed a big hill and I had been spewing. Apparently I didn't leave her with a very good impression of my wellbeing, because I later found out that she had asked my husband, who was waiting for me at a later checkpoint, whether or not I should be given the opportunity to pull out. Thankfully, my husband explained that it's an endurance event and that I'm always like this. Thanks hubby.

**What do your friends make of your ultra running? Are they all supportive or do some think you're crazy?**

Most of my friends are runners, so they are supportive and knowledgeable. I find, however, that family and work colleagues have very little understanding of the ultra trail running sport. They ask me what event I have done and I tell them. Then they ask how far and I say 100km. Then they ask, "So how long did that take you? Six hours?" I could have said 5000km and they would still be no closer to understanding. The thought of doing ultra trail running events is very hard for the uninitiated mind to grasp. The only way people can get an understanding is to give it a go themselves and that is where events like the Oxfam Trailwalker and TNF100 are so good, as they give people an opportunity to experience what an ultra trail event is all about, whether they run or walk the distance.

**More and more women are being drawn to ultra running. What do you think the appeal is for the ladies?**

It's definitely not the smelly, sweating blokes! The sport allows both men and women to compete together on the same course. The goals in ultra running are different to other sports. The primary goal is just finishing the distance, anything else is just a bonus.

**What particular strengths do women bring to the sport?**

I think women are mentally stronger than men and, in endurance events, this is a huge factor in getting to the end. Also, ultra running is not about speed, but endurance. I consider myself to be a slow runner, but my advantage is that I fatigue slowly, so I can keep a more consistent pace for longer. I think that is true for most women – we are unlikely to be physically stronger or faster than the men, but we can certainly chase and wear them down.

**What does your typical training week look like in the lead up to a race?**

I have a few races throughout the year that I try to target. I work the other races I do around these and use them as speed sessions to gauge where I'm at. I build up my distances from about 70km for an easy week, up to about 120km or more a few weeks prior to my big ultra events. Since my injury, I have reverted to my old method of training, which is lots of small runs Sunday to Friday, and a long run on Saturday, all at an easy pace. I am confident that my ITB injury was because I increased the intensity of my training sessions too much.

**What keeps you going? How do you stay motivated to put in the miles when it's the dead of winter, it's cold and dark outside, your legs are sore, and you just want to stay in bed?**

Winter is usually my off season, however this year was an exception with WS100 being at the end of June – that, in itself, was my motivation to get out in the cold and dark this year. My husband is also a good source of motivation, as he organises most of my weekend training runs and we go out and run together.

**What's next for Beth Cardelli?**

To see out 2011, I'll be running the Fitzroy Falls Fire Trail Marathon in October, the Great North Walk 100-mile in November, and then the Kepler Challenge Mountain Run in New Zealand in December. I have also recently been recruited by Team No Roads to be part of their ultra trail running team. We are still to set our races for next year, so stay tuned \*



Above image > Supersport Images  
[www.supersportimages.com](http://www.supersportimages.com)

# Trail Running BROKE MY HEART

It's the elephant in any room full of lifelong ultra runners: can all this extreme stress placed on our bodies over such long periods actually kill us? In the very least it can cause serious heartache...

Words > Andy Hewat \* Image > Chris Ord



**I was lying on a trolley in the Emergency Department,** looking at the world through the distorted plastic of an oxygen mask. I knew I had a big problem. I was probably at my fittest ever. Ironic. That was likely the cause of my problem.

The blood pressure cuff inflated spontaneously squeezing my upper arm before releasing and beeping away on the large LCD monitor above me. My heartbeat zigzagged all over the screen like a drunken spider dragging its legs through a pot of ink. I was lightheaded and confused. I was worried and a little scared. My pulse was racing at 140bpm despite me lying flat on my back. I didn't need the monitor to tell me though. I could feel it beating in my throat. It felt like my heart was trying to break out of my chest. I was short of breath and low on oxygen. My circulation was compromised. I was seriously not happy.

I have Atrial Fibrillation (AF). Paroxysmal, which means it comes in bursts and rectifies itself eventually. In my case it comes on spontaneously and reverts in a matter of hours. No identifiable cause. No specific triggers. Bending over to tie my shoelaces. Walking the dog. Sitting on the couch. And running, it happens a lot when running.

For me it's not really life threatening. There is some danger of developing a clot in my heart, which flies off and could cause a stroke. I am on blood thinners just in case. But AF is distressing when it occurs. It causes my heart to beat abnormally fast but inefficiently, reducing circulation, causing fatigue and breathlessness. Almost worse than the disease is the medication to control it: add tiredness, nausea, headaches, loss of concentration, anxiety and weakness.

As runners we work hard to build up our endurance, our strength, our speed. We strive to make ourselves fitter, faster. At the core of all that physiology we want our heart to be strong and efficient. It is our primary muscle. It is our engine room. We love to make it pump, make it work hard.

As an athlete of whatever calibre it is the common denominator underlying all our fitness: a healthy heart. When it fails you have problems. You feel betrayed. You feel vulnerable. You feel weak. You feel frustrated because you can no longer do the thing you love best: run. You feel cheated because you have been doing your best to make it stronger and healthier yet it is sick and broken. It is not like an achilles or a hamstring or an ITB. You can rest, rub and stretch those and you know they will come good eventually. AF is perplexing to someone so fit. Yet that very fitness has probably caused it.

AF is more common than you might think. While running helps protect us from ischaemic heart disease that causes heart attack, it increases our chance of arrhythmias (abnormal heart rate and/or rhythm). The most common of these is AF.

But AF is more a disease of old people. At 47 and very fit I was a curiosity to the casualty staff. Unfortunately, I am not alone. The association between AF and over 40 year-old endurance athletes is becoming all too common.

A 30-year study of elite cross-country skiers in Norway found a prevalence of 12.8 per cent compared to 0.5 per cent in the general population\*. Dare I say it but overweight-unfit people all over the world are rejoicing.

When I finally saw a cardiologist three weeks after my first big attack, he told me I was the third athlete he had seen with AF in two days. Little consolation. Missing was the suggestion of any answers, especially the most important one: a quick cure.

I was put on beta-blockers to try to help regulate my heart rate. And aspirin to reduce the chance of a stroke. The beta-blockers are worse than the disease. Not only is my heart rate suppressed, but so am I.

While the AF would come and go the side effects are constant. Much of my days are spent asleep on the couch. I try to run but it feels like I am dragging a tyre behind me. Sometimes two tyres. Sometimes a tractor tyre. But I still try.

As hard and uncomfortable as it is, I need to maintain that connection with who I really am: a runner.

As an ultra adherent I have developed a personal fitness rating that tells me where I am at. Generally, with base fitness, I can roll out of bed on a weekend and go run a marathon. If I am fit, I can roll out of bed and go run 100km. When I am in really good shape I can get up and go run 200km. On the beta-blockers I am lucky to get out of bed, period.

Every day is a struggle. Running 10km on flat pavement is like running up a mountain on day two of a hundred miler. And with a cruel twist it often comes with the same nausea. It is just plain awful. I get home after a run and collapse on the floor in the foetal position to recover. And still the flutters and palpitations. All my races are cancelled. My running life is on hold. But running is my life.

Every now and then I try to forget the reality and try to reconnect with the runner still inside me. Just like another ultra, I keep putting one foot in front of the other and hope that eventually things will get better. The true value of ultras is that they actually train us for life. I remind myself that there are far worse things that can happen. I try to retain some perspective and just get on with things. Keep moving to the next checkpoint.

As life goes on around me I wait for an ablation. This is possibly a cure. They will stick a scope down my throat and a catheter into my heart via my groin. Then they will burn the rogue tissue where the extra beats emanate from. The scar tissue will be my new best friend.

There are risks: stroke, bleeding or even death. And it might not work. But I am willing to take those risks. I want the ablation. It will hopefully give me a chance to run trails again, free and unfettered.

*\*ScienceDaily.com (10/2/2010) European Society of Cardiology*

**“...with base fitness, I can roll out of bed on a weekend and go run a marathon. If I am fit, I can roll out of bed and go run 100km. When I am in really good shape I can get up and go run 200km. On the beta-blockers I am lucky to get out of bed, period.”**

**Post script >**

After five months I was lucky to get in as an urgent patient for an ablation. The surgery took five hours and I was in coronary care for three days afterwards. It is no trivial procedure and a story in its own right. It is way too soon to know if it has cured my AF and I will continue on the medication for several months while things heal. But I have pencilled in an ultra for November in hope.

— Andy Hewat



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# KING OF KOKODA

IS THE KOKODA CHALLENGE  
THE TOUGHEST (CLOSE ENOUGH TO)  
100KM TRAIL RACE IN THE WORLD?  
**WE VOTE YES.**

WILL THE TITLE AND  
BONUS PRIZE MONEY EVER  
GO TO A NON-PAPUAN?  
**NOT THIS YEAR.**



Words > Matt McLaughlin  
Images > Wendy Seymour, Rocky Roe



Popondetta-based, Goroka-born Brendan Buka once again proved he is head, shoulders and a stonking set of thighs above all comers in this year's Kokoda Challenge – a gruelling 96km run over Papua New Guinea's famed Kokoda Track, held in August.

Buka led from the start, descending the steep single-track trail from Owens Corner to the first of many river crossings at Goldie River. He arrived at the finish line at Kokoda village in an impressive 17 hours 50 minutes and 33 seconds, comfortably holding off all challengers and claiming the K10,000 prize money (US\$4500).

Buka has now won the race four times and remains the holder of the race record (16:34:05 in 2008).

The K5,000 bonus on offer for any athlete breaking the record, unclaimed this year, will roll over to next year's race.

The race presents serious challenges: an unmarked dirt trail running through the jungle, with a never-ending series of steep climbs up dog-toothed ridgelines followed by sheer descents to the rivers below. Walkers find the trail and its rollercoaster nature as demoralizing physically as the wartime story that played out in its bogs is inspirational.

Less than 10km of the track is on flat ground. Competitors must negotiate multiple river crossings on rickety makeshift bridges of fallen logs and deal with both the heat and humidity of the jungle and the bitter cold of the high mountain passes.

The track was of major importance in WWII when Japanese troops advanced from the Kokoda (north) side and a numerically

overwhelmed Australian force famously held them off, preventing a Japanese occupation of the capital Port Moresby (and many argue preventing a likely invasion of Australia).

A traverse of the Owen Stanley mountain range via the Kokoda Track is normally a five to seven day guided trek. Attempting to do it non-stop is not for the faint hearted. This year only 16 of 30 competitors finished the race, with the rest retiring due to injury, fatigue, and illness.

Hong Kong-based adventure racer Matt McLaughlin was one of just two international competitors. McLaughlin, who tied for 11th place with previous race winner Tom Hango in a time of 31:47:25, said afterwards that it was the toughest running race he had ever participated in.

"96 kilometres? That felt like 200 kilometres!" he said, noting that "I may have been the first overseas racer, but I was slow. I think the expat record is just under 20 hrs."

"The race deserves to be up there with the premiere endurance running events of the world. If more international competitors experienced it, and word of mouth spread, the Kokoda Challenge could really take off."

Undoubtedly the event can legitimately vie for the title of one of the world's toughest ultras in the 100km range, a claim that will no doubt be seconded by the only other non-Papuan to have a crack this year, Will Bennett.

He reached roughly the half way mark before knee pain and dehydration halted his progress. Race organisers sent six men in to help carry him out, the hapless runner wandering into Kokoda by 11pm on the Monday night after the race.

"He was most grateful to the locals who helped him," reports McLaughlin, "And he stayed up drinking local beer with them (his shout) until 3am!"

Bennett flew out of Kokoda the next morning straight on to Australia where customs queried his lack of luggage: his bags were almost empty as he had given away most of his possessions to the locals in Kokoda. Despite the dramas Bennett reports that the Kokoda Challenge was the best experience of his life.

**Final results >**

- 1. Brendan Buka > 17:50:33
  - 2. Andrew Yauga > 19:10:06
  - 3. Horace Yauga > 20:18:36
- First (and only) non-Papua New Guinean >  
11. Matt McLaughlin > 31:47:25

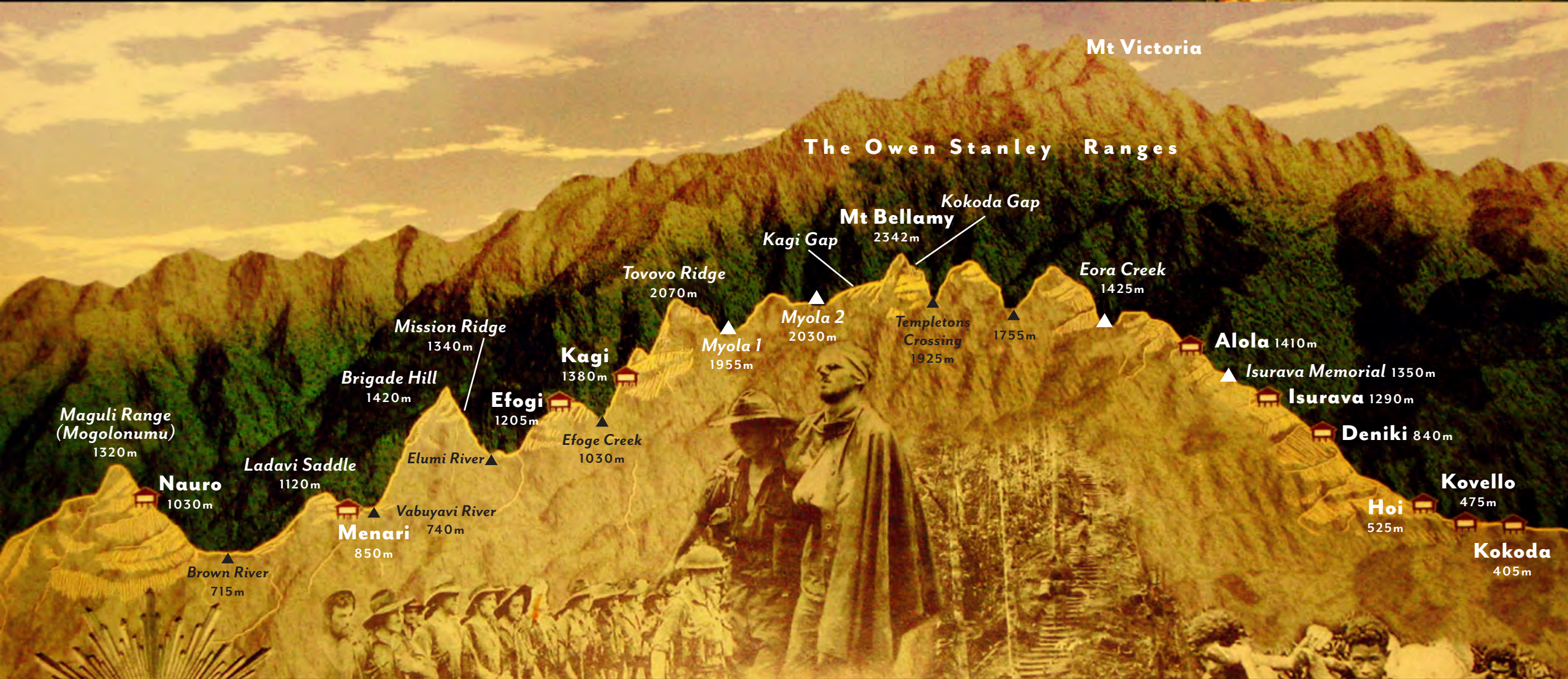
*The Kokoda Challenge is organised by Kokoda Trekking Limited, which also runs regular five to seven day hikes over the Track.*

[www.kokodatrail.com.au](http://www.kokodatrail.com.au)





**THE KOKODA TRAIL MAP >**  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA



The all time record for the fastest non-Papuan competitor in the Kokoda Challenge – Owers' Corner to Kokoda – is held by Australian Damon Goerke who ran it in a time of 19:28 in August 2006. Check out our profile on the man who has hitherto run under the radar on page 76





# XTERRA TRAIL CHALLENGE WAIHI

8 OCTOBER, 2012

The mob at Auckland-based events company Total Sport has long made it their mission to unearth hidden trail gems that enthrall, excite and challenge those of us that like to do our “thing” on single track. As Aaron Carter, Total Sport’s head man, says: “It’s only every so often that you manage to find a magical spot that ticks every box required to make a truly successful and special event.”

But based on competitor reaction to last year’s event it seems they’ve found one such a gem in the history-rich area around Waihi.

“It was kind of like finding perhaps not the Holy Grail, but the Holy Trail (or trails!)” says Aaron.

The XTERRA Trail Challenge also doubles as the National Trail Running Championships and for elite runners offers the chance to win a spot to compete at the annual XTERRA World Trail Running Championships in Hawaii, held on the first weekend in December.

But the event also caters to those just keen to be out there among some of the finest scenery and trails that the North Island has to offer. In fact, weekend warriors make up the majority of the field.

Aaron explains his approach: “We always have a variety of course distance options available so there is a challenging yet achievable distance for all levels of fitness and ability. It’s about offering the event experience to people, using the natural landscapes we are so fortunate to have access to as our canvas, then letting the good times roll.”

The upcoming XTERRA Trail Challenge Waihi is based in the Karangahake gorge at a tranquil and scenic spot known as Dickey Flat, which is also a Department of Conservation (DOC) campground. It has been the enthusiastic support of DOC and the local Waihi community that gives the day such a special atmosphere.

“The locals are just incredible and welcome us with open arms, determined to paint their town in the brightest and most positive of light,” says Aaron. “They get that events like ours are a unique opportunity to showcase the marvels of their town and surrounding areas.”

Their home turf hosts a well established network of tracks in and around the Karangahake gorge region, a good chunk of them running alongside the magnificent Waitawheta river. We’re talking about well-groomed single and double track here, much of it with a nice, solid gravel base. It’s the sort of stuff you could mountain bike on, and some of it you could even push a stroller (with 4 wheel drive capability, of course) on. That’s the easy stuff.

Then there’s a good amount of true single track, with gnarly tree roots, off-camber terrain, slippery limestone along with some very solid climbs. But whoever created these trails put all of the bits in the right places. And on the all-new marathon course, there are several decent river crossings, too.

This is not a course on which you’re likely to achieve a trail marathon PB, but if you take a camera and aren’t in a particular hurry, you may just run out of space on the memory card.

Another couple of nice features include (on all course options) having to negotiate a number of tunnels in the gorge, all of which are lit up especially for the race, saving the need for any head torches. Then there are the old tram tracks used by pioneers to transport the massive kauri trees from the area, which form part of the trail network in the gorge.

The XTERRA Trail Challenge Waihi features four course options (7km, 13km, 19km and 42km) and with its reputation spreading fast, is shaping up to be a one of those events you religiously lock into your calendar every year.

For more information and to enter, visit >

[www.totalsport.co.nz](http://www.totalsport.co.nz)



# SCORCHED EARTH

Last month the eyes of trail runners all around the world focused on Australia for all the wrong reasons, as a group of ultra runners in WA ran off-road and straight into hade's backyard. TRM looks at what went so terribly wrong in the Kimberley and what can be learned from mistakes made.

*Words > Pat Kinsella  
2011 Images > Kimberley Echo  
2010 Images > Racing The Planet  
Kimberley 4 Deserts.*



**For a fleeting moment in the first week of September**, the sport of off-road ultramarathon running flickered incandescently on the radar screen of public attention. Unfortunately, the background to this aberration was dark in the extreme. In Western Australia two young women, who'd stood excitedly on the starting line of a professionally organised trail running event one spring morning, had both ended the day in induced comas in hospital, with burns to around 80 per cent of their bodies and the only certainty left in their lives the sure fact that life would never be the same again.

What followed in the aftermath of the Kimberly tragedy was as depressingly foreseeable as a bush fire is devastatingly unpredictable. A vociferous chorus of people armed with a fraction of the facts rushed to apportion blame and waxed lyrical about the irresponsible nature of the whole bloody thing. Most were happy to heap guilt on the heads of the race organisers, Racing the Planet, but a few kept a bit in reserve for ultra runners themselves.

Admirably, the families of the injured girls – 35-year-old Victorian Kate Sanderson, and Turia Pitt (24) from Ulladulla – starved the story of sensationalist oxygen by maintaining a dignified silence. Racing the Planet management also kept their mouths tightly zipped as they went into damage control mode.

But just as it began to slide off the front page of the papers, that barometer of transient angry-mob outrage, 60 Minutes, jumped on the story. They gave it the tabloid touch and once again a cacophony of ill-informed commentary poured forth, with the common denominator being a casual consensus that something like this was bound to happen sooner or later, in a sport that is little more than organised masochism.

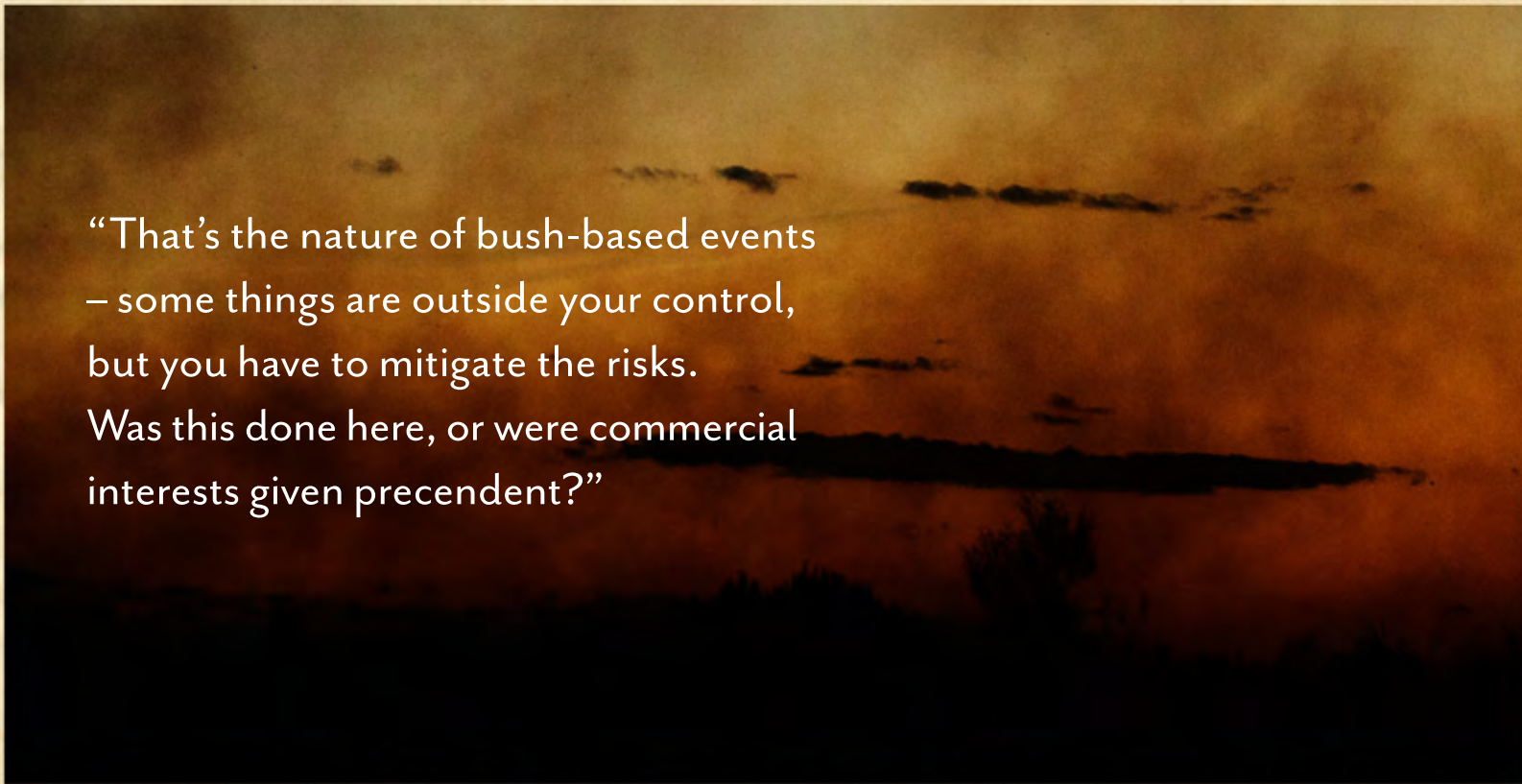
Just as war quickly murders truth, perspective is the first casualty of a high-profile tragedy. It's worth noting that during the same week as the Kimberley incident, 26-year-old Shaun Bergin was knocked unconscious in a suburban game of Australian-rules football. When his life support machine was turned off 16 days later, he became the third amateur footy player in as many weeks to die as a direct result of participating in their family friendly sport of choice.

Of course every form of physical activity has an inherent risk associated with it, but that doesn't change the basic facts: the horrific injuries suffered by Kate and Turia should never have happened – nor should fellow runners Michael Hull and Martin van der Merwe have sustained significant burns – and the life-threatening risk the rest of the runners taking part in the race were exposed to was unacceptable. Somewhere along the line, communication between key decision makers broke down, and that lies at the crux of this tragedy.

At TRM, we feel strongly that once the fierce but fickle and oft-misguided glare of public attention has wandered on to something else, there needs to be a full and frank discussion of what transpired on that terrible day. The debate needs to be free of hysteria and mudslinging, and it needs to involve properly informed people.

We do not intend, here, to mine the minutiae of what happened to the injured runners when they were trapped in that hell-like gorge, or to speculate on how long help took to arrive, nor how early warnings were communicated by an alarmed flying farmer to race organisers. These emotive and contentious details have been the subject of many column inches in the popular press, and are now being dissected by police and officials who are conducting an inquiry (the findings of which we will report on via the website and our community pages when they are announced). Instead we want to look at the backstory to the event, and assess what it means for those it will affect the most: the trail running community.





“That’s the nature of bush-based events – some things are outside your control, but you have to mitigate the risks. Was this done here, or were commercial interests given precedent?”



In the days immediately after the Kimberley race, feelings were running ragged. When TRM spoke to elite competitor Samantha Gash, she was “still in shock and suffering badly with ‘survivor guilt’.”

“I’m a Victorian – I should know how dangerous fires are,” she said with raw emotion evident in her voice. “Could I have done more? It is really devastating for everyone involved in the race. Two girls fighting for their lives...lives that will never be the same again.”

“It’s been a very emotional week. About eight of us who were in the lead group have been in constant contact, offering each other support, talking about how we feel, and discussing what is being said.”

The implicit corollary contained within this last line quickly convinced us that we needed to continue to cover this evolving story, as the views of the runners were obviously not being heard clearly enough above the general clamour.

Ultra running is a niche sport, and participants form a tight-knit community that can often behave almost like a family. And, just like in a family scenario, it’s fine for people to have a go at their own clan members, but if someone from outside the blood group starts slagging them off, the heckles begin to rise and a defence mechanism is almost subconsciously triggered.

After the stampede to make early and ill-informed judgemental statements, it was a surprise to some that many of the actual runners subsequently came to the defence of the race organisers (who very quickly were portrayed as the villains in the piece).

“There was a lot of non-runner discussion after *60 Minutes* ran their story,” says Andy Hewat, a seasoned ultra runner (though not a participant in the Kimberley race) and a professional race director. “I was surprised that a number of runners came to the defence of the organisation as a consequence of that report.”

“We have been very disappointed with some of the negative comments and articles that have come out of this,” Sam told us. “A few times we’ve said to each other: ‘These people weren’t there – they don’t know what they’re talking about.’”

“Someone made a terrible comment on Lisa Tamati’s Facebook page that I had to address. Not only did I think it was generally inappropriate and unconstructive, it bothered me that it was made by someone who doesn’t even do ultras. It’s just so horrible for the girls who are injured, and their families. There’s been a real rush to apportion blame, but for us – on one level – it was just a tragic accident.”

“You have to follow your gut in some situations. But it’s hard, when you’re head is down and you’re immersed in a race – you assume that these things – safety issues – are being looked after for you. But sometimes it’s outside the organiser’s control, too.”

“The race organisers were in a no-win situation really,” agrees Nick Wienholt, an accomplished ultra runner and editor of *enduroexplorer.com*. “Look at the criticism the UTMB copped for cancelling the race last year. You had the likes of Kilian Jornet saying the bad weather was just the nature of the mountains, and that the race should have run. If Racing the Planet had cancelled the race early on, the same criticism could and would have been levelled here: the Kimberley is a hostile environment by its very nature.”

That’s not good enough, says Andy Hewat. “When you do a sport that takes place in the wilderness, it’s an inherent risk that events may have to be cancelled. The biggest 100-miler in the world – the Western States 100 – was cancelled the day before the race a few years back because of fires. They had 400 runners waiting to go, plus 1000 crew and volunteers, but they pulled the plug because of safety concerns.”

“That’s the nature of bush-based events – some things are outside your control, but you have to mitigate the risks. Was that done here, or were commercial interests given precedent?”

“We know we’re taking risks when we enter an event like this, but there is a reasonable expectation from runners that organisers will have assessed the safety of the event before letting it proceed. When there’s a danger that could clearly be foreseen, like when there’s a fire already burning, then there’s a duty of care that needs to be shown by the organisers to the runners.”

“Bad practices by suspect race directors make it harder for the rest of us to get permits and insurance, and endanger our friends. I know Kate Sanderson, not closeley, but she is entered in GOW (Great Ocean Walk 100km race) and was our inaugural women’s 100km winner in 2009.”

**On the Monday after the race was cancelled**, Sam Fanshawe, Racing The Planet’s race organiser, told TRM: “There was no known risk of this fire before the race started and part of the investigation is how did the fire start and how did it flare up so quickly.”

The following entry from Samantha Gash’s blog, however, suggests there was knowledge of some fires being active prior to the race starting.

“We had a pre-race briefing at 8pm on Thursday where we heard that there were spot fires around the area we would be racing,” wrote Sam. “Being a Victorian and having the events of Black Saturday etched very fresh in my memory I instantly felt uneasy and remember wondering if it was wise to be running in these circumstances. The issue was not deliberated much further so I got swept up in the other concerns being explained by race organisers.”



The next morning Sam buddied up with another runner, Matt Meckenstock, partly because she felt unsettled after hearing about fires in the region.

"About 14km in, we ran right past a fire," Sam told us. "Dark smoke was blowing across the course. I felt quite uncomfortable and I began saying to myself, 'what are we doing here?'"

"I arrived at checkpoint 2 totally exhausted. Sometimes you don't even know yourself whether you're looking for a reason to pull out of a race just because you're suffering, or whether it's because you have genuine concerns for your safety, but I was really quite worried.

"We pretty much walked the first bit between checkpoint 2 and checkpoint 3. It was very technical terrain and it was hard to do much else. About 6km in, however, we saw the fires, and they weren't spot fires any more, they were proper bushfires, so we picked up the pace and pushed through fast.

"I think we were in a bit of shock after that. We had a talk about what to do. Should we go back and tell people? Could we stop them coming through? We knew there was a road coming up, though, so we decided to push on and raise the alarm there.

"As soon as we reached the road we met Riitta [Hanninen, from Racing the Planet] and a cameraman. I said to Riitta: 'No one else should go through this.' Rita assured me she'd look after it. I checked with her later, and she said she immediately relayed the message, but that all but three runners had left checkpoint 2 by that stage.

"I was worried about the runner behind us. He'd been one of the favourites before the race, and I'd expected him to be faster, but he'd really been struggling with the heat. Most of us had buddied up with someone, but this guy was all by himself. We saw someone catching us up, and I thought it was him, but it was another mate of ours who said he'd had to literally sprint though the technical terrain to escape the fire."



**Shaken**, but oblivious to the extent of the horror unfolding behind her, Sam carried on running past checkpoint 4 and only stopped at the 72km mark, when the top 12 competitors ran into the direction of a second significant fire, which had burnt down checkpoint 5. At the time they thought this was the reason the race was being cancelled, and it wasn't until she got back to her hotel that Sam learnt about the terrible events that had taken place on the course.

"I feel really weird about the fact that we carried on," says Sam. "People in the same community as me were being seriously injured, and I was still running."

"Do I think the race should have been cancelled when it became known that there were spot fires in the region? It's easy to say yes with the benefit of hindsight, but yeah, I do. Or they should have changed the course to run it closer to the road."

"They had a contingency plan whereby any runner not at CP2 by a certain time would be driven around the technical terrain to CP3 – they'd be disqualified from the overall race, but could continue. I think this contingency plan should have been implemented for all runners as soon as it became clear there were fires."

"Apparently there was a problem with communications. Their sat phones weren't working. This is probably the most expensive 100km race in the world to take part in [entry is \$1400], and no expense should be spared on getting the very best comms equipment possible."

"The other thing is access. Every trail runner wants to run through rugged and remote terrain – it's what the sport is about. However, my big concern about things like this is how far away vehicle access is in case of an emergency."

Andy Hewat agrees: "They had the opportunity to remove the runners when they saw smoke at CP2, but they didn't. You have to ask yourself, when they had helicopters in the air filming the race, how did they not see the approaching danger and act on it? They had all the infrastructure there to film the event and to get publicity for their series, but was this at the expense of runners' safety? It appears that the helicopters were there filming the front runners, while those nearer the back were left to fend for themselves."

"I went on to the Racing the Planet website to assess their approach to safety, and I was horrified to discover they actually had NSAIDS [Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen] listed as part of their mandatory kit. NSAIDS have been proven to be dangerous during endurance sports for several years. This may seem a small point but demonstrates a dangerous lack of knowledge and awareness of runner safety."

**Despite the public's perception** of ultra-running as an extreme pursuit, deaths and serious injuries are actually very rare, particularly in comparison to a mass-participation sports such as triathlon (five triathletes died during separate US races during August and September 2011, prompting a review into fatalities in the sport).

In 2004 Mark Heinemann died after running the 220-mile Across the Years event in Arizona, but Andy Hewat can only recall one other death worldwide during the 15 years he has been involved in the sport, and that was during Racing the Planet's Gobi March earlier this year, where 31-year-old American Nick Kruse died of heatstroke.

Some criticism was leveled at the company about their handling of the Gobi incident, and negative comments have also been made about the first Kimberley ultra-marathon in 2010 – a longer-format, 250km multi-day race that was part of Racing the Planet's 4Deserts series – where medics reportedly ran out of IV drips on the very first day.

Damon Goerke, an elite Australian adventure racer and ultra runner, who won Racing The Planet's 2011 Gobi March, reckons that, in a way, these events are victims of their own marketing.

"On the one hand they want the race to seem as extreme as possible," he says. "But on the other they want to attract ordinary people to keep the participation numbers up. It's a hard thing to pull off in the kind of terrain these races pass through."

"Some people do enter these events unprepared," says Sam Gash. "Racing the Planet now have stricter requirements for entry – medicals and so on – but people can be so gung ho in these events. We have to be self-reliant in ultra running. Runners need to be prepared."

But the tragedy in the Kimberley did not arise from any lack of preparedness on behalf of the competitors. The route of the race took them through a fire front. Simple as that. If anything, the actions of certain runners prevented a worse tragedy from unfolding – trapped in a gorge and faced with an inferno they couldn't outrun, some competitors turned around, faced their fears and jumped over the onrushing flames into areas that had already burnt out.

"The entry list didn't reflect the normal crew you'd expect at an Australian ultra event," says Nick Wienholt. There were a few familiar names, and then some mining people and lots of internationals. When you don't have an intimate knowledge of the course or the area, you're a lot more vulnerable. You've got no real idea where you are or what is coming up, so when something goes wrong...."

Why exactly things went so wrong here, however, and to what extent the entire tragedy was avoidable, is what haunts many. Questions about which authorities were notified about the event and when, and whose advice was actually sought and heeded, and how good the advice was, are particularly vexed. The official inquiry is likely to spend most of its time looking at evidence around these crucial points.

Reports so far have been conflicting. Racing the Planet insist that they notified all relevant local authorities, including the WA Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA), the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and the police. However the DEC say they simply offered advice about crocodile safety and referred organisers to FESA for fire advice. FESA spokespeople have commented that they heard about the event indirectly, while police have said they only received a generic email. The inquiry will reveal more, but one thing seems apparent: communication between all parties could and should have been clearer.

"When events take place on public land you have to get permission and permits from numerous people and authorities – parks, tourism, police, local councils, traditional owners, landlords and so on," explains Andy Hewat.

"Parks are hot on this stuff – I've had a couple of events that have been running for decades come to me for advice recently because Parks have told them their risk management plans are not up to scratch."

"This event, however, was being held largely on private land [the El Questro station], so the rules and regulations appear more relaxed."

**"Every trail runner wants to run through rugged and remote terrain – it's what the sport is about. However, my big concern about things like this is how far away vehicle access is in case of an emergency"**



Since the event, TRM has been in constant contact with Racing The Planet's founder Mary Gadams, in an attempt to get her version of events first hand. Mary was herself racing in the Kimberley and she was the fifth person injured in the fire. "I received second degree burns on the backs of my arms, legs and hands," she told us.

Despite promptly answering all our emails, Mary explained she was unable to go on record about the events in the Kimberley until after the official inquiry. "I would gladly speak to you but I have been advised that I should not make any comments until after the investigation is complete," she said.

Mary further told us that she had declined to go on *60 Minutes* because of legal advice and, "one of the families didn't want me on the show."

The company did send us an official statement (the same one sent to Channel 9), in which they reiterated that they had informed all relevant local emergency services about the event well in advance, and said that: "At no stage was Racing the Planet advised that fire would be a risk to the Kimberley Ultramarathon." They also stress that they are fully co-operating with investigations into the event.

While this position is understandable, the information vacuum left behind has not been pretty. "All the time they're saying nothing, all people can do is speculate," observes Andy Hewat. "And the speculation at this stage is pretty ordinary."

"I was there in China last year [where a competitor died in the Gobi March]," says Sam Gash. "And communication was an issue there too. To be fair to them, they [Racing the Planet] have been quick in their responses to my questions since it happened, and do seem to care about how we're feeling. I think the veil of secrecy that seems to descend after an accident makes it seem like it hasn't been handled well, but actually it hasn't been handled too badly."

Many of the people we spoke to while researching this article wanted to emphasise that the most important thing here is that the girls get back to full health as soon as possible.

Obviously we wish Kate and Turia the very best in their recovery, but the most important thing that needs to come out of this is that this doesn't happen again.

"I really hope there is a public airing of the investigation, says Andy Hewat. "I'd hate to think people will just forget and by doing so give tacit approval to bad practice. I know those affected will never forget but if all of us don't learn from mistakes, our own or others, then we will simply repeat them."

"I know the incident forced me to go over my own risk plans again with a fine toothcomb, but unless all race organisers are forced to come into line with 'best practice' they will place more people in unnecessary danger."

Sam Gash, who remains supportive of Racing the Planet and says she will take part in more of their races, believes the incident has underlined the need for a place for a third party in all of this. "I think there should be an independent risk assessor looking at the safety plans for all of these kind of events," she said.

When she was still numb from shock, Sam wrote the following sentence in her blog immediately after the event: "I am always a believer in turning negatives into positives but I cannot think of one positive thing to come out of this experience."

Perhaps, however, there is a glimmer of positivity yet to be seen, if the ultra community can pull together and demand that correct procedures are put in place to prevent an incident like this being repeated. And maybe, the next time ultra running sees a surge in public interest, it might be for all the right reasons \*

Got any thoughts on this subject?

Express them here >

[www.facebook.com/TrailRunMag](http://www.facebook.com/TrailRunMag)

Donate >

Some fellow competitors are collecting donations to help the girls who suffered horrific burns in the Kimberley Ultramarathon.

If you would like to support Turia Pitt and Kate Sanderson please visit the Kate Sanderson & Turia Pitt Donation Page >

[www.facebook.com/pages/Kate-Sanderson-Turia-Pitt-Donation-Page/290185740994771](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kate-Sanderson-Turia-Pitt-Donation-Page/290185740994771)



Postscript >

In TRM's last correspondence with Mary Gadams, she was in Egypt, preparing for Racing The Planet's 250-kilometre Sahara Race through the Valley of the Whales. In terms of the immediate future of the company she confirmed that: "There are no changes to our schedule of races planned."

As this article was being written, police and the Parks and Wildlife Service effectively forced the midrace cancellation of the Simpson Desert MultiMarathon ([www.multimarathon.com.au](http://www.multimarathon.com.au)) by closing the Simpson Desert because of bushfires.



# Coastal Classic

**With a trail as spectacular as the one that skirts New South Wales' Royal National Park, how could a run along its 30km length not become a classic? Nick Wienholt plays by the seaside...**

A narrow ribbon of track winding through dense palm jungles, coastal heaths, windswept beaches and towering sandstone cliffs, the Royal National Park Coast Track is one of the most technical trails in the Sydney area and, blessed with striking ocean views for almost its entire length, its also one of the most mindblowing.

In September, 317 brave runners gathered at the Otford Primary School at the park's southern end ready for the 30km journey through to Bundeena in the north. The crowd shivered in the

weak early spring morning sunlight, all weighing their likelihood of finishing and contemplating the inevitable rough going thanks to the trail's variable state from bone dry to downright boggy. Even those sure to be at the pointy end of the field publicly acknowledged it was going to be a tough day at the trail office:

*"Oh dear, just managed to get an entry to the [Coastal Classic] and [only] now I start doing some research. Didn't realise the trail was so technical, maybe my trusty DS racers won't do the job. Sounds like it could be more like a boggy cross country race."* – eventual winner and new course record holder Andrew Tuckey's post on [coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au).

Words > Nick Wienholt

Images > Aurora Images + Derek Waterman Photography

[www.auroraimages.com.au](http://www.auroraimages.com.au)

[www.derekwaterman.com](http://www.derekwaterman.com)



Building on one of Sydney's most popular Fat Ass trail runs, the second running of the Inov8 Coastal Classic this year is further proof of the growing popularity of distance trail running. Each year the FatAss crowds bulged making it tougher for the event to slip under the watchful gaze of local rangers. By the final running of the 2009 Otford to Bundeena FatAss, the event had hit critical mass and an organised run was required.

Local Bundeena resident Kevin Tiller, founder of Australia's wildly popular coolrunning.com.au site and long-time Six Foot Track race director, is one of the local running gurus that has provided inspiration for the current generation of runners to take to the trails. After many years working with and local rangers, Kevin and Gary Fairbrother from event managers, Maximum Adventure, jumped through the hoops and were issued a race permit in 2010. The splendour of the Coast Track could now be shared with a much wider running community.

After an unseasonably hot 2010 event, where early spring temperatures nudged 30 degrees Celsius and many a runner was caught out by the widely-spaced stations along the often inaccessible track, the 2011 event was scheduled for 18 June, mid-winter. Torrential rain in the preceding week scuttled best-laid plans, however, and a September running was again on the cards.

The Wednesday before the race storm clouds gathered over Sydney and the skies opened up – the possibility of a second postponement looked likely. With fortune though the forecast heavy rain never eventuated and track conditions were no muddier than usual so the rangers and event directors gave the green light. By race morning conditions were close to perfect with a strong tail wind pushing runners along and cool, sunny conditions delivering ideal conditions.

The race starts in the little village of Otford, nestled in a small valley just inland from the coastal cliffs that tower above the Pacific Ocean north of Wollongong. A steep 125-metre climb out of Otford over narrow trails makes the first two kilometres prime mass congestion real estate. To combat this, the start is staggered with two runners crossing the line every five seconds. The system requires competitors to self-seed and choosing the right starting position is a challenge – go too early and risk getting caught up

in the early enthusiasm which can blow out lungs and legs in a sprint-like scramble to the cliff-tops (my 2010 experience), start too far back and you could get snared in congestion on the many pinch-points the Coast Track offers.

Coming out of an autumn program dominated by the Australian ultra events of Bogong to Hotham, Cradle Mountain and The North Face 100, my spring program is dedicated to much shorter races, ranging from marathon distance all the way down to five kilometre 'sprint' trail events.

Controversy rages in ultra circles as to whether dedicated speed work has any benefit for long-distance events, but my experience is that the improvement in racing ability and running efficiency gained through shorter distance events makes me a much better overall runner.

Just as importantly, the switch from distance to speed is mentally and physically refreshing, offering new challenges and skills to master, and this aids in avoiding burnout and injury.

With a winter season featuring weekly cross-country races ranging from 5km to 10km (and the odd half-marathon and twenty-miler thrown in), I was feeling in good form and fitness for the Coastal Classic. I started the climb out of Otford with a determination to beat my 2010 time of three hours 14 minutes and go sub-three hours. To make tracking the goal easy, I dialled a six-minute-per-kilometre pace in to the GPS virtual partner of my Garmin.

Trail shoe reviewers are honour-bound to test the shoes in the most demanding of conditions, and it was with a pair of Inov8 Talon 190s (full review to follow next issue, see breakout box for a background) that I began my hurtle down the coastal escarpment. Touted as the world's lightest cross-country and mountain racer, the Talon 190s feature an extremely aggressive outer sole combined with a minimal midsole and extremely light and breathable upper. With a grip on muddy track that approaches that of a football boot, the Talons made speeding down the steep, muddy grade a breeze and the only fall of the day came when my following foot became

entangled in a vine during the aptly-named Palm Jungle section. With damp mud making the landing pleasantly soft, I was soon cruising out of the jungle, into daylight and heading towards the first aid station at Garie Beach.

After the jungle, the coast track settles into a routine of beach crossings and steep climbs over the headlands that separate them, with many cliff-top sections offering stunning coastline views. Breaking up the trail conditions is another footing wild-card – long sections of metal grates suspended above the easily-eroded natural terrain. These offer a fast running surface with the added spice of a potentially very nasty spill on to unforgiving metal. The Talons are designed to give excellent grip across a wide variety of natural trail conditions, and the metal walkways were the great unknown heading into the race. Thankfully, the aggressively studded outer-sole gripped to the metal walkways extremely well, and as the track settled into some runnable terrain north of the huge cliff ascent at Garie, my lead on my

Controversy rages in ultra circles as to whether dedicated speed work has any benefit for long-distance events, but my experience is that the improvement in racing ability and running efficiency gained through shorter distance events makes me a much better overall runner.

[Check out a vid from the event >](#)



virtual racing partner began to slowly extend – two minutes, three minute, four minutes – making a three hour finish a formality if I could avoid hitting both the wall and the trail.

During a race that is going well, time and distance go very quickly. When things are going wrong, a five-kilometre race can feel like it will never end. In contrast, a 100km event where everything is clicking perfectly seems to come to an end sooner than the elapsed time on the race clock records. As I burst through the foliage onto Jibbon Beach, it was obvious that this was a race that was going very well – it felt like I was still getting started and there was enough left in the legs to increase the pace, cruise along Jibbon and speed through the back roads of Bundeena up to the RSL to finish in 2.54.52.

My time was 31st overall and 19th in the 30-39 age category. Andrew Tuckey had won the overall race with a staggering 2.17.45 effort, and Shona Stephenson, the female winner, came in 2.57.30.

While the early finishers of the race were sprawled around the grass lawns of the Bundeena RSL, enjoying a well-earned beer and burger from the outdoor BBQ, many runners were still out on the course and making steady, determined progress along the Coast Track. The Coastal Classic offers a generous six-hour cut-off for an official finishing time, and this made for a long day out for course sweeps Justin Low and David Brown.

With multiple duties that include retrieving any litter inadvertently left on the track (which thankfully was very sparse), collecting all the ribbons and extra markers that race organisers had deployed to assist in the sometimes-tricky navigation, being ready to call in emergency assistance for runners that had come to grief and ensuring that the tail of the pack have sufficient energy, ability and encouragement to reach the finish line, the sweep fulfils one of the most critical roles in a distance trail race.

With a super-technical track that features tripping hazards along every step of the way, the field held up remarkably well, and approaching the last aid station, the sweeps were greeted with the astute observation that “It’s great to see you guys coming in together because that means nobody got badly hurt out there today”.



For such an arduous event, the extremely small DNF count of six runners is testament to both the on-course aid that allowed runners with minor tweaks to be patched up and continue to the finish as well as the toughness of competitors to finish the race despite a good number of grazed knees and twisted ankles.

Almost as important as the health of all the runners is the state of the track after three hundred plus had completed the event. Justin reported that the state of the track was excellent, and no obvious impact was evident. As an added bonus to the wider community, Maximum Adventure sets aside a significant amount of the funds raised by entries for track upgrade work. With around twenty thousand dollars donated to National Parks across the 2010 and 2011 events, a badly degraded section of track north of Big Marley is being rehabilitated.

With reports from the track about the imminent arrival of Justin and David to round off the event, Race Director Gary Fairbrother was wearing a fixed smile as he awarded Inov8 trail shoes to all the category winners and soaked in the exhausted contentment of the collected runners.

All the features of a great race were present – the event was a sell-out, the overwhelming majority of the feedback on both the event and the course was very positive, a large collection of race volunteers gave up their time to provide great support for the runners, and a strong band of elite runners pushed each other and blitzed the course, with both the male and female course records from 2010 broken.

An early September date for the 2012 event is already locked in, and with the general growth in trail running popularity, combined with plenty of awareness and interest in the Coastal Classic, the prospect of the race growing to a Six Foot spring-equivalent is very real.

Laying on the lawn and looking around at the smiling faces, muddied knees and exhausted shuffles through a haze of post-race fatigue, it was obvious that there’s something very special about this tough trail race and this beautiful location, enough to keep the Coastal Classic a sell-out for years to come.

[www.maxadventure.com.au/coastalclassic](http://www.maxadventure.com.au/coastalclassic)



## Innovation of the sole

2011 Coastal Classic's new naming rights sponsor, Inov8, is a specialist off-road running company with an interesting history. Its origins are in the Euro-sport of fell running: trail-running taken to the extreme, which typically involves steeper gradients and much harsher under-foot conditions. The demands of fell running have, in Europe, prompted the development of specialised shoes of staggering grip and limited cushioning. In contrast to many shoe manufactures that have only discovered minimalist shoes in the last few years, Inov8 has been a long-term proponent of minimalist shoes, and has a design philosophy to produce "footwear around the natural function of the foot."

When first launched in Australia in the early 2000s, Inov8 minimalist offerings failed to capture popular imagination and support, and it wasn't until after the *Born to Run*-inspired barefoot craze that local distribution of the shoes became feasible.

Appropriately enough, the team at Barefoot Inc., led by the indomitable Max DeLacy and best known for its distribution of Vibram FiveFingers, is the driving force behind Inov8 in Australia. With fell running typically involving insanely fast descents down muddy, technical trails, Inov8's association with the Coastal Classic is an entirely appropriate fit, with close to 300 metres of descent through a primeval rainforest of towering palms and vines confronting runners as they leave the heights of the cliffs and descend to sea-level.

[www.barefootinc.com.au](http://www.barefootinc.com.au)

[www.inov-8.com](http://www.inov-8.com)





# THE QUIET MAN

TRM meets Damon Goerke, the laconic long-distance trail runner who takes everything in his stride, from a sensational string of international ultra victories to a mutiny within his own body

“About four or five hours alright with you?” says Damon Goerke, tweaking something on his GPS-equipped watch, shouldering a super serious-looking hydropack and bidding goodbye to his girlfriend, who quickly runs off in the other direction.

Oh bloody hell. I’d been afraid this might happen. Damon has been ducking and diving around my requests for an interview for months.

Now he has agreed to meet me for a run, and he is planning to kill me to silence my annoying bleat forever. Or maybe he’s kidding. It’s hard to tell with this guy.

*Story > Pat Kinsella Images > Racing The Planet + Bernd Meyer + Aurora Images > [www.auroraimages.com.au](http://www.auroraimages.com.au)*



As we set off, I try and work out what kind of running style Damon has, but it seems quite indistinct. "I don't actually know... I guess I'm a bit unorthodox really," he says when I give up and ask. "Fleur reckons I'm lopsided." Whatever. It seems to be working for him.

As self-deprecating and likeable as he is, something about Damon that probably irritates the bejesus out of many of the dedicated runners he comprehensively and regularly beats at various events, is the fact that he isn't simply a trail runner – he's a highly accomplished multi-sport athlete who can also paddle and pedal with the best of them.

Damon has been at the forefront of Australian adventure racing for over a decade. He has taken part in every Geoquest race since its inception in 2002 (winning three of the last 10) and is one quarter of Team Blackheart – two-time conquerors of Australia's last true expedition-length adventure race, the XPD. Blackheart are about to contest the Adventure Racing World Championships in Tasmania, and they are unanimously considered Australia's best hope for a world title.

In fact – just to rub it in a bit more – when it comes to training, Damon focuses much more on other pursuits than he does on his running. "I've always been strong on foot, so I actually end up doing more kayaking and riding than I do running, because I don't want to hold the team up," he tells me.

"Generally I just head out and do about an hour's run three times a week – never much more than that. And then, at the weekend, I might head out for a bigger three- or four-hour run with Fleur [Grose, his partner, also a trail runner and adventure racer, whose achievements include winning the women's category of the 2009 Atacama Crossing]."

In many ways, his multi-discipline endurance pedigree is a big part of Damon's secret to success on the trails. By constantly cross-training he is perpetually building up his endurance capabilities and fitness levels without forever punishing his legs by repeatedly running enormous distances. He also knows how to hurt in all manner of ways, and he can dig deep to punch his way out of the other side. All in all it's a tasty arsenal of weapons to have when you're an ultra runner – particularly one who tends to pick fights with the toughest races possible.

The dynamics of racing a long-form event as part of a team, and pushing yourself through an ultra run all on your lonesome are so radically different, though, I wonder how he copes with the mental challenges involved.

"There's nothing quite like that feeling when you're racing as part of a team and everything is going well – that's fantastic," he admits. "But I don't mind my own company either. I don't know what I think about, but I never seem to get bored. Obviously there are those times when everything goes a bit wobbly, but when that happens you just eat something and get on with it."

At 38 years of age, Damon has forced his body through more wobbly experiences than most people can imagine. It isn't simply the kilometres ground out, it's the conditions they are run in – across some of the most unforgiving terrain on earth, where temperatures oscillate viciously from one extreme to the other.

"During one stage of the Gobi race, I was really suffering," he tells me as we pad around the altogether gentler environment of the Yarra Trails. "I was expecting to be passed at any moment because I was going so slowly, but when I finally crossed the finish line for the stage, it seemed an age before the next guy came in. And when he did, he just fell flat on his face and didn't move. The medics came over and started talking to him, but he said nothing. He was like that for about 15 minutes. The next person came in and did the same thing. And the next. So I thought to myself, 'Oh well I'm not going too badly here then.'"

By that stage in his running career, Damon knew just how badly things could go. In 2009, he landed in hospital for eight days after suffering severe kidney failure. The warning signs had begun to manifest while he was racing across the Atacama Desert in Chile. He pushed through, however, and finished fourth overall. Shortly afterwards he took part in the 100km Oxfam Trail Walker event in Sydney, as part of a team, and very early on in that race his body began to breakdown.







Toby Cogley was on his team that day. "About 7km into the race, Damon told me he was getting cramps in his quads," recalls Toby. "He wasn't complaining, he was just letting me know, and we worked out a system where he'd put his hands on my shoulders for the downhills to relieve the pressure on his legs."

"I've met a lot of ultra runners, and they're all a bit barking, but no one else I know would continue on running in a 100km race if they knew, after just 7km, that they were in for a complete horror show. But Damon...he is a bit special. He told me it had happened once before and that it would sort itself out after another 20km or so. That sounded like a long time to be running with cramp."

"After about 60km he told me he was pissing blood. I'd trained with Damon for quite a while and he was obviously in quite a bit of discomfort, but he never complained. He just put one foot in front of the other, and we helped him along when we needed to. I never got any sense that he wanted to pull out. We finished third or fourth I think, with a time of around 14 hours. It wasn't as quick as we would have liked, but it wasn't too bad either."

That was on a Friday. Toby didn't hear from Damon again until he rang him on the Monday, and it wasn't until halfway through the conversation that he realised that his teammate was talking to him from a hospital bed. "He's a pretty laconic guy," explains Toby. "With Damon, you'd never know anything was wrong with him until it became catastrophic. And even then..."

"I wasn't feeling great after the race, so I had some tests done," explains Damon. "Next thing I was being told I had renal failure and I was hospitalised straight away. It was the same thing that the endurance mountain biker Craig Gordon [Australia's first 24-hour Solo MTB World Champion, who nearly wrote himself off while winning the trophy] had - I forget the technical name for it now."

The technical name for it, Mr Goerke, is 'rhabdomyolysis', and it's every bit as nasty as it sounds. Basically, it's a self-destruct mechanism within the human body - a reaction to severe trauma to skeletal muscle that causes toxic cell components to be released into the circulation, potentially causing such delightful things as renal failure, hyperkalaemia, cardiac arrest, disseminated intravascular coagulation and other such words that are far more impressive in a game of Scrabble than when they come out of your doctor's mouth.

"My kidneys weren't working at all. They kept filling me with fluids, but nothing would come out. I put on 15kg in a day. You could see it all pooling in my body, just under my skin. And, then, just before I was going to have to go on dialysis, I started urinating again."

A brush with major organ collapse would probably make most people a bit ginger about pushing ahead full steam with their ultra-endurance career, but not Damon. In fact, it was after this little setback that he took on his hardest races and recorded his best results.

"My personal opinion is that it had a lot to do with taking pain relief. Some people pop pills like lollies during ultras and adventure races, but I hardly ever take anything. The two times this happened to me, I had taken some ibuprofen. Interestingly, a lot of race organisers warn against taking these drugs during their race briefings these days."

But isn't he worried that it might strike again? "I just make sure my teammates are aware of the warning signs, and I keep an eye on things myself and take things easy if I think it's happening again."

Of course, one person's version of taking things easy may differ to a lot of others. While researching this piece I came across a race report that Damon wrote after competing solo in the 2010 Cradle to Coast Multisport Race in Tasmania, a punishing three-day adventure event. Early on in the very first stage, a 62km trail run from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair, he reported experiencing "severe leg cramps, similar to what I suffered last year which ended with me in hospital for 8 days."

Despite claiming to have "backed it off", he went on to finish the run and then paddled 15km across the lake, cycled 120km to the Derwent River, kayaked a further 60km down the river, rode another 60km into Hobart (not including an extra 15km he inadvertently added by taking a wrong turn) and then climbed 1200 vertical metres to the top of Mt Wellington before dashing back to Salamanca Place to finish in second place. He then got the ferry straight back to Melbourne, drove to Sydney and was at work the next morning.

"Damon loves nothing more than pushing himself to the brink of destruction and beyond," observes Rob Preston, a fellow member of Blackheart who has witnessed his teammates iron will and incredible stamina at close quarters.



"I've known Damon since 2005," says Rob, who has also competed alongside him in several major rogaining events (the pair came second in the 2006 World Rogaining Championships and won the 2010 Australian 24-hour Rogaining Championships).

"I like racing with him because he is always consistent and reliable, and he never gives up. I've gone into few races in good form and thought I might be fitter than Damon, but he's consistently the strongest any time we get on our feet. You can load him up with all of the team's compulsory gear and he'll still keep toting all day and night. He is very strong – mentally and physically – and doesn't seem to be slowed down by carrying a pack, which can affect a lot of lighter runners."

\*

**Years ago Damon, an engineer by trade,** swapped the security of a fulltime job for the flexibility of contracting. It means occasional frenetic periods of work, but it also gives him the opportunity to spend a few months of every year overseas, running, competing and exploring.

Since he first bloodied himself in a multi-day ultra by completing the Marathon des Sables, Damon has racked up an incredible trail running resume, which includes holding the fasting time for a non-Papuan to run the length of the Kokoda Track (19.5 hours in 2006). His involvement in the sport came about more through chance than design, however.

"My dad was a runner, so I guess I grew up with trainers in the hallway, but really, I was always much more of a bushwalker," he says "I was one of the lads, going to the pub and so on, and then I met Fleur and I got in with a bad crowd."

In Australia, the Bogong to Hotham is the event closest to his heart. It was the first ultra he ever ran, and he went on to win the race in 2009. "The atmosphere at the finish is absolutely fantastic," he says. "Although the timing – just after Christmas – sucks. You're never in good shape."

"I don't take a scientific approach to training, otherwise I'd never do it," he says. "And because of the nature of my work and the fact that I've got commitments with my adventure racing team, I often decide to enter races really late in the day. I only put my name down for the Gobi two weeks before it started – same with the Namib."

His reason for running, and the over-riding factor in determining which races he will take part in, remains beautifully simple and pure: "It's all about the quality of the trail and how interesting the location and the terrain is," he says.

"There are races I'll do again for sure, but there are others I can't be bothered with. A lot of races tap on extra kilometres just so they can say it's a 100km event – I'm not into that. I don't care how long the race is, so long as it's good.

"Last year I went over to France to race the Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc. It got cancelled last minute, so I went walking through the

Alps instead. I would like to do the UTMB, but I keep on hearing about all these other races around the world and I want to go and do them as well. There are definitely two I'd like a crack at: Le Grand Raid on Reunion Island and another one in Costa Rica. Mainly it's just that I like to go to those places though."

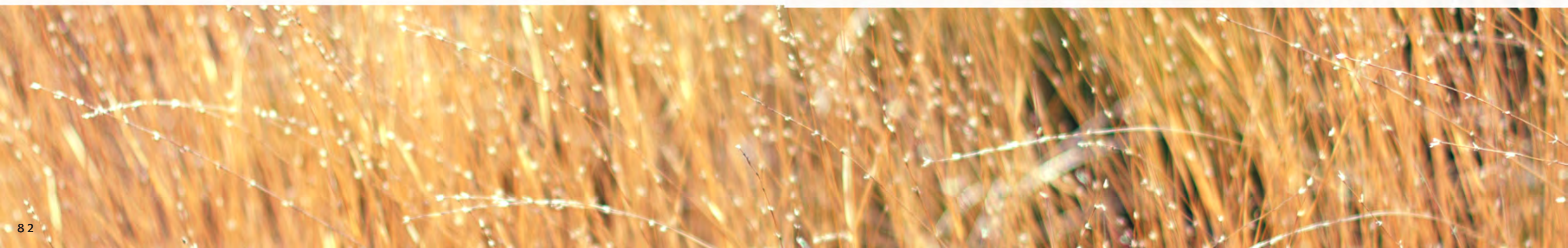
The way he trains and the race he chooses to do reflect the fact that, Damon is in this sport because he simply enjoys it, not for any sort of kudos or to prove anything to anyone.

"Damon's definitely got what it takes to be a genuinely great runner," says Toby Cogley. "But he's not in it for the glory. He just likes it, and he'll pretty much run with anyone, no matter how good or bad they are."

The truth in Toby's words is evident as we near the end of our Yarra Trails loop. Increasingly I ask short questions that require long answers, in a desperate attempt to keep breathing.

To be fair though, Damon has charitably run at my pace for the entire time. If he's been frustrated by my glacial gait, he's been decent enough not to let on. Or perhaps he's just picking his moment to push me into the river so he won't have to endure the agony of reading about himself.

As we approach the turn-off to his house in Kew, we pass a fork in the trail. "We can carry on for another few hours if you like," grins the quiet man. Ah...nah, you're OK mate. I'll call it a day while all my vital organs are still talking to me I think – my kidneys are concerned about the crowd I've been running with lately \*





# FACE THE MOUNTAIN ...AND RUN IT

Nick White has run a few mountains in his time,  
but the biggest he ever faced  
was one that threatened to send him  
to the Great Trail in the Sky.  
Looking for inspiration to remain alive,  
Nick found it in a mountain goat.



“I get a massive amount of enjoyment and satisfaction each Goat event and it’s a big motivator for me every year... What I need to believe, and do believe, is that I’m going to run it again.”

Right > Nick White running ‘The Goat’ in 2005



As a young kid growing up in Wainuiorua, a small community in rural Wairarapa in New Zealand, I had several friends who came from farming families. Our playgrounds were vast, hilly farms with clumps of pine trees and macrocarpa trees, punctuated by hidden, trickling rivers and stagnant, stinking ponds and surrounded by giant harakeke flax bushes. We’d go on day-long adventures running around the hills, searching for possums and tearing after them with sticks.

My friend Wade would lead the chase for these real and imaginary possums, as we’d scoot through the dimly lit clumps of trees, over and under damp fallen trunks and branches, across the soft pine-needle laden ground with its hidden, sudden pockets, and then we’d burst out into the bright open light – half-stumbling, half-flying down steep sheep-tracks off the ridges.

My home these days is in the city of Wellington. One day in 2005 I heard that the World Mountain Running Championships would be held on our local peak, Mt Victoria, finishing just a few hundred metres from where I lived. As I watched the runners scamper down a steep grassy hill section, the memories surged back – the sense of freedom and adventure I had while playing in the hills. From that day I knew I’d found the ideal sport for me.

The event that captured my imagination was The Goat, a 21km adventure run from Whakapapa to Turoa Ski Fields, traversing the western slopes of Mount Ruapehu and taking in more than 1000 metres of vertical ascent. I had read the stories on the event’s website and knew the Goat was for me. I loved the tales about hundreds of people skirting around Mt. Ruapehu, clambering up rocky trails and scooting down the tussocks, splashing across chilly rivers and through the mud, with a spectacular views up and off the mountain. It was my kind of adventure.

I liked the idea so much, the first time I ran the race I took a camera with me. The best views were found by turning back to face down the slope, across the valley to see the lines of people scaling their way up the trail, like ants threading through a rock garden. A couple of times I sneaked portraits of the guys sweating it out right behind me, grumbling and gasping up between the boulders. I got a few dark looks for that.

From then I was hooked on mountain running. Every event offered a sense of adventure, of difficulty and ultimately a sense of reward. I’d sign up for events in different parts of the country, as a way of seeing and experiencing spectacular scenery.

But in June 2009 I faced my biggest mountain: I was diagnosed with cancer. The cancer had spread in the lymph system in my

neck, my jaw and my tongue. No one knew why I had cancer – I was fit, healthy and had never smoked – but I did.

To maximise my chances of survival, the doctors proposed a radical surgery. They would remove the cancer from my neck and lymph, cut out half my tongue, and replace it with a muscle from my left forearm. It would be a complex eight-hour surgery with all the significant risks and uncertainty about the nature of recovery. I was told it would be followed by 4–5 days in intensive care and several weeks in hospital recovering. I’d need to breathe through a pipe into my neck, and be fed by nasal gastric tubes. After that I’d spend the remainder of the year on a radiation and chemotherapy treatment.

That treatment plan was proposed on a Thursday afternoon and I was offered the chance to go straight into surgery the following Monday. I was lucky – it meant there wouldn’t be much time to stress or worry – so I said yes straight away. Then I had three busy days of pre-surgery tests and preparation, as well as gathering my family, friends and workmates to tell them about my upcoming surgery and treatment.

Those three days were hectic and mentally draining. By Sunday I was more spent than after finishing any trail run I had ever attempted. There was a lot of uncertainty about the surgery itself and I had an unspoken fear of not waking up.

I wanted to go into the surgery believing that I would live and be well again. I wanted to be strong and running happily in the hills. So the day before my surgery, I emailed Jason Cameron, the race director for the Goat, and asked if he would accept me as an early-bird entry into the Goat race in December that year. Entries weren’t open yet, but I wanted to be entered and committed to running the race. In my email to Jason I explained the situation, and wrote:

“...I get a massive amount of enjoyment and satisfaction each Goat event and it’s a big motivator for me every year. It’s got everything I love – adventure, nature, and a great mix of positive people. What I need to believe, and do believe, is that I’m going to run it again.

So the favour I’m asking is, if you can, please confirm me as an early entry this year... I know this must sound a really strange request – but it’ll mean a great deal to me personally if I go into Monday knowing I’m entered to run the Goat in December this year.”

On Sunday afternoon I checked into my hospital room, to prepare for going into surgery the next morning. I spent a lot of time talking in the ward to my partner Larissa, my family and friends. My mobile phone had been running hot.

## GOAT WHAT IT TAKES?

### Check out the terrain

“Macmillan Cancer Support has lobbied for exercise to be considered a formal part of cancer treatment. The organisation concluded that breast and prostate cancer patients who exercised at least 150 minutes a week were 30 to 40 per cent less likely to die of their disease compared with those who were active for an hour or less.

Bowel cancer patients halved their risk of dying.”



Then, out of the blue, Jason called me, to wish me well and to confirm my entry into the Goat. That was a massive boost.

“I’ll see you at the startline”, I said, and I meant it. It felt great to say that.

I didn’t tell my family about my Goat entry at that stage – they were focused on my survival, and I thought my ‘extreme dream’ would freak them out. I only told my partner Larissa, and my friends Dan and Lisa, who were tasked with arranging my entry and sorting out “any admin”.

So, after more talking in the ward on Sunday night, it was time to say goodbye, and I was taken away by the anaesthetist.

The next day, I had an eight-hour surgery, followed by a couple of days in intensive care and a few weeks in hospital. Then many months at home and occasional stays back in hospital, plus radiation treatment and chemotherapy.

I spent many days and nights in hospital that year dreaming about my return to the Goat. Most of these days I wasn’t physically capable of leaving my bed, but I didn’t give up believing I would run again. In September and October the effects of radiation treatment hit me hard; I couldn’t eat food or drink water – it all had to be done by a tube into my stomach,

and I lost a lot of weight. On those days it was tiring to walk around in the house, so I mostly stayed on the couch.

### Running, let alone running hills, was incomprehensible.

By late October I knew I was running out of time for making my Goat dream a reality. I was still feeding through a stomach tube and had very low energy. The main problem, as I saw it, was that even if I could force myself to jog or walk, most people wouldn’t let me do that.

But, in a rather radical move, I did some research to see if I could run with my stomach tube taped to my chest, tucked inside my t-shirt. I checked with one of my gastric surgeons, who first looked at me strangely, saying it was “very unusual to want to do that...” but that it would essentially be low-risk.

Running with the tube seemed to work out okay on a few 3km jogs along the city waterfront. I remember one evening I ran out in a storm, along the promenade with waves crashing over the concrete walls, onto the footpath and spraying all over me. Bring it on, I thought.

So I kept up a little jogging, and a couple of weeks later did the 17km Rimutaka Incline, as my last chance at training for the Goat.

There were issues to overcome, such as not being able to eat food or drink water on the run, but basically it was workable. So I ran it.

I was slow, but extremely happy to be running in the hills again. A few weeks after that, I made it to the start line of the Goat.

Adrenaline was racing through me and I took off at the start of the 21km course like it was a 400-metre sprint. Fortunately, good sense prevailed and I slowed to a steady pace, allowing myself a smile as I plodded across the volcanic trails, through the icy rivers, up the infamous waterfall section and ascending the legendary Mama’s Mile hill road – finishing high.

In hospital, I had vowed that if I ever got well, I wouldn’t hold back from living the experiences I loved. It’s a privilege to be able to run in the hills among nature and a thrill to share the experience with friends.

The following summer I recovered enough to compete in a full season of running and I fulfilled another dream I’d had in hospital by running the Triple Crown mountain running series, taking in spectacular scenery of the Kauri Run in the Coromandel, the Toi’s Challenge and of course, a return to The Goat.

These days I don’t enter a mountain race to beat a time, I enter for pure enjoyment. The result is that I’m faster, fitter and happier than I’ve ever been. I’ve reached my own sense of what ‘personal best’ means.

When I run in the mountains, I think about all the people who made it possible for me to be there. In the long solo patches across the ridges, I give a silent dedication to my medical dream team: my surgeon Professor Swee Tan, the doctors and nurses at Hutt Hospital, my ever-encouraging oncology team at Wellington Hospital, and my inspirational radiation oncologist Jamie, who listens intently to the stories of my adventures beyond hospital, and encourages me to tackle even more.

The best way out of a difficulty is to go through it. What helped me get through my challenge was to dream of an experience I truly loved, to understand the ingredients that underpinned its importance to me: adventure, nature and a great mix of positive people.

### EDITOR’S NOTE >

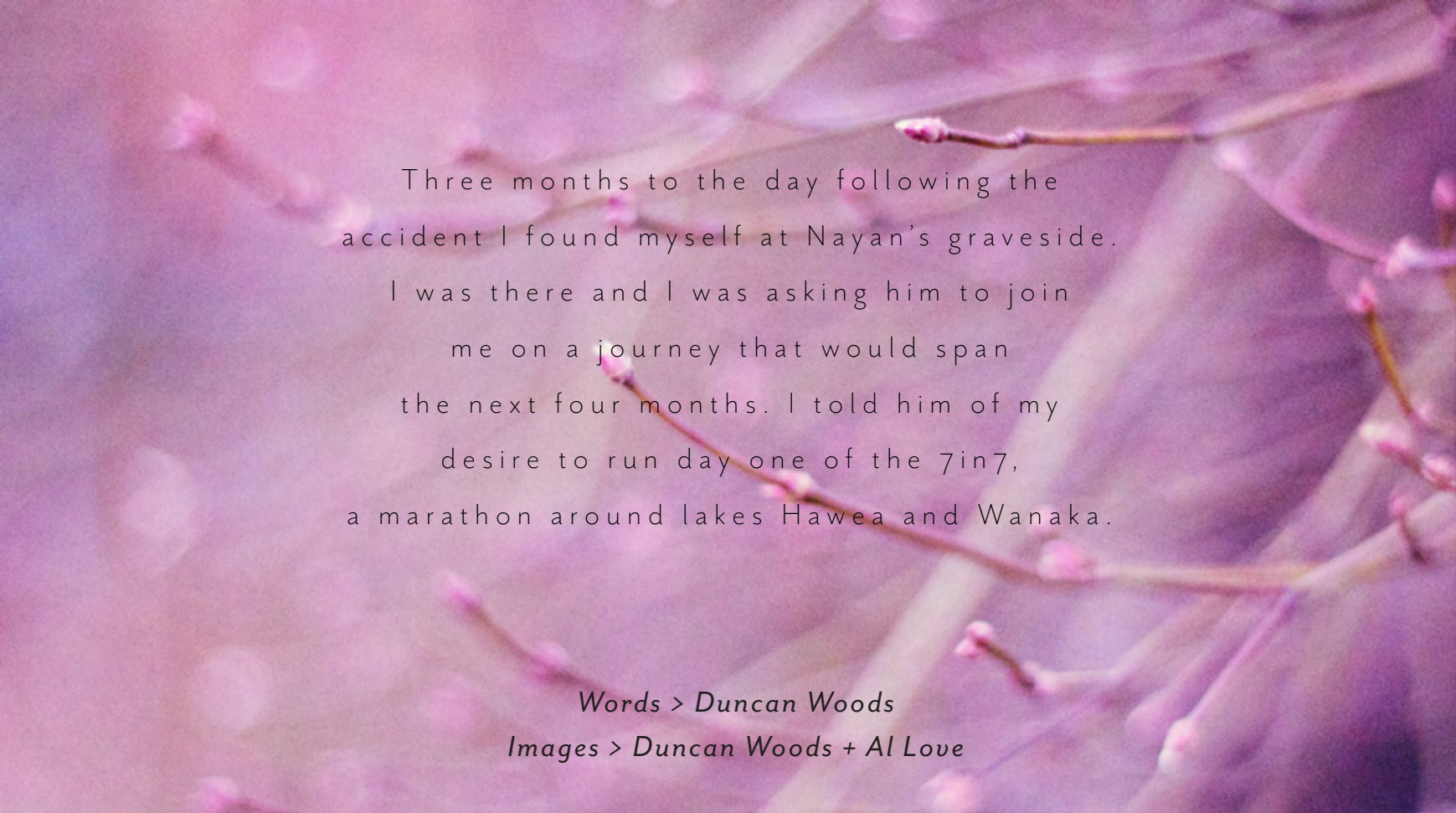
*Nick White finished the 2009 Goat 204th in 3:23:27, an incredible performance given what he’d recently been through, the difficulty of the race terrain and the fact that there were 463 runners all up – he finished in the top half of the field.*

[www.thegoat.co.nz](http://www.thegoat.co.nz)

What happens when the  
most precious thing in the  
world is ripped from your life,  
while you are running?  
You keep on running...

# NAYAN'S RUN





Three months to the day following the accident I found myself at Nayan's graveside. I was there and I was asking him to join me on a journey that would span the next four months. I told him of my desire to run day one of the 7in7, a marathon around lakes Hawea and Wanaka.

*Words > Duncan Woods*

*Images > Duncan Woods + Al Love*



**As I set out that night around the park** little did I know that within an hour everything would be different.

I was not a runner. It had been years since I had run but for some reason I pulled my shoes on and stepped out. It would be the last time I would run for three months and it would be some time before I'd recognise how symbolic that run had been.

For my life was about to irreversibly alter, events were set to conspire that would leave me broken and plunged into the depths of despair. I received a call from my wife Emma asking if I had seen the accident [while out running]. Then she told me that it was her and the boys who had been hit.

"Jacob's here at the hospital," she said, "Nayan didn't look too good."

"I'm on my way," I told her and left the house.

The accident took place just after 5pm. Emma was in front, Jacob behind her and Nayan trailing as they walked along the path. They were 200 metres from home when Ash, who at that point was unknown to us, lost control of his car on a slippery road, mounted the footpath and collided with all three of them. Emma was bruised, Jacob had his shoulder, leg, and pelvis broken, his teeth were loosened and his kidney damaged. Nayan, my beautiful son, was killed.

I remember the looks on the faces of the hospital staff as I was ushered into a family room: their eyes said it all. No one told me,

no one needed to, I knew it already. The next few hours were spent with doctors, nurses, police, social workers, friends and family. The medical staff worked to repair Jacob, eventually clearing him for surgery about 11pm. I visited Nayan twice that night. The horror of seeing his battered and broken body will haunt me always. My son had suffered a violent and horrible death at only four years of age.

Three months to the day following the accident I found myself at Nayan's graveside. I was there and I was asking him to join me on a journey that would span the next four months. I told him of my desire to run day one of the 7in7, a marathon around lakes Hawea and Wanaka.

I had taken a photo of Nayan with me, and I spoke to him of how I would carry this with me every step of the way. I folded it beside him and placed it in my pocket. I then drove out to Maclean's Island, a local recreation area and readied myself.

**Moving slowly, my journey began.** I assumed the track would be easy to follow, but in no time I was lost with a feeling I was going the wrong way. Never mind, I had my music on, I was focused and instantly knew I was doing the right thing. I thought of Nayan while I ran. I reached my hand down imagining as best I could the feel of his, picturing him there beside me as together we moved through the trees, beside the river and along the track. I thought of the mixed emotions completing my goal would bring: the joy of achieving and the sadness of unpacking Nayan's photograph to tell him we did it.

I passed one other runner, he seemed much fitter than I. We exchanged a raise of eyebrows as we crossed. Eventually, I found a sign pointing to the car park. I followed it, completing my run in just over 1 hour having run about nine kilometres.

As I closed in on the carpark, I received a text from Emma asking me to pick Jacob up from school. Neither Jacob nor anyone else passed comment about my chicken legs wrapped in compression tights muddied and hobbling. I had stiffened up significantly on the drive in. There was no mention of my smell either, all though I'm sure it wasn't pretty.

We headed for home and once there I made for the shower. Before showering I did two things: picked up my guitar and played 'You're Missing', a Springsteen song we had played at Nayan's funeral. With that, the tears flowed and continued for some time. I took the picture I carried with me and wrote upon the reverse side the details of the run. I showered and cried. It had begun.

I can't recall exactly when I first heard about Trail Run Magazine's NZ editor, Malcolm Law, and his 7in7 challenge. It was, however, via Facebook and in the back half of 2009. What Mal was setting out to do (see TRM Edition #1) was beyond belief to me. At the most I had run 20km, as a much younger man, and the thought of 360km over mountains in just seven days didn't seem like something that was possible for humans to do.

I followed with interest Mal's exploits and was blown away by his achievement that year. Not just the running, but the

reasons behind it and the money he raised in the process. I was in awe of this; I wished I could be that kind of person, but I didn't believe that I was.

In the weeks that followed the accident, I forced all my energies into supporting my son Jacob and his recovery. It was a crazy time. I was lost in my grief, on the brink of suicide and living in a fishbowl as the media swarmed. Our tragedy had become national news and we were being simultaneously praised and ridiculed. I felt trapped and didn't know what to do or how to escape.

**I have always been a believer that things will sort themselves out.** For the first time I was questioning this. I was unsure how I could possibly begin to climb out of the very deep hole I found myself in. Just when I felt that all hope was gone, two things happened. I recalled my run of May 21 and with it came a flood of positivity. I also noticed a Facebook post by Mal. The second edition of 7in7 was happening, he was still fundraising, the targets were greater than ever before and he was asking others to run with him. I remember the moment so clearly, it felt as if he was speaking to me directly and for the first time I glimpsed a way back to the light.

I didn't contact Mal immediately, I was scared that I wouldn't be able to run a marathon, I wasn't sure if I had the physical capacity or the emotional strength to get ready for it. I knew in my heart that Nayan would have grown to be the kind of man who would have done this and I knew that he would be proud of me. I knew I had to drag myself back into life and live in a way that would honour the spirit of my son.





So it began. It was hard at first – I was 36 years old and not a runner. Each step and each run brought a new challenge and delivered a new lesson. But slowly I began to emerge and slowly I began to feel again. Running connected me with Nayan and with my grief. It gave me solitude and time to think through the journey I was being forced to take. I was getting fitter and I felt good about that. It made me believe in myself and in the strength I had within. I felt that if I could do this in the midst of all this turmoil, then I could accomplish anything. I felt pride and that allowed me to connect with life and to believe in a future that would again bring laughter and joy.

As I made progress, I flagged an interest in running on day one of 7in7. Mal was in touch soon after trying to gauge how serious I was. I wrote to him telling him of my reasons for participating, but that I was still unsure of how I was going to hold together over the next couple of months. If I can I'll do it, I told him, and I'll confirm with you as soon as possible.

Mal patiently accepted my uncertainty and left me to carry on as I needed. Perhaps another month passed and I continued to get fitter and stronger. Eventually I dragged myself out for a 22km run. I finished that day, tired but with a little left in my legs and for the first time a real belief that I could do this. I contacted Mal that night, confirmed my entry and sat back, excited and nervous and completely focused on the challenge that lay ahead.

As a runner in the 7in7 I was committing to fundraise for the Leukemia and Blood foundation. I had my own fundraising

page and I actively began the process. The response was overwhelming. People from everywhere were messaging me with words of support and money was being donated to the LBF. It was an amazing night. I sat for hours responding to all who contacted me. I felt good; I was happy I was making a difference and I was going to do this.

The day finally dawned and Emma and I drove to the start at Lake Hawea. My parents and a friend came along for moral support. It was intimidating to stand on the start line with a bunch of people who seemed supremely confident in their abilities. My fears of coming last were peaking.

**The marathon started right** on 8am and the pace seemed fast. I attempted to run at my own pace and soon found I was trundling along with a group at the back of the pack. My emotions were steady. I was feeling good and confident that I was maintaining a sustainable soeed. After a few kilometers I found myself running with Mal. It was heartening to chat with him and inspiring to think of what he was about to do over the next week. The scenery was beautiful; there were smiles and laughter; it was good.

Running into the first checkpoint was incredibly uplifting. People were cheering and applauding, my friends and family were there, Jacob even ran a little with me. I refilled quickly and set out for the second leg. I continued to run with a group, including Mal, and initially felt good.

However, at about the 15–16km point I started to struggle. My ankle and knee were all of a sudden very painful, I stiffened up and my pace slowed. The group I was with ran away from me, and I found myself alone. I was lucky enough to be caught by a runner from Auckland, Andy. He seemed like a great guy and running alongside him I found the energy to push in to halfway.

By this stage I was really noticing the heat, which I later found reached as high as 32 degrees, much hotter than anything I had ever run in before. On reflection this temperature and the fast pace were a bad combination which I would pay for late in the day. Again, the reception at the following checkpoint was amazing, providing a boost and leaving me feeling energised as the third leg began.

I was now running by myself and did so for the entire second half of the marathon. There were passing exchanges with others but no significant time running with them.

I enjoyed this section more than the previous one. I had taken some Nurofen, which eased the pain, and ran at a more sensible pace. I was still emotionally strong and determined. Knowing that I would run through Wanaka during this leg was exciting. Seeing people and closing in on the final stretch motivated me to keep going.

The last checkpoint arrived and I refilled my drink bottles. I knew this would be a hard final push and that there would be some hills. But I completely underestimated just how hard this would be.

I was only perhaps one kilometre in when my body and mind began to shut down. I was experiencing intense cramping in my right leg and the reasons for running were welling within me.

I tapped the photo of Nayan constantly and tried to draw strength from him. I became heightened to the fact that all my training over the past four months had been in his memory and that here I was on the brink of completion having doubts and that this journey with him was coming to a close. Tears welled up and overwhelmed me. I forced myself to regain composure and push on. This cycle continued again and again over the two and a quarter hours it took me to complete the final section.

Eventually in the distance I recognised the finishing line. It seemed an eternity away and at this point I came close to giving up. I could rationalise that it was maybe only four kilometres away, but in my head it felt like 400. I was physically and emotionally at my limits. I had been running in 30-degree heat for over five hours; I was coming to the end of my most personal and emotional journey. It was brutal.

Somehow, I persevered. I had to: there were not a lot of options other than to keep going. I would run until the cramp became too painful to continue. I would stop and stretch and run again. Each minute felt like an hour and each step sent waves of discomfort through me.

The distance slowly began to decrease and eventually I found a sign that read 1.2km to the Glendu Bay Campground.

*Holding a picture of son Nayan in hand, Duncan Woods takes his final strides with surviving son Jacob and TRMs, Mal Law alongside.*



The finish. It was the first time in the past two hours that some belief returned. I forced myself on and in the minutes that followed made my way to the campground. The finishline was at the far end and just before coming into sight I was forced for one last time to deal with the cramp.

I rounded the corner 200 metres away. I was within 20 metres of it when I was told I had to run another 500 metres around a set of cones before finishing. It was a real blow, but with the elation of being so close I just kept going. I turned and ran for home, took out my picture of Nayan and held him close as I ran the last few metres. Jacob again came to my side and ran the last few steps. Mal was there and met me as I finished, he wrapped me in an embrace.

It was done, I had done it.

My family and friends gathered round, the emotions raw. There was relief, satisfaction, pride and sadness. Relief that after six hours and four months of training it was over. Satisfaction to have achieved something that I thought beyond my capacity. Pride that I had found the strength and persistence to achieve and that I had fundraised for a great cause. And so very sad that my whole reason for doing this was taken from me. That my son's wonderful spirit was lost from the world and that my final journey with him had come to a close.

In the days and weeks that followed I began to realise what running had come to mean to me. It levelled my emotions, gave me time to think and something to focus on. Running had

become part of who I was. I was a runner. But more than that I was a runner with a cause. What I had come to learn was that remarkable achievements could make an incredible difference and I wanted more of this.

To continue running and to run further I needed to get things right. So I started to read and learn and refine my running style. I made the switch to Vibram Five Fingers and focused on running more efficiently. Almost instantly I was running pain free and faster. I made some mistakes in my transition and have had to slow things down a little but in general I found new capacity in my body to achieve.

So I started to think and work towards new challenges. I have some things in mind and I am looking forward to the journey towards them. I have come to a perspective that through such a simple act as running there lies a potential to give so much. I want to inspire others to believe that ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things and in the process make the world a little better.

My son was an extraordinary boy and the world lost so much when it lost him. However, if we can all live just a little like Nayan did then his spirit will live on and the world will be richer for the time he spent in it. I continue to sit in awe of the impact one four-year-old boy has had and I am so proud to be his father.

I miss holding him in my arms and looking in his eyes, I long to see his smile and hear his voice. I miss him so much.

I run for Nayan \*

I continue to sit in awe of the impact  
one four-year-old boy has had  
and I am so proud to be his father...  
I run for Nayan.

Smitten after being bitten by the TNF 100 in 2009, Australian runner Gretel Fortmann set off on a singletrack mission that ultimately left her standing nervously on the starting line of the Le Tour of trail running, the infamous UTMB – The North Face Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc – a rugged rite of passage for all ultra runners (at least those who have the firepower to qualify.)

# GREAT WHITE





*Words > Margaretha Fortmann  
 Images > Margaretha Fortmann + UTMB.*

Two years ago, with a modest half marathon under my belt, I found myself looking for a bigger challenge. The North Face 100 in Australia's Blue Mountains took my interest. Unable to find willing teammates for the relay, I began contemplating the previously unthinkable: "Stuff it. I can do it by myself."

And I did.

After 16 hours I was exhausted, but knew that I would be coming back for more. I was hooked on the journey, the camaraderie, and the satisfaction of achieving a goal I once considered impossible.

My friend James, an avid mountaineer and trail runner, leant over to me during the awards ceremony following the race. (Fortunately he had showered.)

"Have you heard about the Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc?" he asked, butchering the French name. I didn't know what he was talking about. And so James began the sell: "It circumnavigates Mont Blanc. It is extremely tough, requiring all the skills of a mountaineer and strategies of an explorer. Grown men are reduced to crying babies by the sheer length and steepness of the mountain trails, and you have to make a decision whether to sleep on the trail or not."

Intrigued, I began to dig. The UTMB is one of the few races that attracts all the world's best trail runners at the same time, I learnt. The 2010 roll call was a veritable who's who: Salomon's Kilian Jornet, Hoka OneOne runner Pascal Giguet, Lizzy Hawker, Brooks' Scott Jurek, Karl Meltzer, Montrail's Geoff Roes and Mike Wolfe were all there. For those new to the sport, these are the current pantheon of Trail Gods.

Runners battle to gain enough qualifying points in other races across the globe just to earn the right to stand on the starting line. This is considered such an honour that these other ultra races tussle for – and then boast about the fact that they have – the right to offer UTMB-qualifying 'points' up for grabs.

The UTMB is, simply, sacred ground for trail runners.

Fast forward to today. I am looking at my toenails in a small village 9km north of Chamonix, France. They are a sickening shade of grey; the only indication that I've just run 170km through three countries (the route goes like this: France–Italy–Switzerland–France), climbed 9700 metres and toured the Mont Blanc Massif.

Over the past two years I have immersed myself in trail running to collect the required five qualification points needed to enter the UTMB. I raced in New Zealand on the majestic Kepler Track and survived the 125km Canadian Death Race. In January I got the email that led to me focusing all my energy towards a single goal for the rest of the year: "Nous avons le plaisir de confirmer votre inscription à la course utmb."

I was going to France to run over 100 miles with the best ultra runners in the world.



*Above > Margaretha refuels at a checkpoint along the gruelling UTMB course.*





## The Build Up

Walking through Chamonix in the days leading into the event, you could be forgiven for thinking the Tour de France was passing through, sans bikes. The village is charged with athletic energy. Compression socks adorn taut calves, all manner of technical clothing is on display and the restaurants are packed with little people eating big meals.

I arrived in the valley 10 days before the race to give my body a chance to adapt to the elevation (Chamonix is perched in the hills at just over 1000 metres). During this time I went on a few runs on the trails on either side of the valley. Everything I knew about mountains was based on a different scale. A gradual climb up to a mountain pass (or *col* as the French call it) in the Alps is a steep ascent by any other standard. This didn't inspire confidence.

Race statistics didn't help. Only 8 per cent of the 2313 competitors taking part this year are female, and of these, less than 50 per cent will finish within the 46-hour time limit. My strongly guarded hope is to complete the race in less than 36 hours. History suggests that this time will put me among the top 20 females, some of the best trail runners in the world, a place where I don't see myself.

Numbers... Pah! I think, as I slap my laptop closed. Forget the negativity, my race strategy is to listen to my body, ignore the times and just enjoy the race. I'm confident that the beautiful scenery and thousands of spectators will propel me along the path and across the finishing line.

## The Day

On race day, thunderstorms roll in and Mont Blanc's summit becomes obscured by heavy, angry clouds. Storms, cold weather, snow and rain conspire against nervous runners. Rather than see a repeat of last year – after torrential downpours, and faced with the high risk of mudslides and rockfall, organisers cancelled the race three hours in, only for runners to reconvene and run two other 'alternative' races – the race directors decide to delay the start by five hours, meaning we set off from Chamonix at 11.30pm.

The conditions (and the history) emphasise the importance of the mandatory gear runners must carry, which includes warm clothing, waterproof jacket, pants and gloves, and a safety blanket.

After the race, Killian Jornet, the overall winner, made a philosophical observation to the running website – “We adapt to the mountains,” said the Catalan. “The mountains do not adapt to us.”

This truism would determine many a runner's fate: could they adapt to survive the rain, the muddy, slippery descents, icy winds, wet snow and tiny balls of hail that the force of the mountains would throw at them?

Arriving in Chamonix 30 minutes before the start, a solemn mood descends over me. The wet streets glisten under streetlamps; in the distance drums can be heard, runners walk together, a quiet mass of taut muscle all converging on the start. The starting line itself is pulsing with energy and heaving with runners and spectators. I duck and weave myself into a spot not too far from the front...and wait.

Vangelis' inspiring theme song from Conquest of Paradise alternates with commentary and just before we start running everyone lets out a huge cheer, raising hands and hiking poles into the air – an act that is perhaps born out of respect for Mont Blanc, or maybe it is defiance.

Then we are running. Our pace is barely more than a walk to begin. Spectators jostle to give us high-fives, a gesture of solidarity and awe. “Bravo, Bon Courage, Bon route!”

Once out of the town we are onto the trails and it finally dawns that I have a night, a day and another night ahead – all filled with running, hiking and potentially crawling – before I will see the finish line.

The first 31km winds south from Chamonix, a rolling mixture of trail, wide gravel paths and paved roads passing through tiny French towns, where people party despite the rain. I am constantly checking my pace, feeling that I am running so slowly; any slower I will be walking. Nevertheless, I feel good. I ask a runner beside me about our pace. He looks experienced judging from his craggy, weathered face and the glint of determination in his eyes.

“We are going too fast but the approaching two mountains that we have to climb will soon settle us down.”

From the town of Les Contamines, we are in mountainous wilderness, slowly climbing up, and on up in the dark. Over the next 14km we ascend more than 1200 metres to the



Refuge Croix du Bonhomme, a small mountain hut surrounded by rugged peaks and volcanic-looking rock formations.

The single file of headlamps that had guided me through much of the night slowly disappears as dawn emerges. I have never seen anything more spectacular and, for an instant, I forget the distance I still have to run. The feeling of being alive with a strong body and with a group of people running through breathtaking terrain is almost overwhelming.

We descend almost 1000 vertical metres, to where the scenery turns to lush alpine meadows. The track underfoot highlights what I can expect for the duration of the tour: steep, narrow, rocky trails that propel you straight down the side of the mountain, more reminiscent of a river channel than a path. Toes jam to the front of shoes, knees protest and quadriceps work their hardest to stop me from falling. This is what will start culling the field and reducing the numbers.

We climb once more to the Col de la Seigne (2516 metres) before passing into Italy. It is here that the mist sets in, and then it starts snowing. The checkpoint looks like a lone Arctic station and I am amazed at the efforts of the volunteers waiting for runners to appear through the surrounding white haze.

Amazingly, however, as soon as we leave this isolated mountain pass and begin our gradual descent to Courmayeur, the weather completely changes and we enter a land of sunshine, blossoming flowers and happy Italians. “Ciao!” Tanned spectators of all ages welcome us into the aid stations.

It is here that the race organisers send out messages to runners' phones advising that the course has been changed due to damaged trails. We skip the ascent up Bovine and instead run



through Martigny, a reroute that adds 3km onto the total distance of the race, including 200 metres of extra ascent. Under normal circumstances three extra kilometres could be considered a “cool-down” but after so many kilometres – more than 100 – it just means more time on battered, swollen feet.

The trail through Italy boasts views towards the back side of Monte Bianco (as the Italians call the great white peak) while the rest of the mountain range takes on a more jagged and wild personality compared to the French side.

Since the 45km mark I have not seen a single female and it is during the passage through Italy that I notice how male-dominated and serious UTMB competitors are. In Australian and North American races, the trails would be filled with easy chatter between runners – here the competitors (mostly European) are completely focused.

The biggest climb of the race occurs late in the day in Italy, up to the Grand Col Ferret at 2537 metres, where the trail weaves a serpentine-like path up the grassy side of the mountain. I have to concentrate on just placing one foot after another, taking sips of water and eating to compensate for the huge amount of energy I’m expending. Icy winds at the top of the climb defy the Italian sunshine but I don’t want to stop and take my gloves out of my pack.

Soon Swiss soil is under my feet, but by the time I reach the aid station at Champex-Lac it is dark and I’m ready to finish. The night is cold; my muscles stiffen with any prolonged stop. The field of runners is thinning dramatically, due to the tight cut-off times and the brutality of the trails. I become more and more appreciative of the immense encouragement of the volunteers manning the stations. Hot soup, bread, cheeses, salty salami and cured meats are always on offer upon arrival, and taste amazing. I always attract attention, firstly because I’m Australian and secondly because I am now the 9th placed female overall.

“Wow, Australien! Allez le fille!” spectators shout at me, clapping their hands. It seems that the Europeans feel an enormous sense of pride that an Aussie has travelled from the other side of the planet to take part in their race and to experience their country.

During any ultra trail-racing experience, there’s a point where the true physical and mental battle starts. For UTMB, this point arrives at Champex in Switzerland. I have three major climbs ahead – a total of 2600 metres elevation – before I reach Chamonix valley.

This section is a blur of endless straight up climbing. I’m constantly raising my headtorch to see the next trail marker way above me, and it feels as though there’s no power whatsoever in my legs to push me up the hills. Every now and then a lone male runner passes me, barely saying anything so fierce is his concentration. My breathing is laboured and at intervals I have to stop to lean on my hiking poles and catch my breath, feeling totally defeated.

I look up to see lights high above me but don’t know if they are stars or runners. Rounding Catogne Mountain I encounter another aid station with roaring fire and nearly burst into tears so overwhelming is the relief that I had survived the last major climb of the race.



## The finish

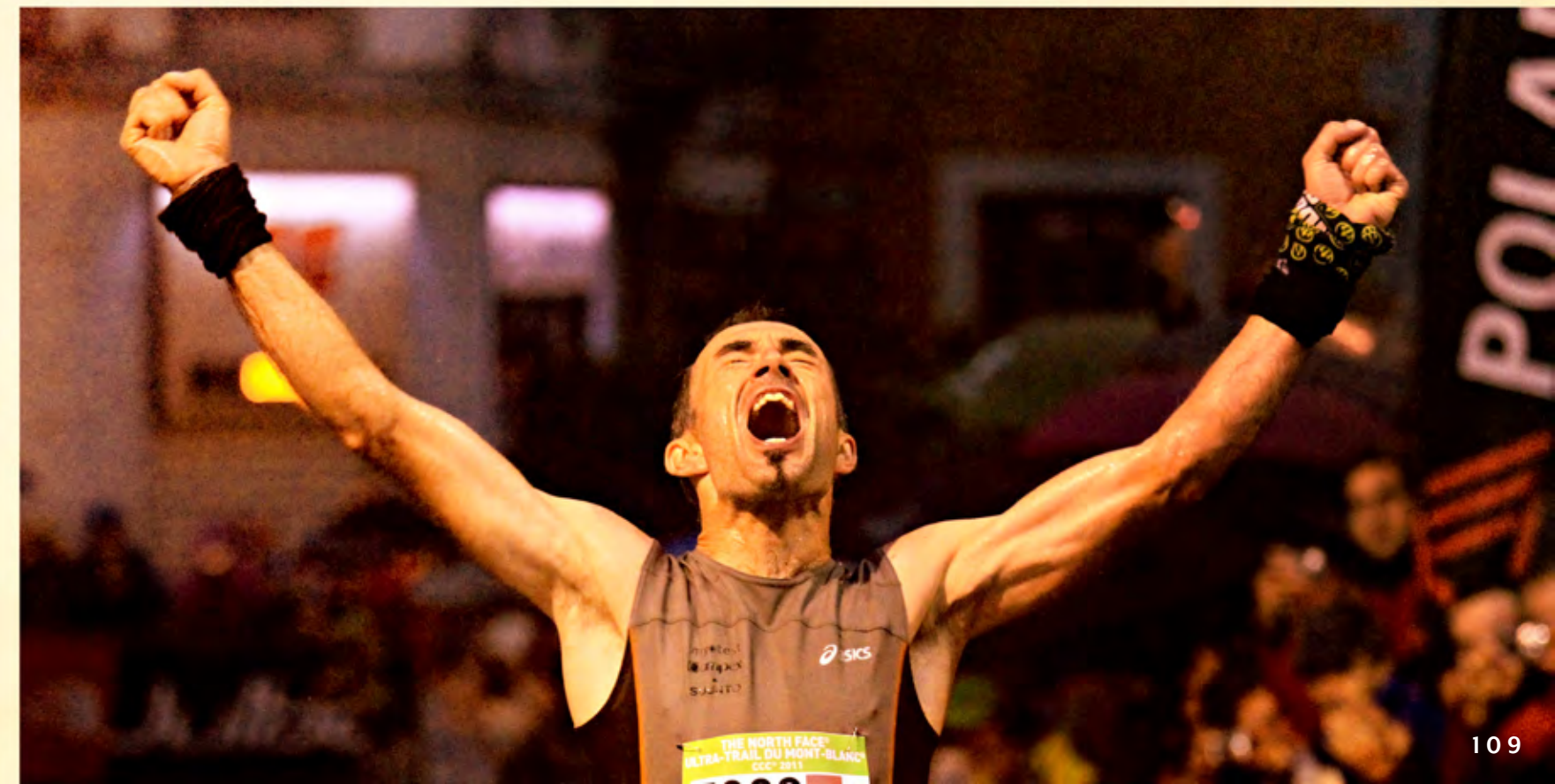
The last 14km from Vallorcine to Chamonix runs along the valley, just above the white waters of the river Arve. The end is in sight, and I move as quickly as possible on the trail to get there. Finally paved road is underfoot, the crowds start to condense and people stop to clap me along. Every muscle in my body begs to walk, but pride mandates that I have to run the final 1.5km through town, feeling stronger and stronger until the finish line is before me.

“Margaretha! Welcome! Australia!”

Catherine Poletti, the race director, stands with arms wide open and gives me a warm embrace. I cross the line as the 10th placed female and well under my dream time of 36 hours. I am also the first Australian female to enter the top 10 since the race started in 1993. More importantly though, I cross the line a stronger person, a woman that had been tested by the brutal wilderness of the Alps, and I survived my encounter with the great white mountain with a huge smile on my face \*

[www.ultratrailmb.com](http://www.ultratrailmb.com)

[margarethafortmann.blogspot.com](http://margarethafortmann.blogspot.com)



## QUALIFYING FOR THE UTMB IN AUSTRALIA + NEW ZEALAND

To enrol for the UTMB 2012, you need to have acquired a minimum of 5 points by having completed (in 2010 or in 2011) races included in this list. The 5 points have to be acquired with 2 races maximum. (details correct at time of publication as per [www.ultratrailmb.com/page/87/courses\\_qualificatives\\_liste.html](http://www.ultratrailmb.com/page/87/courses_qualificatives_liste.html) —check for updates )

### AUSTRALIA >

- Bogong to Hotham** > 64km / 2 points
- Oxfam Trailwalker Melbourne** > 100km / 2 points
- Cradle Mountain Run** > 82km / 2 points
- Wildendurance** > 100km / 3 points
- The North Face 100** > 100km / 3 points
- Glasshouse Trail Run** > 100km / 161km, 3 points
- Great Ocean Walk** > 100km / 3 points
- The Great North Walk** > 100km / 161km, 3 points / 4 points
- Oxfam Trailwalker Brisbane** > 100km / 2 points
- Kokoda Challenge** > 96km / 3 points
- Oxfam Trailwalker Sydney** > 100km / 2 points

### NEW ZEALAND >

- Kepler Challenge** > 60km / 1 point
- Tarawera Ultramarathon** > 100km / 85km, 2 points
- Northburn 100 mile** > 160km, 4 points

Right > Winner, the dominator, Kilian Jornet.  
Far Right > Trail running not a popular sport? Judging by this media pack it is...



### UTMB IN NUMBERS >

- Total distance** > 166km
- Total elevation gain** > 9,400 metres
- Number of check points** > 50
- Time typically taken by walkers hiking the trail** > 7-9 days
- Record for running the UTMB** > 20 hours 5 minutes (Dachhiri Dawa Sherpa, 2003)
- Winning time for UTMB 2011** > 20 hours 36 minutes (Kilian Jornet)
- Maximum number of competitors** > 2000
- Time UTMB took to sell out in 2005** > 7 months
- Time UTMB took to sell out in 2008** > 7 minutes




# Knocking the bastard off

Ever since the Hillary Trail opened in January 2010, there has been a groundswell of runners looking to conquer the wild track. Mal Law takes a look at the particular allure of trotting through Auckland's Waitakere Ranges in the name of a legend.

Words > Mal Law  
Images > Alistair McDowell,  
Shaun Collins + Mal Law



A hiker with a backpack stands on a rocky trail overlooking a bay. The hiker is wearing a green shirt and dark shorts, and is looking back over their shoulder. The background shows a large body of water and distant hills under a clear sky.

**A string of headlamps light up the track**  
**The journey begun, no turning back**  
**First light pierces through bush tinged black**  
**Hillary Trail, well worth a crack**

*(Alastair McDowell, trail runner and wannabe poet)*

The name of Sir Ed Hillary resonates with people around the world. He is perhaps New Zealand's most famous son. He is certainly one of its most admired. When we think of him we think of high alpine peaks and of the Himalaya, in particular Mt. Everest. So it may seem a little strange that a collection of tracks through temperate rainforest just outside Auckland with a high point not exceeding 400 metres should bear the name of this national hero. But the Waitakere Ranges through which the Hillary Trail winds its torturous path was a place dear to the great mountaineer's heart. Here he built the family bach (holiday cottage) and while walking the area's trails he dreamed up many of his big expeditions. As his son Peter says: "That coastline personifies what he was all about – that adventurous spirit, the wildness of the landscape."

Which is why on January 11 2010, two years to the day after Sir Ed's death sent a nation into mourning, we were gifted a precious long-distance trail – the Hillary Trail.

So just how long is it? The official website claims it to be "approximately 70 kms" but intriguingly the distances recorded by runners wearing GPS watches vary from 67km right through to 78km. The general consensus seems to be that it is about 75 kms (assuming, of course, you stick to the official route).

What is beyond question though is that within a very short time of its creation the Trail had acquired a cult following amongst trail runners who see this as a personal Everest and a 'must do' running challenge.

In fact, two local runners were so keen to be first over the Trail that they ran it the week before it officially opened. Shaun Collins was the impatient mastermind behind this first attempt. He told Trail Run Mag: "As soon as I heard about the trail I knew I wanted to run it and started planning. I also wanted to be the first – I'm a competitive bastard – and so wanted to do it before the opening. I called up an old adventure racing buddy of mine, Gus Grey. There wasn't any hesitation from him so we got into it."

The Hillary Trail (HT) is a point-to-point affair and so offers the prospective runner the choice of doing it south-north (Arataki to Muriwai) or north-south (Muriwai to Arataki). Shaun and

Gus chose the former to take advantage of the nett 220 metre altitude loss that running from the hills to the coast provides. They knocked it out in 12 hours 53 minutes, although as Shaun points out: "That included a big bunch of time at support stops along the way. Our actual running time was just under 12 hours."

Does that sound slow for a 75km run? Well, to put it in perspective we need to understand the true nature of this beast. Eighty per cent of the distance is covered on single-track, the vast majority of it technical, some of it lethally so. Tree roots, mud and steep drops are the major obstacles and strong ankles are definitely called for. The remaining distance is equally split between gravel roads/4WD track and tar-sealed road, except for a beautiful but energy-sapping one kilometre stretch of soft sand along Piha Beach.

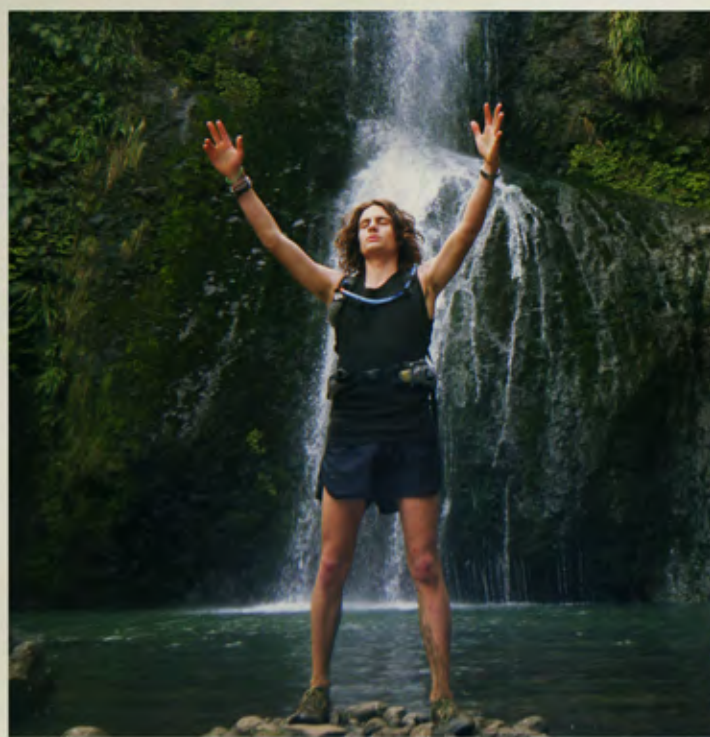
Then there is the relentless climb, descent, climb, descent that tests the runner for fully three-quarters of the distance. There is very little flat running, still less flat and even running. One glimpse at the profile is enough to confirm this. It all adds up to about 3300 metres of climb and 3500 metres of descent when run south-north (or vice-versa when run north-south).

While these statistics start to explain the lure of the trail for those whose idea of a good time is to push themselves to the edge of oblivion, they do not tell the whole story. For there is something more; something almost mythical or magical about the HT that entices the dirty-ankle running brigade to try and "knock the bastard off".

Just what it is that gives the HT its X-Factor is very hard to pin down, but in the hope of uncovering some clues I went asking questions of some who have fallen under its spell.

Certainly one recurrent theme I kept hearing is reflected in Shaun Collins' observation that "the HT takes in the most stunning trails of the Waitakere Ranges and because of this offers a range of scenery and terrain to run on".

Never was a truer word spoken, for during any epic outing on the trail – and they will always be epic – runners will encounter glorious native bush, sparkling creeks, a reservoir with an



**“It is bloody long, it’s bloody hard,  
and at the moment  
relatively few people have done it.  
It’s brutal, beautiful  
and unsullied. It’s everything  
a trail runner needs.”**

impressive man-made dam, the low tide flats of the Manukau Harbour at Huia, spectacular cliff-top views, beautiful black sand beaches, cascading waterfalls, rock pools, boardwalked wetlands, massive sand dunes, a stunning jewel of a lake, and a unique stretch of running down a wide, sand-based creek bed. If you want to take a thirty second diversion just a hundred or so metres from the end (or start) of your run you can also see a huge gannet colony. Whenever the body and mind start to suffer it seems a change of scene is on hand to rescue the spirit.

Also on hand will very often be a support crew. Many runs of this distance in New Zealand are through wilderness areas with little in the way of road access. But despite all its beauty and feeling of remoteness the trail is regularly intersected by roads, enabling supporters to be in situ with much needed food, fluids and well-placed kicks up the arse. Furthermore, no point on the trail is much more than an hour’s drive from downtown Auckland, a fact that is as convenient as it is remarkable.

This proximity to the country’s biggest city also means it is relatively easy to get a posse of runners together for a stab at the Big One. And with company comes that other special ingredient of any long run, camaraderie. Groups of as many as 24 people have been known to set off from Arataki in midwinter at midnight to run the trail.

With a collective will to make it through comes a very special bond. Michael Cartwright, an American who recently emigrated to New Zealand is one who has felt the intoxication of this special HT spirit.

“I think for me it was about making new friends. Having lived in New Zealand for less than a month I got to run the HT with some people that I’d barely met. By the end of the day we all knew one another a lot better.”

Michael also goes on to say that “Long running days are a great way to build friendships simply because you cannot spend that amount of time sharing an intense experience and not get a little closer to your new mates.”

So it probably follows that as every HT run is an epic outing then the intensity of this effect is amplified.

Keith Crook, another HT aficionado, puts it like this: “It’s about the spirit of people taking on a huge mental and physical challenge, fighting demons and mud monsters on the way. Toiling up the hills, the faster ones stopping at points for the slower ones to catch up, running in the dark next to one another without a word needing to be spoken,



**Hillary In Action**

Anyone wanting a better idea of the experience should check out >

**Nick Harris's video** >  
of running the Trail

**Running Wild's video** >  
from this year's  
Midnight Madness run along the HT

**Hillary Trail video** >  
by the Auckland Regional Council

- Hillary Trail
- Road walking
- Beach walking
- Stage 2 track
- At high tide, walk along Huia Road with care, take the Karamatara Farm driveway. Follow the markers from the barn to the Karamatara Campground
- Public transport option
- Rail
- Bus stops
- Railway station
- Hillary Trail campground
- Other campground
- Emergency telephone
- Pick up options
- Surf lifesaving club
- Store / cafe
- Café
- Toilets
- ARC Parkland
- Other public open space
- Beach and wetlands
- Private land



Dromana

January 15th 2012

www.twobaystrailrun.com

28km (One Way)

56km (Both Ways)

Mornington Peninsula Vic.

Only the Strong Survive



Event Photography by fstop5.com

Cape Schanck



MORNINGTON PENINSULA Shire

COMMITTED TO A SUSTAINABLE PENINSULA



sharing that moment in time. Friendships forged, emails swapped, new friends on Facebook, and so the trail running community grows."

Indeed, the community of interest that has grown up around the HT is such that it has its own Hillary Trail Runners Facebook Group with almost 200 members. As well as providing a forum for a lot of lively discussion about which direction is the hardest way to run the trail, what is actually the correct route to take (for there are several tempting short-cuts), and much petty banter, this group provides the would-be HT runner access to a great body of knowledge about the trail as some of its members have run it as many as five times.

Perhaps one of the most succinct and honest opinions I have heard in answer to the question "What IS it about the Hillary Trail?" comes from another stalwart of the Waitakeres running scene, Vicki Wooley.

"Simple. It is bloody long, it's bloody hard, and at the moment relatively few people have done it. It's brutal, beautiful and unsullied. It's everything a trail runner needs."

There is little doubt that for many the HT has become every bit as much a rite of passage as completing an iconic ultra race such as TNF 100 or Tarawera. So what is left to be achieved once you have knocked the you-know-what off?

Well, it would seem that once is seldom enough. Many are those that go back for more, either for the sheer joy of it or to set a new personal best time. Or, if you are truly daft in the head you could of course do the Hillary Double – out and back in both directions in a single run.

To date Shaun Collins, one of the pair that made the first full traverse of the trail, is the only person to have achieved this. His 29½ hour mission is recounted in all

its gory detail in his blog that is aptly titled Running Beast.

When asked, as only seems fair, "what the hell motivated you to do it?" he replied "Not to simplify it, but because it was there and I love a challenge."

Fair enough Shaun, so when is the treble?

Others will be motivated to set other records on the HT. As yet these are not very well formalised but it is this writer's intention to set up a Hall of Fame into which all who have completed the run will be inaugurated. This will also provide for a record book so best times for solo supported, solo unsupported, group supported and group unsupported in each direction can be formally recognised.

Then of course there is the enticing possibility of a race along the Hillary Trail. To date only whispers and rumours have been heard but should it ever come to pass then it would make, I believe, one of the great runs on the ultra trail calendar anywhere in the world.

In signing off, I find it hard to avoid the thoughts of one of my favourite writers, Simon Winchester, who in his excellent book, Atlantic, fears for the great ocean because it is "no longer so challenging a prospect [to cross it] as it once was. It stands in the public imagination rather as Mount Everest once did: now that we have conquered it, we perceive it as somehow manageable, and on the way to being even, dare one say it, trivial".

I can't dispute the truth of this statement or hide my disappointment that the great mountain first conquered by Sir Ed should have been somehow diminished in this way. But I am cheered by the belief that the trail that is one of this great man's many legacies will not meet the same fate. It will never be trivial. It will always be, as Vicki so poignantly put it, "brutal, beautiful and unsullied" \*

Tired legs, twelve hours run

Virtuous completion, journey done

Free as lambs, slaves to none

Muriwai Beach, a setting sun

- Alastair McDowell,

one of the few to have knocked out the HT in under 12 hours



# GLASSHOUSE 100 QUEENSLAND

Mike Le Roux knows a thing or two about endurance. As reigning ultraman world champion, he has spent up to 21 hours sweating it out on competitive courses. Even so, when it came to the Glasshouse 100 he worried about tired legs and nutrition. But with a tilt at Badwater on his radar, he needed this, his third 100 miler, to qualify.

For me, the Glasshouse 100 (GH100) was always going to come down to nutrition on the day and whether I would suffer from running the Angeles Crest 100 only seven weeks prior.

Although conditioned to endurance events, I'd still only ever run two 100 milers (160km): the Moab 100 in 19 hrs 36 and Angeles Crest in 27 hrs 24, both this year. I needed a third 100 miler finish to qualify for Badwater 2012. That was my main motivation for entering GH100.

It was, however, a race that I'd always wanted to finish, even prior to setting my sights on using it as a stepping stone to Badwater.

I'd entered in 2009 and was forced to pull out three weeks before because of Achilles tendinopathy. In terms of a finish time I was hoping to be beat my PB at Moab wanting to go under 19 hours, but that was as much as I'd hoped for.

I flew in from Cairns with my crew, wife Kirsten and friend Roy Willets. Roy was going to pace me from the 110km point, as had been a tradition in the race for other runners in the past few years. We'd practiced running a fair bit together in preparation and had talked about how we would attack the last 50km of the race together.

I hadn't done much homework on the competition, other than I knew I was up against three fast Daves, and none of them weighed 90kgs (as I do) in their bare feet...

Dave Waugh is four-time winner of the GH100 and he'd beaten me at The North Face 100 in 2010. Dave Coombs was the current titleholder, having tied first last year. I know how much course knowledge can help to pace in a long race, so I expected that this would be a massive competitive advantage for them both.

Add to the mix Dave Eadie, who I knew as a tough nut from my triathlon squad days in Melbourne. He has an impressive running resume, including the 2011 Australian National 100km Championships.

With that trio in the field, I wasn't backing my chances of appearing on the podium.

We got to the race start at 4:50am and I scooted to the toilet as we arrived while the rest of the crew headed to registration. When I walked into the room and saw the glum, pale faces I felt panic spread through me. No pacers allowed. Apparently this had been decided a while back but not explicitly communicated by the race organisers.

Roy was gracious about it but I started the race with an unsettled feeling that took me the first few kilometers to shake off. Was it a bad omen of things to come, an indication of my poor preparation and knowledge? It wasn't the race start I'd hoped for.

The pace was hot from the gun and with the two 100 milers under my belt in quick succession, it felt like such a gamble to hang with the fast Daves from the start. But if you're not on the bus, you're off the pace, so gamble I did.

I was in a Dave sandwich for the best part of the first 90kms. There are very few poker faces in 100 milers, even if that's how you'd like to play it: the distance keeps it real and raw.

We had a few conversations between us on the pace and we all knew we were pushing it. Dave E mentioned to me at about the 40km mark that, on current speed, we were on track for a 15h 30m finish time, a mark that let us know this was just not sustainable. I wholeheartedly agreed but I wasn't going to be the one to slow down. The others must've felt the same as we all pushed on.

Checkpoints were not leisurely; they were finely tuned, quick transitions. My crew was well prepared for this and responded immediately to my need for speed through each aid station. Dave W had a crew as did I, Dave E and C were relying on the



Words > Mike Le Roux  
Images > courtesy of  
Mike Le Roux + Tim Miller





Back at checkpoint ten, I suddenly felt like I was on the home stretch. With only 30km or so to go, I started thinking how many times I run that distance and how easy it is for me to run that far.

well stocked aid stations and their drop bags. There is a lot to be said for a top crew: the information, motivation and personal comforts can make hours of difference to me.

At checkpoint six for the second time and 88km in to the race, I started feeling nauseous. I had dropped off the pace a bit and had pushed really hard to catch up to Dave W, the effort of the chase had caused my stomach to react. Dave W seemed a little surprised to see me back again and we left checkpoint six together.

I took Travel Calm (natural) and ginger sweets and backed off the nutrition for a half hour, sipping water, it seemed to do the trick. A few kilometers down the road we started up a hill together and feeling good I stopped power hiking and started running. At the next checkpoint I had put a couple of minutes distance between Dave W and I, and stayed that way until the 110km mark, back at the race start.

It was about 4pm when I arrived at checkpoint two (the start/finish) and my crew was keen to have a key stop, get some warm food into me and get me into warm gear ready for the darkness to descend. They had set out a lovely foot spa bath for me to wash my feet, a fresh pair of shoes and had a cup of coffee and soup ready to sip. They were very unimpressed when I barely stopped to weigh in and refused to stay. I knew Dave W was close and I didn't want him to catch up to me again. When I didn't see him on the loop out, I knew I had just missed him at the checkpoint and the gap wasn't getting bigger. I resolved to push harder to the end of the daylight, as I knew the dark would make the going tougher and his course knowledge would be an advantage.

I knew from my crew at this point that Dave C and Dave E were upward of 10 minutes off Dave W's time and they were sticking together, which was smart racing.

12.5km to checkpoint nine nearly did my head in. It was by far the longest distance between checkpoints, it was flat and uninteresting, and I was filled with self-doubt. I was sick of sweet stuff and I had asked my crew to find me some different savoury options for the next stop. I had also decided along the way that when I got to checkpoint nine I was going to have a good sit down.

My wife had other plans when I arrived at checkpoint nine and when I insisted that I was probably better off just waiting for Dave to run together, she wouldn't even let me sit down. I got a ticket and was sent off up the hill for the 1.5km out and back to the top of Wildhorse Mountain. Coming back down, about two thirds of the way up I crossed Dave going up. He looked fresh, and was smiling! I was not happy, and trudged back down to the pleasant Dutch folk in the campervan checkpoint.

My crew greeted me with lots of attention and I was wiped down, dressed in warm, fresh gear, fed delicious warming soup and given a head torch. I had a smorgasbord of savoury delights and ate hungrily. It was the pep up I needed and, revitalized, I left for checkpoint ten and was greeted there to the tunes of a trumpet!

This was a turning point for me in the race. Dave W dogged me

for the first 6.5km loop, which was very slow going. It was like running on a sandy beach, and navigating by torchlight was frustrating. My pace slowed exponentially.

Back at checkpoint ten, I suddenly felt like I was on the home stretch. With only 30km or so to go, I started thinking how many times I run that distance and how easy it is for me to run that far. I felt the confidence of knowing that I could finish at this pace. I also met the other two Daves coming into checkpoint ten and the camaraderie and handshakes gave me another boost.

The 9.5km loop from there felt effortless. I was in the zone, I felt light, powerful and fast. I ran it in 51 minutes, which was about the same as what I had run the first 6.5km. Back to checkpoint nine, up Wildhorse mountain and back down. As I left checkpoint nine, I glimpsed Dave coming in. I knew then that I had a good margin.

But it wasn't over yet. It was personality split time: my body versus my brain. I had 12.5kms to go to the finish line. I was an hour ahead of the course record, I was in front by a margin. I should have been focused on getting there, but instead I was focused on blocking out the nagging doubts:

"If you bonk now and walk to the finish, Dave will pass you. This is too good to be true, your legs are going to feel the other 100 milers any moment now and seize and cramp, and you won't finish. In the dark you could get lost, trip and fall. You can't eat and drink any more, do you have enough calories in your system to get you there?"

On and on my brain nagged me...

At about the 3kms to go mark, the fatigue disappeared and I was wired, pumped. I finished strong and with a wide smile. Dave came in 20 minutes later, just under 16 hours, which meant a 40-minute PB for him. As my wife is fond of saying "A rising tide raises all boats". If it wasn't for the contest between myself and the three fast Daves, none of us would've been inclined to push ourselves to these times. I can only thank them for allowing me to bring my best to the table, it was a pleasure to race against competitors of such caliber and character.

Now if all three Daves can just get over to Badwater with me – they allow pacers...

*Mike Le Roux finished the 160km Glasshouse 100 in a time of 15 hours 38 minutes 48 seconds, beating the old course record held by previous four-time winner, Dave Waugh by just under an hour.*

[www.glasshousetrails.com.au/glasshouse100.html](http://www.glasshousetrails.com.au/glasshouse100.html)

[www.mikeleroux.com.au](http://www.mikeleroux.com.au)

The fact that New Zealand's only ice luge is based nearby gives hint that the Great Naseby Water Race - held in the chill of August – isn't going to be a run in the sun. But Maniototo plains region through which the run traverses makes up for the icy encounter by packing in enough wild beauty to make you glad to run the course a few times over.

## THE GREAT NASEBY WATER RACE

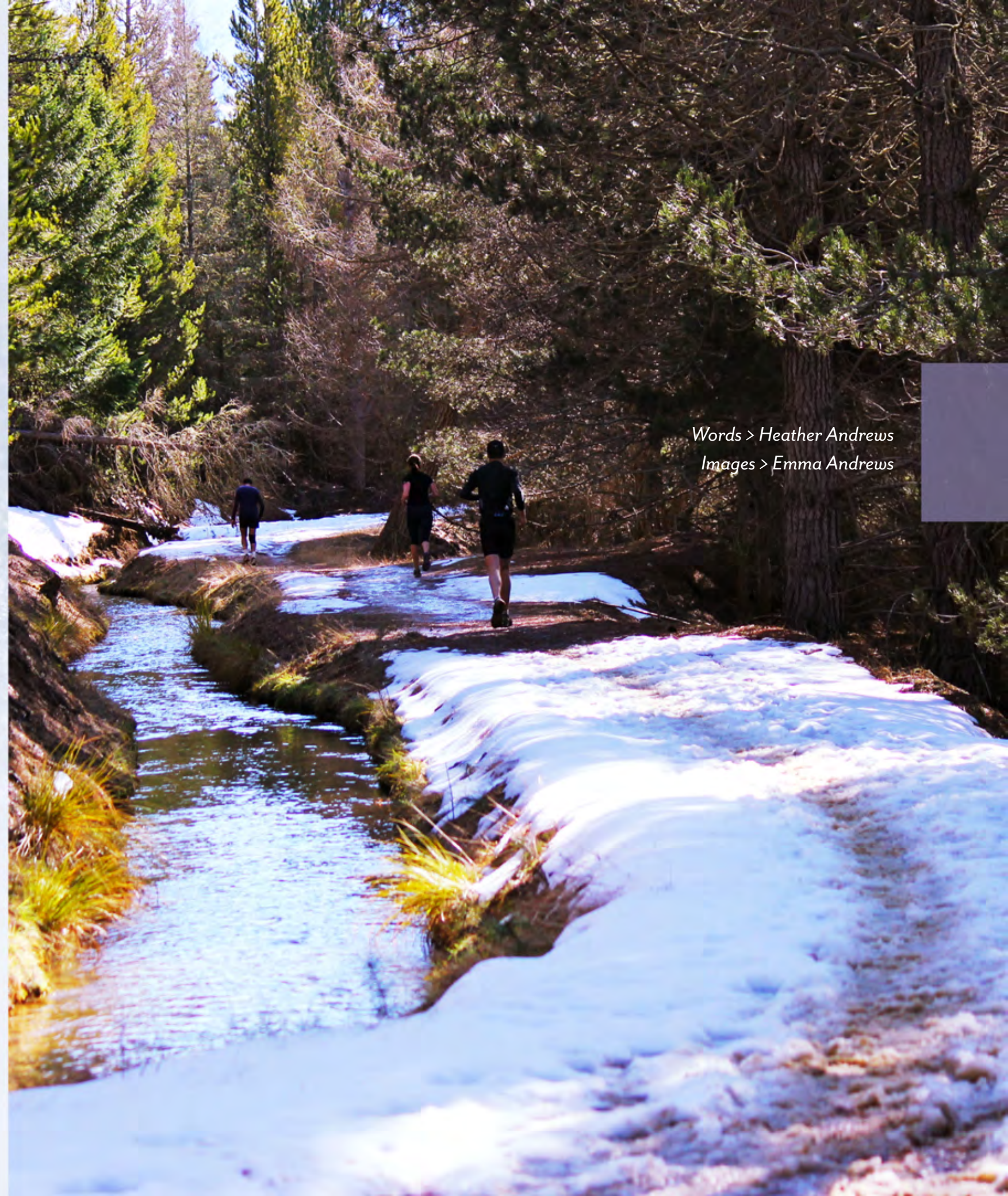
Otago running legend Jim Kerse is famed for such wonderful quotes as: "Sometimes you have to go too far to see how far you can go" and "If the bone ain't showing you just keep going".

It is the perennial presence of characters such as Jim, the charismatic enthusiasm of a husband and wife race organiser team and a unique (for New Zealand) format of multiple lap racing that makes The Great Naseby Water Race a 'must do' event for so many hardy folk. Adding to the alluring mix is a variety of trails, killer scenery and a big challenge. Plus, having the choice of running 50km, 80km or 100km as an individual, or doing a 60km relay as a two-person team, no doubt helps entice more people away from their firesides at this traditionally inhospitable time of the year.

The Great Naseby Water Race (GNWR) is a boutique event held on the last weekend of August each year. Now in its fifth year the event is going from strength to strength. From humble beginnings of 14 entrants in the inaugural 2007 race to 58 starters two years later and a record field of 84 this year, the race is starting to stretch the definition of boutique.

To those who know Dunedin-based race organisers, Jamie and Aileen Sinclair, this growth will come as no surprise. They know how to do things the "old school" way – no hype, no fuss, just get the basics right and keep people entertained. Jamie, a veteran runner who has a Western States finish to his name (but don't ask him how many minutes he missed a sub-24 hour finish by!) explains the origins of the GNWR:

Words > Heather Andrews  
Images > Emma Andrews







Finishers are rewarded with a can of Speights from Jamie and a hug from Aileen. It is hotly debated which of these is the more welcome!



"The birth of the GNWR came about with the demise of another event, That Dam Run 100k, in Kurow. The organisers were moving away and no one else picked up the mantle. Every other ultra that we entered was miles away: Kepler, Molesworth and The Western States 100 Mile Endurance Race.

"So, one night in discussion with running legend Jim Kerse we hatched a plan. We thought first of using the Central Otago Rail Trail, but then road marshalls and traffic management plans loomed so we canned that. Then my wife Aileen and I went to Naseby for a weekend, and we were happiness-filled. The water race is really pretty, the town is small and quaint and in August there aren't many people in the forest and we have the place to ourselves."

"There is always conflict with other events when you pick a race day, but if you had to choose between a little 10km road race on boring bitumen or a full blown 100km off-road in spectacular scenic Central Otago, well it's a no brainer isn't it? And so the race was born over a few beers, Speights of course."

"August is also a good time of year for our race because it gives recovery time for other events.

"C.R. Lawton said: "If you only do what you have done before you will never grow" and in that spirit we started our event for people who wanted to extend themselves. If you've done a half marathon get a teammate and do 30km each. If you've done a full marathon then do 50km – it's only a little bit further. Then next time consider the 80km (50mile). Our race is now also recognised as a qualifying event for The Western States 100 Miler."

The course is a 10km figure-eight loop, with excellent well-equipped aid stations at the start/finish line and half way. A key advantage

of the 10km loop is that it provides ready access to aid stations and personal gear, without needing to plan multiple drop bags. The first half of the course is primarily on gravel forestry roads, the second half on grassy single track beside the historic Mt Ida water race. Although the surface is for the most part easily runnable, the loop is a good undulating 10km that keeps runners honest.

After heavy snowfall two weeks prior to this year's edition, the course still had plenty of white stuff holding on doggedly against the melt. In places it was relatively soft powder and easy to run, but in other places – particularly where it was compressed on vehicle tracks – it remained icy and slippery. Starting at 6am, the first two laps were much like this, but as the day progressed and temperatures warmed the ice and snow became slushier and in places turned to mud. A small diversion was put in place because of the mud and snow, taking entrants around the right hand side of the Coalpit Dam rather than the left.

As a slower runner, one of the encouraging features of the format is that you get to see some of the elite runners out on the course – they don't just run away from you at the start of the race, never to be seen again. The figure-eight format means that you may see the top runners several times during the day, either as they lap you or as paths cross on the figure-eight junction.

New Zealand representatives who have competed at Naseby in 2010 and 2011 include Marty Lukes, Val Muskett, Matt Bixley, Grant Guise, and Vivian Cheng. Matt Bixley and Helen Chignall have competed in all five editions of the GNWR.

Finishers are rewarded with a can of Speights from Jamie and a hug from Aileen. It is hotly debated which of these is more welcome!





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CHECK OUT SOME VISION  
FROM THIS YEAR'S RACE

Taking out the Men's 100km race this year was past Kepler winner Marty Lukes in an impressive 8 hours 21 minutes. First woman across the line was Mitch Murdoch (10 hours 13 minutes) – so what if she was the only woman, she still beat all but the top three men!

The Men's 80km race went to Matthew Cavanaugh (7 hours 43 minutes). One of the other great characters of the race, Dave McLean (pictured with the crutches), of whom Jamie says: "If you tied him up to a house and walked away he'd still finish the race dragging the house behind him, he's that strong" lived up to his reputation finishing second. The women's race was taken by 24-hour specialist, Vivian Cheng, for whom a 9 hour 24 minute run constituted a little light training.

The 50km race saw the most starters and was won by Matt Bixley (4 hours 6 minutes) and Monica Aarsen (5 hours 57 minutes). Third woman across the line was the ever-amazing Margaret Hazelwood who has completed over a hundred ultra races since 1985 but who explains "I don't do 100kays any more, I just do wee 50's instead!"

The 60km Teams Race was a hotly contested affair that was finally taken out by Nathan Harris and Ev Tolerton. Three other teams finished within 14 minutes of them.

*Special thanks to Jamie and Aileen Sinclair and the Koedyk family for hosting a wonderful event, and also Matt Bixley, Andrew Shelley and Emma Andrews (photographer) for their assistance in producing this article.*

[www.greatnasebywaterrace.co.nz](http://www.greatnasebywaterrace.co.nz)



Check it out at <http://runningwildnz.com/wild-tours/tots/>

# S

## The Shoe Review



# One track mind



**THE NORTH FACE BEGAN LIFE AS A hardcore mountaineering and outdoor manufacturer/retailer, but in recent years has focused more heavily on the lifestyle and streetwear market.**

## THE NORTH FACE SINGLE TRACK

**Great for** > Most trail and pavement conditions. Competent crossover shoe, with good foot protection on rocky trails. Fast drying, and with good upper protection from trail debris.

**Not so great for** > Muddy conditions – the grip patterns on the sole are quite shallow and tend to fill up quickly, so muddy / claying conditions will not suit the shoe.

**Test conditions** > Road, mixed trail and road, fire-trail, technical trail with mud and slippery rock conditions, ~400km

**Tester** > Nick Wienholt – ultra-trail runner based in Sydney’s southern suburbs, Nick recently completed three of Australia’s toughest trail ultras (Bogong to Hotham, Cradle Mountain and The North Face 100), highlighted by a finish in the top 5 per cent of the field at The North Face 100, earning a silver buckle. He plans to dedicate the spring to short-distance events like the marathon.

**Tester mechanics** > Mid-weight (73kg) experienced trail runner with neutral pronation and forefoot strike.

**Stockists** > The North Face stores and selected outdoor retailers

**RRP AU\$199.00 / NZ\$249.95**

Even so, and despite in some quarters losing its hardcore mountaineering cred, TNF has in recent years bolstered its trail running credentials through sponsorship of both events and athletes, including the celebrity face of trail ultra-runners Dean Karnazes and New Zealander Lisa Tamati.

After some less than stellar offerings like the gadgetey North Face Boa and its dial lacing system, the Single Track is a genuine trail shoe built for purpose. In addition to offering reasonably good looks (I trialed the black and ‘North Face’ red edition of the shoe which does not look entirely tragic when combined with casual pants), these shoes are manufactured to face up to serious trail conditions. One of the most noticeable outings was North Face-sponsored athlete

Jez Bragg’s Winter West Highland Way record run, his blog ([www.jezbraggblogspot.com](http://www.jezbraggblogspot.com)) detailing some seriously tough conditions that were well handled by the shoe (“Trail conditions in the valley were awful. Ice, ice, ice, it was everywhere...”).

The Single Track offers less cushioning than the Double Track reviewed last issue, especially in the forefoot. The heel features the same ‘Dome Cradle’ as the Double Track, but is noticeably lower, and the Single Track is a neutral offering aimed at competent runners with good mechanics. Despite the lower sole, downhill heel striking is pain-free, with good cushioning and plenty of bounce delivering a smooth ride. Forefoot protection is excellent, with a ‘Snake Plate’ providing protection without sacrificing flexibility. Rather than a solid plate, the Snake Plate slithers down the sole in a continuous ‘S’ pattern – an interesting innovation that does well on delivering the conflicting design goals of flexibility and protection. The toe bumper is adequate, offering sufficient protection for most trail conditions, and a scree-cover below the tongue does a good job at limiting debris entry.

On pavement, the Single Track offers a smooth ride, and could be used as a full-blown hybrid without imparting undue stress on the legs. The outer sole tread is quite passive, and while this will bring some slippage in muddy conditions, the pavement ride is greatly improved, and distances up to half-marathon length on the road feel fine.

In wet conditions, the light mesh upper allows fast drainage and drying, and while the Dome Cradle of the heel is very sturdy and built-up, small gaps allow water to escape well, and squishiness doesn’t linger long after a creek crossing.

The laces that shipped with the Single Track could definitely be improved – no matter how tight and sturdy the initial bow was, extended water crossings combined with drying resulted in the laces working loose and requiring on-going re-tying. While not a big issue on a training run, after-market laces would be a must for race conditions.

Reception for the Single Track has been quite positive, capped by a “Best Debut” award by *Runner’s World* (USA). While it’s hard to see the Single Track taking huge market share in the trail community, it makes plenty of sense having this shoe as part of the kit accompanying a well-heeled urban adventurer who chooses to be outfitted at a North Face retail outlet, and this seems to be the market segment targeted by this offering. The generalist, hybrid trail-trainer-come-racer handles most conditions very well and would be a sound investment for a casual runner planning to have a single pair of trail shoes in the rack.

[www.thenorthface.com.au](http://www.thenorthface.com.au)

# Speed Machine

## WHEN APPROACHED TO TEST THE NEW SALOMON SPEEDCROSS 3 TRAIL SHOE STRAIGHT OUT OF THE BOX, YOU MIGHT THINK ONE SHOULD BAULK AT THE IDEA.

I mean, what a way to ruin a great day on the trail: slip on a brand you have never worn and a model you had only heard was due later in the year, add to that a body recovering from hip and knee injuries and a recently badly-rolled ankle, and the safety of the known versus unknown might have seemed the wiser choice. Even so, ultra trail runners are often accused of being not too smart and a little crazy, and who am I to mess with the stereotype?

I was handed the box, popped the lid and, "Oh, they're sleek and narrow," was my first thought. "This won't fare well."

I have always searched out the wider forefoot type shoe. But nothing ventured, nothing gained, I thought. Off with the old and on with the new.

This can't be right, they feel roomy up front, yet hug my foot – better slip on the right one, which is my wider foot (do we all have odd foot widths?). Wow, just the same, almost like they mould and adjust to suit. I grab the kevlar quickdraw lace and pull. I'm amazed at how evenly the whole foot is neatly hugged with a single pull on the lace. Tucking the excess lace in the small tongue pouch I spring to my feet, I mean, like a jack in the box, or should I say out of the box. The Speedcross 3's feel light and springy. I'm no lightweight, but with these under me I'm floating. Today is going to be a good day on the trail.

I'm running on the hills around Silvan Dam in the finale in the Salomon Trail Run Series 2011, and there isn't a lot of soft mushy stuff to really test the grip, though I remain impressed. I feel at one with the land. You kind of expect a bit of loose top surface movement under foot on trails, but not today, it's like the tread cuts through the top layer and just holds on tight. Yet at the same time the Speedcross 3 is supple and provides feedback allowing me to make all the right adjustments. The steep ascent is no bother, I actually want the grip to let go so I can take a break, but no such luck.

Then the real test: the descent. I'm heavy enough and gravity just pushes me onward and downward. When I need to apply brakes, the Speedcross 3 obliges; into technical manoeuvres they engage

### SALOMON SPEEDCROSS 3

**Great for** > Comfort, feel, grip, responsiveness, lightweight, did I mention grip?

**Not so great for** > Running on hard flat surfaces, keep them off road where they belong.

**Test conditions** > Single technical trail, leaf litter, hard and rocky fire trails, steep ascents and descents, moist grassy trails – tested in race condition over 14.3km

**Tester** > Brett Saxon. Ultra runner with finishes in Coast to Kosci 240km, TNF100, Wilsons Prom 100, Bogong to Hotham 64km, Bretts Run For Canteen 100 miler. Trail race director at Trails Plus, purveyor of the new Victorian Trail Running Championships 2012, Maroondah Dam 50/30, Mt Macedon 50/30, You Yangs 80/50/30/15, Tan Ultra 100/50/30. [www.trailsplus.org](http://www.trailsplus.org)

**Tester mechanics** > Neutral wide feet, 86kg, overuse hip, knee injuries, but it doesn't stop me...

**RRP AU\$210.00**

[www.salomon.com/au](http://www.salomon.com/au)

all wheel drive and away we go. Landing my foot on grass-covered logs is no bother – they just don't let go when they are planted.

If I have one negative experience, it is that the machine in the shoes just can't keep up. With all that extra grip, I just have to work harder. The Speedcross 3 seems to demand that from me, and I have to come to the party.

I perform as best I can coming off injuries, though ultimately the Speedcross 3 out performs me. And I wonder – does Kilian have the same problem? Shoes that are too good for him?



# Peak performer



## PEARL IZUMI PEAK XC

**Great for** > You name it, any sort of trail, technical, rocky, soft, loose, hard.

**Not so great for** > Runners seeking a minimalist shoe or over-pronators.

**Test conditions** > Mix of trail including loose sand and dirt, hard compacted firetrail, loose gravel and stones, hard rock (wet and dry), creeks, technical singletrack, mud, puddles. Total test distance 70km.

**Tester** > Andy Hewat – Ultrarunner with 15 x 100 milers including 3 x Hardrock, 1 x Western States, 5 x Great North Walk and 5 x Glasshouse. Race Director for Great Ocean Walk100s and Bogong to Hotham.  
[www.trailrunningcompany.com.au](http://www.trailrunningcompany.com.au)

**Tester mechanics** > Mild over pronator with fairly wide forefoot and low arches. Major arthritis in big toe joints of both feet so appreciate protection.

**Supplier** > Big thanks for the test shoes provided by Barefoot Inc, Adventure Megastore, 505 Kent St, Sydney.

**RRP AU\$189.00**

**SINCE DISCOVERING THE SYNCHRO FUEL BY ACCIDENT I HAVE BECOME A HUGE FAN OF PEARL IZUMI SHOES. SO WHEN I SAW THE PEAK XC I HAD TO GIVE THEM A TRY. AND SO MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE PIS CONTINUES.**

While not part of the latest minimalist brigade the Peak are nonetheless very light and flexible. But what sets them apart from others is the PI patented seamless uppers. If you run long you inevitably find something in a shoe that will rub you somewhere. Pearl Izumi has created a line of shoes that boasts the absence of seams so there is no inner stitching and no stiff layers or supports impinging on your foot. Read: no pressure points, no rubbing and no blisters. This alone makes them worth a try. And I now have three different models including a road version that are my hardtop go-to.

The Peak XC ride is smooth, if a little plush. If you want that harsh feel-every-root-and-rock experience these might not be for you. But if you like a little protection and comfort yet

retain a flexible, forgiving ride then you can't go wrong. Even the tongue is soft and the squishy laces combine nicely to give you that slipper feeling more acquainted to the fireside than the trail-side.

The thing the Peak XCs have over the Synchro Fuels is traction. While the heel is still relatively low in tread profile, the forefoot sports a series of parallel cleat-like lugs that offer great grip on loose surfaces and even mud. Not as aggressive as most mud-runners, they still provide great traction on the rough but allow an easy ride over the smooth as well. The ride is smooth enough that these make an excellent all round trail shoe for transition from bitumen to loose dirt. The lugs are low enough in profile and spaced wide enough apart that they shed dirt and debris well. I had confidence on all surfaces experienced.

There is a protection plate only in the forefoot but there is adequate cushioning across the rest of the midsole that rocky surfaces don't pose a problem. Pearl Izumi hasn't caught the minimalist superbug yet and for those of us who want to go long on rough surfaces that is a blessing. There are no motion control devices so consider the XCs to be a neutral shoe.

The cut is stylish and more importantly functional. The heel is snug but very soft. The toe-box is generous making them ideal for ultras. And the mesh upper is very forgiving while still wrapping the foot up snugly. It drains well and allows your foot to breathe.

The acid test for me for a trail shoe is would I wear them in a 100miler? I wore the Synchro Fuel XC on my Great Dividing trail run over 209km for 53 hours without one foot issue. And I like the Peak XC more, so yes, I plan to wear them at my next 100. The Great North Walk no less, which is the ultimate testing ground for trail shoes.

The Peak XC has been around for a while and a newer version is now available: the Peak II. While carrying the same name it is a complete rebuild. The XC has a heel-toe drop of 21-11mm (10mm) while the Peak II goes from 17mm down to 8mm. Still a long way from the true minimalists the overall lower profile is definitely attractive. This creates a dilemma for me: do I stick with my tried and trusted Peak XC or plunge into the newer model? Needless to say I am keen to give them a try. Pearl Izumi hasn't disappointed me yet.

[www.pearlizumi.com.au](http://www.pearlizumi.com.au)

# Cab Savvy

## MIZUNO CABRAKAN 2

**Great for** > Rugged trails with lots of underfoot challenges, runners who want good protection and stability while still being able to feel the trail for some feedback

**Not so great for** > Wet conditions; mud as the tread collects.

**Test conditions** > Trails with a high level of debris, some sand stretches, slippery surfaces, softer forest trails

**Tester** > Chris Ord – middleweight (if that) everyman trail runner, completed the Oxfam 100k, a half TNF100, a bush marathon in the Grampians knocking off four highest peaks, and shorter distance trail runs for multisport events. Regular outdoor gear tester for myriad outdoor magazines, including *Australian Geographic Outdoor* magazine.

**Tester mechanics** > Slight pronator, dodgy hip, “undergoing treatment for ITB so can be grumpy and blame shoes for bad biomechanics

**RRP AU\$ 220 / NZ\$ 270**



**LET'S FACE IT – IT SUCKS THAT AUSTRALIAN RUNNING STORES ARE LIVING IN A PERENNIAL YESTERDAY IN TERMS OF THEIR TRAIL SHOE OFFERINGS (I WON'T SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE NZ MARKET – FOR ALL I KNOW, YOU GUYS MAY BE RIDING FRONT-OF-WAVE).**

But let's not blame the frontliners – it's the distributors who get the things into the country. And even then, who knows what marketing strategies Head Office dictates to the backwater Antipodean market: "Ah give 'em the offcuts – convicts'll be happy with that." Meanwhile Stateside (or Japan-side, or Continental Europe-side) trail hounds are enjoying the fresh fruits of their CAD-design cobblers' labour. Well, that's how it is with the Mizuno Cabrakans – here we're stuck on version 2.0 whereas 3.0 has already hit the dirty ground running in markets elsewhere.

So it kind of felt like slipping on my big brother's hand-me-downs when I received the Cabs. Yet, they were damn comfy out of the box, I'll admit. And the styling? Each to their own but these were my kind of class – all dark and broody and Batmobile-for-your-feet-like.

If you do your web surf research, you'll know that the Cab 2.0s (officially there's no .0, I just like 'webclature') have a few minor updates, none of which will really make a hoot of difference to trail ride. There's a new toe box protector (surely a stock-standard on any trail shoe looking to go gnarly?), an added top lace tab to 'snug you in' better, there's a premium collar lining (aka fluffier feeling ankle collar) and the upper has been made water resistant. Nothing there will win any Red Dot design awards. And I'll flag now that the water resistant upper only scrapes into the definition of 'resistant'. A stretch of wet grass and your pinkies are wet, trust me. No matter – that's trail running.

What you want to take notice of in the Cabrakans are the core design features that were always inherent, the primary one being the wave plate buried in its midsole. Extending from heel through to the forefoot it offers protection for the foot from trail bumps and boulders. But the real genius is the way the wave plate responds to that surface variability. It flexes where it needs to, 'giving' to the intruding rock or root and dispersing impact over a larger area, while the rest of the plate remains strong offering support and protection to your foot.

I found that while not a specific pronation control shoe, they did give me a high level of support. And where most 'protectionist' style shoes lose all trail feel (and thus some runner stability) the Cabs afford good feedback from the terrain to your foot, allowing you to adjust to what's happening down below. Add to that killer aggressive grip, a lightweight construction and an in-shoe comfort factor that rates highly (wider toe box tapering back to a slimmer heel for good foot hold) and you have yesterday's shoe outperforming many of tomorrow's.

[www.mizuno.com.au/](http://www.mizuno.com.au/)

# THE ART OF STABILITY

## WHEN IT COMES TO THE PHYSICS OF RUNNING TRAILS, SPORTS BIOMECHANIST GREG PAIN IS ALL ABOUT AVOIDING HIS SURNAME BY ATTUNING HIS CLIENTS TO THE BASICS OF CORE STABILITY.

In its most simplistic sense running in any form is about two things: 1. maximising propulsive forces and 2. minimising braking forces. Even though the vast majority of the population isn't actually very good at this, it is substantially easier to achieve this as a road runner.

So why is this? Obviously it's the surface (well primarily at least). Because the surfaces are so wild and varied on the trails we need to be able to adapt and respond with the maximum amount of efficiency (and when racing, with the minimal amount of effort!) So one of the main reasons why trail runners lose traction or directional stability (if we take shoe choice out of the equation) is because of the fact the muscles around the foot/ankle/knee/hip and pelvis don't know how to respond accurately and fast enough to the requirements of the sport, and this can be partially attributed to a lack of functional pelvic stability – also known as 'CORE' stability.

So the first factor to consider is a term called 'proprioception'. Big word and I challenge anyone to say it 10x at pace (particularly after a post-trail run bevvie), but its meaning is very simple: "The ability of the body to sense and respond to where it is in space"

Example: I'm running a particularly gnarly trail, rocky, undulating, and unpredictable. As I run I'm not looking at my feet because the resulting collision with a tree or such like would most likely put me off the sport for a good while. So when I run I look straight ahead as I know that I have good proprioceptive awareness, which is the ability of my ankles etc to be able to respond to the various surfaces, keep me upright, not get injured, AND keep me moving forward.

Essentially there are receptors in the muscles and joints themselves that will send signals back to the brain when they are placed under load (ie: running over rocks). If these receptors are in good shape, or have been trained really well, then the signal that gets sent back from the brain to the surrounding muscles will be fast and accurate. Thereby the ankle will respond quickly and effectively to the surface, the ankle and associated muscles will react, stop an ankle roll, and push you in the desired direction.

Unfortunately when I take trail runners through a gait (running) biomechanical assessment, a lot have poor proprioceptive awareness. So how can you 1. improve your proprioceptive response and 2. be aware of the key indicators of a poor response.





**ANKLE INJURY HISTORY** > if you have spent years on the rugby/netball/soccer pitch and have sustained a few ankle sprains then you DO need to be aware that this can most certainly increase the likelihood of further ankle issues.

*[See the following feature for more specifics on ankles — Ed.]*

**INCORRECT PREPARATION** > if you've not done trail running before DO NOT simply attack the first trail that presents itself. You need to know that the joints of the lower limb, pelvis, and yes even the upper body are prepared to face the biomechanical bombardment that is a trail run.

**HOME-BASED TRAINING** > for all trail runners I strongly suggest they invest in a wobble board/air cushion and *really* spend some time educating the receptors around the leg and pelvis so they respond to the unpredictability that is trail running. These should be easy to get hold of online or email me for advice or talk to your local physio.

### **SOLID AS A ROCK** >

The other factor that has a direct influence on how well the leg musculature works, and responds to unpredictable external forces, is just how stable your pelvis and lumbar (lower) spine are. Laymen's term: 'CORE' stability.

Clinical research tells us that when an athlete has good core control, then the signals that get sent to the muscles either above or below the lumbopelvic region are improved, and hence decrease the likelihood of injury and increase the potential performance.

With running we are constantly fighting the assessment battle of: is a movement instability due to poor foot/ankle control (forces from the ground up) or is it a pelvic instability (stability forces going down the leg). A lot of runners have a delayed windlass mechanism (which is the ability to maintain arch height and foot rigidity — and it is outside of my scope to comment more as it really is a podiatrists domain), but to be honest a lot of lateral instability and poor foot placement strategies are due to poor pelvic control.

To be frank, this is why I love trail running. Comparatively road runners run in a straight line and don't have too many sharp turns or obstacles to avoid. Trail runners are the complete opposite, and it is the ability of the pelvis to sit in the right position in space (pelvic tilt) and then the lateral glutes to work to control just how much lateral shifting the trunk employs, that generates a lot of the power to propel us around the corners, up steep climbs, avoid the big tree roots, or any variation thereof.

Stability to the runner is *everything!* In my biomechanical opinion it is more important than your running fitness. Why? The runner who is less fit, but more stable will be able to sustain that level of output for a lot longer than fitter runner who is all over the show. And you know what, the likelihood of injury will be less.

### **GETTING TO THE CORE** >

Reckon you're a pillar of strength or you wilt like a wuss?  
Test yourself >

Stand on one leg. Easy?

Trunk doesn't move AT ALL? Good.

Stand on one leg on a small block.

Trunk still doesn't move? Knee tracking is still good?

*Greg Pain is a Sports Biomechanist specialising in running, cycling, triathlon and multisport.*

*As functional strength advisor to Emirates Team NZ, as well as a number of NZ's elite and Olympic athletes. Greg's passion is educating on correct movement patterning and high level core stability training. Biomechanical analysis is supported by SiliconCoach Movement Software and is 90-120 min in duration.*

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**Facebook/Twitter: bioSPORTnz**

# THE REIGN OF A SPRAIN IS A BLOODY PAIN

**TAKING THE ART OF  
STABILITY TO SPECIFICS,  
JON-ERIK KAWAMOTO  
LOOKS AT THE NASTIER  
SIDE OF THE TWISTS AND  
TURNS THAT CAN BE  
ENCOUNTERED ON TRAIL**

Given the rocks and roots and unpredictable terrain we punt over, it's no wonder that lateral ankle sprains account for a fair percentage of lower limb injuries in trail running. One misplaced foot, with body forces powering under momentum, and there's often little you can do but writhe around on the ground as the pulse of pain swells through your ballooning ankle as thick and fast as the swearwords explode from your mouth.

You've just done yourself what is known as a soft-tissue injury, because it involves the support structures of the foot called ligaments. Ligaments are the short bands of fibrous connective tissue that connect two adjacent bones together found in a joint.

Typically, the mechanism of injury involves an unexpected movement that rapidly forces the ankle into plantar flexion (foot moves downward) and inversion (rotates inward), placing the lateral (outside) ankle ligaments on excessive stretch. Damn you rock.

The severity of the sprain varies depending on how much force is placed on the ligaments and at what angle. A first-degree sprain is considered to be the least damaging resulting in an excessive stretch of the ligaments. This type of sprain may not affect your ability to run but increases the risk of a more severe sprain in the near future.

A second-degree sprain involves a slight tear of the ligaments, while a third degree sprain involves a complete ligament rupture that might require surgery.

A second-degree sprain may restrict your ability to run for three to six weeks, while a third degree sprain can take anything from six weeks to as long as three months to fully recover.

The ankle ligaments usually involved in a lateral ankle sprain include the anterior and posterior talofibular ligaments and the calcaneofibular ligament. Much less common ankle sprains occur when the foot is wrenched outward, known as an eversion sprain. This type of sprain damages the ligaments on the medial (inside) side of the foot, usually the deltoid ligament.

There are numerous risk factors associated with sustaining an ankle injury including: muscle weakness and imbalance; poor flexibility or a hypermobile ankle joint; poor proprioception and balance ability; poor muscle function at the knee and hip; previous lower limb injury and chronic ankle instability; improper alignment of the ankle and foot; shoe type; running surface; and fatigue level.

Chronic ankle instability is a conditioning that involves repeated "giving way" of the lateral structures of the ankle. This functional ankle instability (FAI) has been thought to involve weakness of the muscles surrounding the ankle joint but research has also shown strength deficits and muscle imbalances at the ipsilateral (same side) knee joint and muscle imbalances at the ipsilateral hip joint. However, more research is required to fully understand this concept.

Neuromuscular control (the ability of the brain to communicate with the muscles) and proprioception deficits of the ankle and foot are also found in those with FAI. Proprioception is the communication of the joint sensors and receptors to the nervous system resulting in special neuromuscular pathways that result in joint stiffness and joint stability. The problems don't end there: chronic ankle sprains may lead to compensation patterns which in turn may lead to overuse injuries.

Typically, FAI results because of a lack of effective rehabilitation following a previous ankle sprain. Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation or R.I.C.E. is always prescribed for an acute ankle sprain; however, runners being runners find it hard to perform the first 'R.'

I like to add another 'R' on the end of R.I.C.E. for 'rehabilitation'. This is where a physical therapist and an exercise specialist can work together on recovery modalities to improve and speed up recovery. During the initial stages, reducing inflammation and swelling are of primary importance. Anti-inflammatory drugs can be taken to reduce pain and swelling while the physical therapist uses several

modalities to speed up the healing process. Such treatments include joint and soft tissue mobilisation and scar tissue removal. For partial or complete tears, the ankle is braced in a neutral position to allow the damaged ligaments to build and repair. During the healing process, range of motion exercises can be performed to promote proper healing of the injured ligaments. Drawing the alphabet in mid air with the big toe is a sample range of motion exercise.

Improvements in foot and ankle strength are the next step in the rehabilitation process. These exercises include: isometric, proprioception (balance), and agility. First, isometric non-weight bearing exercises should be utilised to increase the strength of the muscles with minimal range of motion. These types of exercises involve holding a maximum muscle contraction for about 10 seconds.

Once bearing weight is tolerated, rubber tubing/band exercises and balance training are introduced. Rubber band exercises involve wrapping a band around the foot and moving the foot in different directions against the resistance.

Proprioception exercises involve balance training otherwise known as unstable surface training and have been shown to successfully to improve ankle stability post ankle sprain. These types of exercises are important during the rehabilitation process because it has been shown that proprioception deficits are found in those with previous and chronic ankle sprains.

Unstable surface training in a healthy population has also been shown to be effective at improving balance ability. The minimum training period that led to balance improvements was 10-minute sessions, three days per week for four weeks.

Standing on one leg on a level surface is a good place to start. Difficulty can be increased by bouncing a tennis ball against a wall or by removing vision. Similar exercises can also be performed on a balance disc or wobble board. Agility drills are an advanced form of proprioception exercises, which can also be performed to further challenge the ability to control posture and balance. Once you're able to start running again, an ankle brace can be worn for added support. It is also recommended that the running surface initially remain flat and predictable. As the foot and ankle get stronger, changes in terrain and faster running paces can be slowly incorporated.

When rehabbing an ankle sprain, give the following exercises a try and remember that strong muscles in the lower leg (hip, knee, ankle and foot) can reduce your likelihood of sustaining an ankle sprain and help keep you injury free.

*Jon-Erik Kawamoto, CSCS, CEP is a Strength and Conditioning Specialist. He specialises in strength training middle-to-long distance runners. For more information, check out >*

[www.StrongerRunner.com](http://www.StrongerRunner.com)



#### **Exercise > Isometric Ankle Eversion**

How > Place the outside of your foot on a wall or on the side of your desk. Keep your ankle neutral (90 degrees to the lower leg). Press the outside of your foot into the wall as if trying to turn the foot outward. Hold for 10 seconds.  
*Repeat 6-8 repetitions for 3-5 sets.*

#### **Exercise > Ankle Inversion with rubber tubing**

How > Wrap a band around your forefoot with the opposite end hooked onto your hand or something stable. Turn the foot inward against the band.  
*Repeat for 15-20 repetitions for 3-5 sets.*

#### **Exercise > Single Leg Squat on an unstable surface**

How: Stand on a balance board in front of a squat rack with one leg. Gently hang onto the rack while performing a single leg squat. Try not to use the rack for balance and sit to 90 degrees at the knee joint.  
*Repeat 8-12 repetitions for 3-5 sets.*

#### **Exercise: Jump and Stick Agility Drill**

How: Jump diagonally out to the side. Land on one foot lightly and stick the landing for 3-5 seconds before jumping onto the opposite leg.  
*Repeat for 10 repetitions per leg and perform 3-5 sets.*

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The designers of Trail Run could design your ads. Something to ponder on your next 40k run.



*Above >*

**Aussie Ironman legend and trail run convert Guy Andrews  
on the killer single track at the Anaconda  
Adventure Race, Lorne in the Otways, Victoria Australia.**

*Photo > Rapid Ascent / Andrew Connolly*

*Below* > **Running on clouds, on top of Mount Thomas, NZ.**

*Photo* > Paul Petch / [www.outdoorphotography.co.nz](http://www.outdoorphotography.co.nz)

*Right* > **In the thick of it on the Sharplin Falls track, Mount Somers, NZ.**

*Photo* > Paul Petch / [www.outdoorphotography.co.nz](http://www.outdoorphotography.co.nz)





**Trailing towards Pararaha, Waitakeres, NZ.**

*Photo > Mal Law*  
[www.runningwildnz.com](http://www.runningwildnz.com)

**Mountain Goat > Nick White**

Nick White, who faced the biggest virtual mountain of his life when faced with cancer, relishes the view from a more earthly mountain, looking back from Turoa while racing in the Goat Adventure Run in 2005, an event he never thought he'd live to compete in. Read his story on page 86.

*Photo > Mark Mckeown*  
[www.mckeownphotography.co.nz](http://www.mckeownphotography.co.nz)



*Both images >*

**Joshua Phillips enjoys a stretch of the Coastal Track,  
NSW, Australia, which stretches 27.3km from  
Otford to Bundeena through theRoyal National Park**

*Photo by Lyndon Marceau  
[www.marceauphotography.com](http://www.marceauphotography.com)*

# RUNNING OLD SCHOOL

With the *Born to Run* film coming out soon, the minimalist craze is about to explode, whether you agree with it or not. So we thought it pertinent to show that big ones are possible with bugger all on your feet > Here Bookis Smuin runs in Lunar Sandals in the Leadville 100, a mammoth 100-mile (160km) race in the United States, and contemplates his approach >

“There’s some debate whether (some training) miles run can be ‘junk miles’. I believe in running the minimal amount necessary to get ready for an ultra. I’d take it one step further and say that there are not only junk miles but also ‘harmful miles’ and on the flip-side, ‘golden miles.’ Harmful miles are the ones that you don’t want to be doing, the ones where you wish it were over. These miles will actually hurt your performance, especially in an event. Running with negative thoughts is only going to make the negative thoughts come more easily next time. In an ultra, negativity will stop you faster than a brick wall. Golden miles on the other hand, are exactly the opposite. They’re the kind of miles you spend running with your best friends, or alone on a trail feeling like you’re flying through the forest, or where the rain won’t stop coming down and the smile won’t leave your face. These miles are worth millions. I strive to make all of my miles golden miles. Even though my training may average five miles per week, you’d be hard pressed to put in a better five miles than I do.”

[www.lunasandals.com](http://www.lunasandals.com)





# F E E T

**WHAT KIND OF FOOT DO YOU HAVE AND HOW CAN YOU TELL? WITHOUT THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY AND EXPERTISE, YOU CAN'T TELL, WRITES TRM'S SHOE GURU, SIMON BRIGHT.**

There's more chance of finding love online these days than there is of selecting the ideal shoe for your foot type from a shoe catalogue or website. The write-up and description of the shoe might be pretty accurate but your ability to analyse your own foot type is virtually impossible. The reason being is that our feet were designed for running and walking and the only way to analyse your foot is under those same conditions.

To get a clear understanding of what foot type you have you will need someone's help. If that someone was an expert in feet and biomechanics and watched you running from behind you would get a very loose assessment of how they saw your feet functioning. If that expert was analysing footage of you running through high tech 'stop motion' software then you are really getting the good wood. Now I know what some of you are thinking: the culture we embrace as trail lovers



# F I R S T

is low key, understated and relatively simplistic but if there was ever a reason to get all scientific and technical, then this is it.

Understanding what foot type you have and how that will impact your shoe selection is not just for the elite or injury plagued. It should be an annual or bi-annual ritual for all trail runners that gives you security in knowing that your foundation is stable. Unlocking the secret of where you stand in the world of feet and shoes is like discovering the Holy Grail of running injury free. Trail running gets much bad press from all the critics for its high impact and the stress it places on our muscles and joints, allegedly wrecking knees and causing people to resort back to cycling. We don't buy into that. Our skeletal and muscle systems are perfectly tuned to deal with a good 75–80 years of movement and impact, however if you ignore how important your feet are and neglect to examine your biomechanical weaknesses and those 75–80 years of performance will be cut well short.

The primary function of the human foot is shock absorption and it does this by pronating. I suspect everyone knows what pronation is but just in case, here goes. Pronation is the term used to describe the way some feet roll inwards as they deal with the pressure of running, walking or even just standing.

Supination is the exact opposite where the foot actually rolls outwards and which leaves the term neutral for those special foot types that don't roll in or out. To help absorb these forces the human foot has evolved into a wickedly complex structure that allows for each of these natural foot motions. 26 bones (one quarter of the bones in the body are in the feet), 33 joints and over 100 muscles, tendons and ligaments and more nerve receptors per square centimetre than anywhere else in the body. Our feet read like a complex, delicate structure but that bag of bones and ligaments can take a lifetime of punishment and withstand a barrage of abuse.

So we have three general foot types: pronated, neutral and supinated. On average we think the general population can be broken down into the following percentages: people with pronated feet 80 per cent; neutral feet 15 per cent; and supinated feet 5 per cent.

Arch height is another foot characteristic that is used to categorise foot types and again there are only three options: high arch, medium arch and, you guessed it, low arch.

Based on the simplistic idea that there are only three foot types you might wonder why shoe manufacturers have gone to all the effort of making all those different models of shoes, each with their own support and cushioning designs. The fact that they do make all those options is just more proof of the diversity of foot types and foot functions.

I'm sure there's more than a few of you reading that would leave me for dead on your favourite track, or have a CV of trail events completed in the last six months longer than my list from the last two years. Anyway, my point is just because you have been there and done that doesn't really equip you with the skills to analyse your own feet function to get the footwear selection correct every time.

We hear it all the time "What's a good shoe for me, I think my feet roll in?", so we start talking and learn that this gringo

runs more kilometres on trail each week than I drive and puts up with some pretty wicked injuries as well. This guy can run well but could be even stronger if he lets the experts sort his feet out.

To be fair, it's a good thing that this 'gringo' has thought about what shoe he needs to suit his foot type and not chosen new trainers based on colours and brand status. Understanding the biomechanics of your feet and how they react to pressure and motion is the key fine tuning the style of foot footwear that works for you and gives you the best possible chance of being a robust trail runner.

At Footpro we see pronation every day but rarely will two people have the same degree of motion or pronate at the same rate. Some feet collapse immediately on ground contact so the degree is high and the rate is fast. Another might only begin to roll inwards once the foot is fully weight bearing and to a very subtle degree. The same combinations of foot biomechanics will apply to feet that supinate or are neutral. To see this we use video stop motion software. Our eyes are pretty good, but without this technology the naked eye can't spot these slight variations that make all the difference between your feet and mine.

The equation of your foot verses the world of shoes is complicated, but you can go a long way to becoming a strong, fast and resilient trail runner by getting analysed by experts to discover the shoe that is a perfect match. Trust me, it'll be enough to make a frustrated, injured trail runner fall in love all over again \*

*Simon Bright offers individual assessment and advice through his independent retail outlet, Footpro, and while he would love you see you in person, he knows that not everyone lives in Malvern, Victoria, so he recommends that you see any suitably qualified biomechanical expert in your region. Contact him for advice on >*

[simon@footpro.com.au](mailto:simon@footpro.com.au)

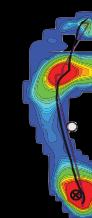
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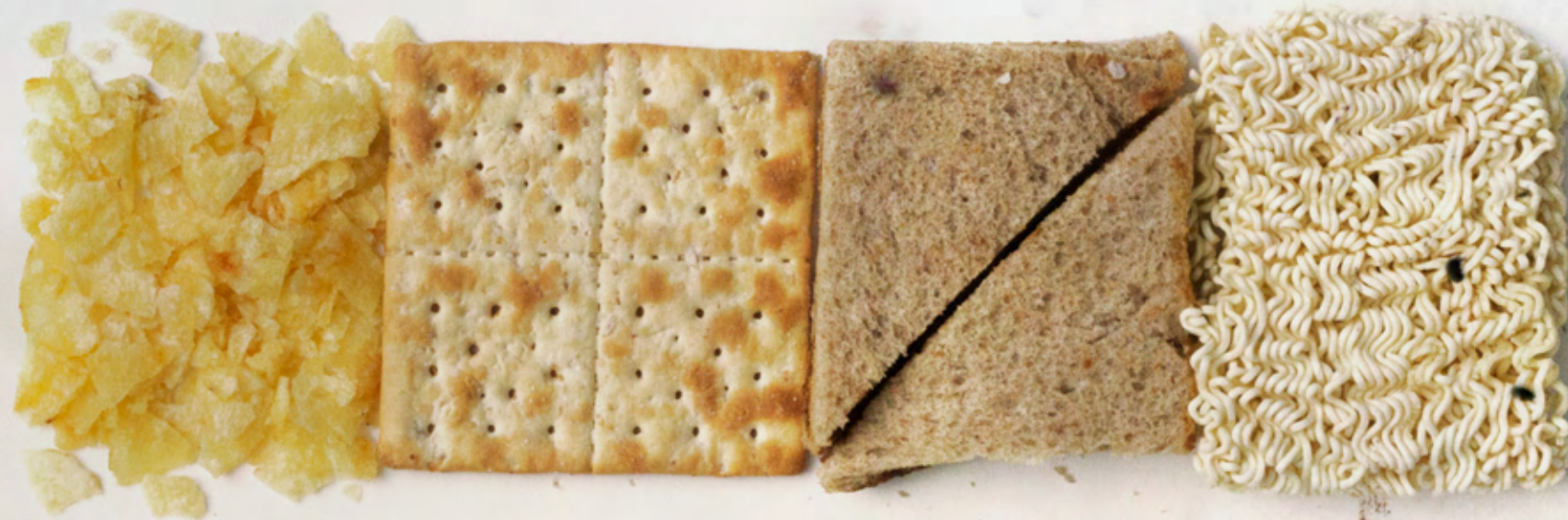
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# BEATING FLAVOUR FATIGUE



Can't face another sickeningly sweet gel? That space station energy drink going to make you puke? Craving some 'real' calories? Nutritionist and sports dietician Alan McCubbin from Next Level Nutrition ([www.nextlevelnutrition.com.au](http://www.nextlevelnutrition.com.au)) looks at what else is available when you're over those super scientific gels + sports drinks.

Of all the aspects of sports nutrition that can make a difference to your performance, carbohydrate during a race comes has to come top of the list. And the benefits of eating and drinking carbs during a race increase the more you consume.

Studies at the Hawaii Ironman showed that around 30 per cent of the variation in performance is related to the quantity of carbohydrate consumed. Benefits range from 3.2 per cent with 15 grams of carbs per hour, up to a whopping 18 per cent with 90 grams an hour of a glucose/fructose combination.

But when you're running for hours on end, or several days back to back, it's easy to get sick of sucking down the same sports drinks and gels hour after hour. They're sticky, rich, and can leave a horrible taste in the back of your throat. So what can you put on the menu to mix things up a bit?

Many trail runners already have some savoury options in their arsenal. The most common is the humble trail mix, a combination of dried fruit and nuts. But while dried fruit is a good option,

nuts in fact are fairly low in carbs (and they're around 50 per cent fat). Sultanas contain 75 grams of carbohydrate per 100 grams of food, but almonds, peanuts and cashews all contain between 4 grams and 17 grams per 100 grams.

Some may argue that the high calorie content of nuts (due to their fat and protein content) is a benefit. But total calories isn't a priority for running, with the exception of races requiring you to carry your food over several days (such as the 4 Deserts races). One thousand calories from pure fat weighs 111 grams whereas the equivalent in carbs would weigh 250 grams, so there's significant weight savings to be made by maximising fat in multi day stage races, but in single-day events the focus should be on carbs to optimise performance.

So what are some high carb, savoury choices for running? Well, there are a few options you can try, and the best part is they're cheap and easy to prepare from some simple ingredients. This is far from an exhaustive list, but includes some that maximise carbs without requiring too much chewing.

### Savoury Sports Drinks >

There are a couple of options for savoury sports drinks, depending on where you're running and what's practical.

**1. Packet soup >** It sounds a bit strange, but packet soup is a great alternative to sports drink. One sachet of tomato Cup-a-Soup in 200mL water provides 8.2 grams of carbs and 412mg sodium per 100mL, compared to 6.2 grams and 84mg for Gatorade Endurance.

**2. Savoury Sports Drink >** If you want something that's not sweet but more closely resembles sports drink, here's a recipe: Maltodextrin is a non-flavoured form of carbohydrate – you can buy it from homebrew stores, or at some pharmacies sold as the nutrition supplement Polyjoule (the homebrew option is much cheaper). Using maltodextrin will prevent your drink from tasting sweet, and allow the savoury flavour of the stock cube to feature.

- \* Add ½ X Massell stock cube to 500mL of boiled water (I prefer vegetable but any flavour will do)
- \* Add 30g (4 tablespoons) of maltodextrin
- \* Shake together in a bottle and let it cool as much or as little as you like. You can drink it warm or cold.

*Nutrition (per 100mL) > 7 grams carbohydrate, 336mg sodium*

### Savoury Gels >

If you like the ease of consumption of gels (no chewing) but need a change from the sickly taste, here's a savoury alternative you can make at home. They're just as good warm or cold. Aussie runner Samantha Gash used these at extreme altitude during the recent La Ultra – The High, a 222km extreme race in the Himalayas [keep an eye out for a future feature from our editor, who went over as crew]. "Everything was pretty tough to consume whilst going up altitude, but the mash was 'gel' was one thing I managed to get down," says Sam. "It was easy to consume as it was soft and being able to squeeze it out of the zip lock portions was super convenient, just like a regular gel."

### Ingredients >

Continental Deb (instant mash potato) – 115g packet  
2 cups of boiling water  
1 Massell stock cube (I like beef in this one)  
4 tablespoons maltodextrin

\* Dissolve stock cube in the boiled water.

\* Add the liquid to the Deb powder and maltodextrin, and stir til it's nice and smooth.

\* Spilt into 4 equal quantities and add to small zip lock bags. Cut corner of the bag (or carefully open part of the zip lock) and consume like a gel

*Nutrition (per "gel"):* 28g carbohydrate, 815mg sodium

### Other Savoury Options >

**Vegemite sandwiches >** Use white bread, cut the crusts off (too much chewing), squash the bread flat like a pancake to remove the air and cut into 3 or 4 pieces. Then wrap in foil – easy to rip open when you're ready to eat. You can also use peanut butter in these, but don't use too much because it's 50 per cent fat.

*Nutrition (per sandwich):* 23 grams carbohydrate, 615mg sodium

**Crushed Potato Crisps >** A bit higher in fat (35 per cent), but a tasty alternative. Take 50 grams of your favourite flavoured chips and crush them into crumbs in a zip lock back. Thin cut chips work best for this purpose.

*Nutrition (per 50 grams):* 25–30 grams carbohydrate, 250–350mg sodium

**Ritz Crackers (or other low fat varieties) >** 8 of these little round crackers can help mix things up. However they'll require more chewing which might be a bit tricky for many when you're running. Perhaps save them for when you're walking uphill.

*Nutrition (per 8 crackers):* 16 grams carbohydrate, 163mg sodium

**Also consider >** Savoury pikelets, muffins or slice, and 2 minute noodles (if you've got time to stop and scoff)

*We'd love to hear your ideas and favourite savoury options too...*

*Post on our Facebook Page or email us*

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[trailrunmag@gmail.com](mailto:trailrunmag@gmail.com)

PRESENTS

# TRAIL GUIDES

**YOU KNOW THEY'RE THERE: THOSE PRISTINE TRAILS. CLOSE.  
NOT FAR FROM YOUR DOORSTEP. YOU CAN SMELL THEM...**

Or maybe that's just the sweet waft of dirt not-long ground into the lugs of your trail shoes, which sit by the front door — a welcome reminder of the weekend's mountain jaunt.

But the blood screams for more. The legs are sore, yet they pine for a warm down. A warm up. A flat out blast along some winding, wet, wonderful singletrack. But where to go? Only got an hour (which you know can stretch to three).

Trail Mag has the answer(s). Here. In this guide. Each edition we'll bring you step by step trail run guides, all within an hour of a major city or town in Australia or New Zealand, all between 5km and 30km, all worth zipping out to for a trail fix.

We've also included some post-trail goodness 'cause we're human; we're caffeine freaks too (strong latte — sometimes double espresso, but only on race days), and we love the smell of fresh eggs and bacon after pounding the paths. Welcome to the goodness guide.

## **WIN SALOMON GEAR!**

All you gotta do is be part of the action. Yes, we need trail correspondents! If you think there's a cracking trail the world needs to know about, go research it, write it up, shoot a photo and send it in. We do have a bit of a style going, so be sure to check out the guidelines and download the pro forma before you do at >

**[trailrunnermag.wordpress.com/contribute](http://trailrunnermag.wordpress.com/contribute)**

If your guide is chosen as the 'Editor's Pick' of the issue, you'll win some great Salomon Trail Gear. Just ask Gretel Fortmann and Anthony Bishop, who will each get a bit of Salomon kit in the mail for their efforts.

So go running, get writing and start window shopping at **[www.salomon.com/au](http://www.salomon.com/au)**



# GREAT NORTH WALK

(GIRRAKOOL TO PATONGA)

## TRAIL TIPS >

**NEARBY TOWN/CITY** > Gosford (11km, 15minutes), Palm Beach Sydney (via ferry from Patonga, 15km, 30mins)

> See [www.sydneysceniccruises.com](http://www.sydneysceniccruises.com)

**EXACT LOCATION** > Girrakool Picnic Area in the Brisbane National Park to Patonga

**ROUTE DISTANCE** > 25km

**ASCENT/DESCENT** > 1083m

**TIME TO RUN** > 3hrs (elite)  
4hrs (keen runners) 5hrs (weekend warriors)

**TYPE OF TRAIL** > Point to point, with lots of bonus loop options to lookouts and vantage points

**DIFFICULTY** > Moderate (some technical sections but lots of open, wide fire trail)

### DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS >

The trail takes runners through dense bush, down into cool fern-enclosed valleys, an awesome waterhole to cool down in, great technical ascents and descents, open runs on sandstone plateaus with views across the National Park, and a finish along the spectacular coastline between Pearl Beach and Patonga.

### FEATURES OF INTEREST >

Towering scribbly-bark gums, Interesting rock formations and caves, Kariong Brook Waterfall and waterhole, Rock flats, Views of Barrenjoey head.

### ONLINE REFERENCE >

[Wild Walks website](#)

[Brisbane Waters National Park Website](#)

**MAPS** > Map available on [Wild Walks website](#).

Alternately a map of the Great North Walk can be used. The trail is well marked though with Great North Walk signposts (GNW) or posts with an image of a hiker or an arrow.

## RUN IT >

A note with this one, take at least 2 litres of water as much of the trail is open and exposed to full sun. There are some opportunities to drink from creeks/streams in the first 8km.

The trailhead is tucked away behind the Girrakool Picnic Area, marked with a sign for the Piles Creek Loop Track. At the first intersection follow the Girrakool Loop Track towards the Illoura lookout. From here, the rest of the trail is marked with the Great North walk signposting, as well as signs towards Patonga, the end destination. Always follow the GNW signage, sometimes indicated with the image of a small hiker on a red background, sometimes just an arrow indicating you should just continue on the same trail.

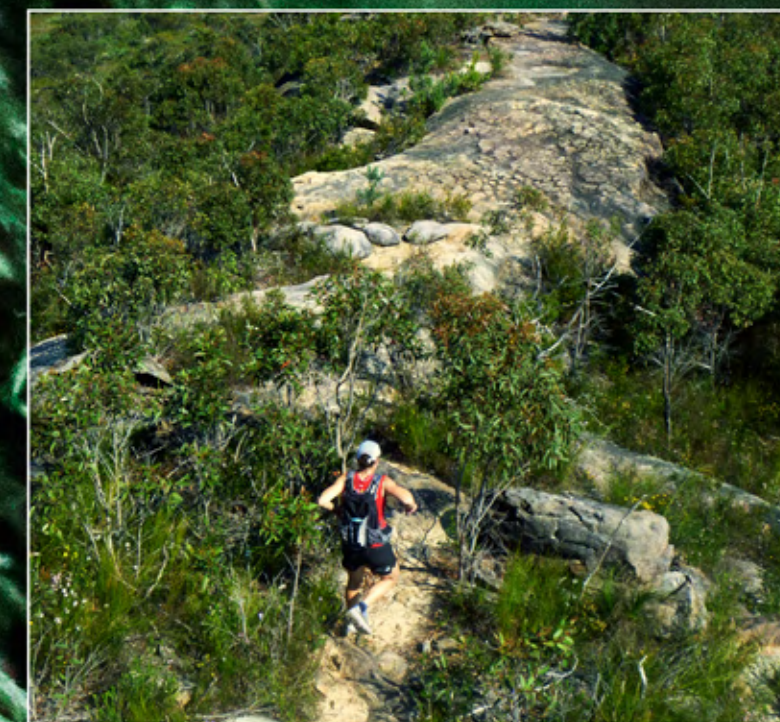
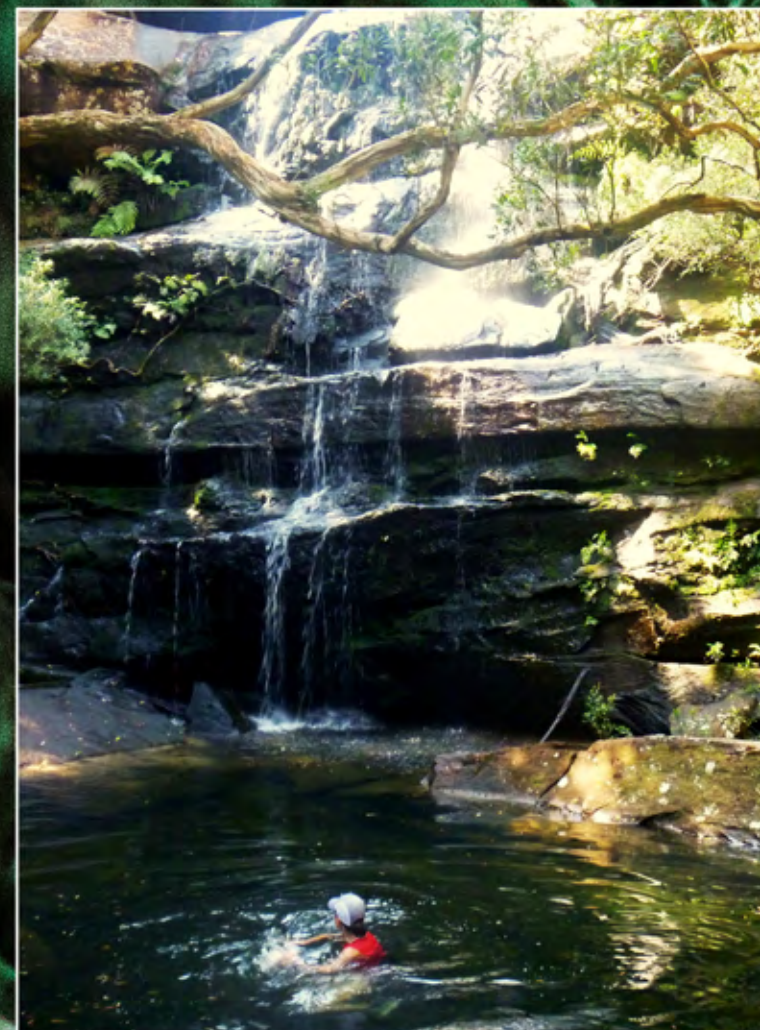
The first 10km takes you through constantly changing scenery, and is mostly on single-track, technical trail defined by rocks and roots that keep you engaged in the run. As it is currently spring, lots of the natives are blossoming, making you feel as if you are running down a tunnel of soft pink, yellow and red hues – definitive Aussie bush! During this section you will be ascending and descending a great deal which is great if you are training for an upcoming trail race like the GNW100, passing interesting sandstone formations, a refreshing waterhole, rocky platforms and you will be privy to unadulterated views of the Brisbane Waters National Park.

After about 10km you will come to a 3-way Intersection – take the trail marked Mt. Wondabyne on your left heading east. This was the one tricky section where we were unsure of direction. From here the trail winds slowly up, most of the ascent runnable, providing the option of a bonus loop up to the view point on Mt Wondabyne for 360 degree views of the National Park (highly recommended).

The next 10km is mostly on open fire trail until you hit the last 3km that runs along the coast towards Patonga. This section was extremely hot as you do not have a lot of cover from the sun. Make sure you have a hat, sunscreen and ample water ready. This section was a nice change as it was more runnable and allowed us to increase our pace a little. You will have one road crossing, but continue straight onto the signposted trail directly on the other side! Soon you will hit the Patonga/Pearl Beach trail. From here you are running along the coast, with beautiful views along the Brisbane waters. About 2km along you will descend along a technical single track down to Patonga Beach!

## POST RUN GOODNESS >

At Patonga Beach there is a General Store and Fish and Chips shop (both were closed though when we finished our run at 3pm). The best option was the Patonga Beach Hotel that had a great option of post-run bistro meal options, chocolate milkshakes and beer on tap. The outdoor seating was a bonus with great views out across the water. Pearl Beach is 4.5km away, and also offers a variety of quaint cafes and eateries. If you can fit it into your pack, swimmers are also a great idea for a post-run cool-down.



# RANGITOTO ROMP

## TRAIL TIPS >

**NEARBY TOWN/CITY** > Auckland > 25 minutes on ferry from downtown. [Check Fullers Timetable.](#)

**EXACT LOCATION** > The run starts and finishes at the wharf on Rangitoto – straight off the ferry and on to the trail!

**ROUTE DISTANCE** > 16.5 kms

**ASCENT / DESCENT** > 470 metres

**TIME TO RUN** > Elite 1hr 30 mins; Novice 3 hrs

**TYPE OF TRAIL** > Loop

**DIFFICULTY** > Moderate

## DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS >

Harsh, volcanic scoria is the base of the trails – take tough shoes. It can be very hot in summer so carry plenty of fluid. Trail varies from well made path and boardwalk to technical and rocky (especially on Coastal Track section). Stunning views from the top of the island are a great reward.

**FEATURES OF INTEREST** > You are going to the top of a volcano that erupted from the sea only about 600 years ago – it is a special and unique place. [Download the informative brochure](#) for more background.

**ONLINE REFERENCE** > See the run in detail via Running Wild's [Garmin Connect page.](#)

**BEST MAP/S** > No topo map required. This simple map will suffice.

## RUN IT >

Just a hundred metres from the wharf you will pick up the Summit Track (signposted sensibly enough to 'Rangitoto Summit'). Follow this up the gradually steepening side of the volcano, ignoring the left turns to Kidney Fern Glen and Wilson's Park Track.

After about 2 kms you'll reach a bit of a clearing. Carry straight on following the steps on the Rangitoto Summit track. Another 300m of lovely bush running brings you to the Crater Rim Track. Turn sharp left up the boardwalk to the summit trig and stupendous 360° views across the harbour and the Hauraki Gulf.

Exit the summit area on the far side via the Crater Rim Track and follow a short distance until a wide track heads off downhill to your left. Follow this and very soon turn left on to Summit Road. Follow this downhill for about 200m before turning left on to Wilson's Park Track. This is a beautiful stretch of single track that sidles around the side of the hill before rejoining the Summit Track in about 1.3 kms.

Turn left on the Summit Track and re-trace your earlier steps up the hill to the clearing. This time leave the clearing to the right following the sign to 'Rangitoto Summit via Road' and 'Lava Caves'. Keep a careful eye out for a junction after a couple of hundred metres. Straight ahead is a worthwhile dead-end detour to the lava caves (take a headlamp if you want to go exploring) and a left turn follows a track around under the summit cone to join Summit Road. On hitting Summit

Road turn left and follow it up the hill for a few hundred metres before turning left on the boardwalk signposted 'Rangitoto Summit 30 mins'. This is a beautiful stretch of uphill running with great views east over the neighbouring islands and the Gulf. After about 400m you will find yourself back at the Summit Track/Crater Rim Track junction – head straight on up the boardwalk to summit for the second time.

Leave the summit by the same route as before and once again take a left turn off Crater Rim Track to rejoin the Summit Road. This time turn right on Summit Road and follow this rocky road down the hill for almost 3 kms. En route you need to bear left at a junction following the sign to Islington Bay Wharf (a right turn following the sign to Rangitoto Wharf provides a less interesting short cut back to the ferry if you are running short of time or energy).

When almost back at sea level turn right at a sign to Yankee Wharf, from where you will pick up the rugged and rocky Coastal Track that carries you the remaining 5 kms back to the wharf and hopefully a waiting ferry.

## POST RUN GOODNESS >

There are no refreshments on the island but the ferry sells a reasonable range of sandwiches, snack foods and drinks.

*Trail Guide courtesy of Running Wild NZ*

[www.runningwildnz.com](http://www.runningwildnz.com)



# THE OKURA WALKWAY

## TRAIL TIPS >

**NEARBY TOWN/CITY >** Auckland  
(approx. 30 mins drive from downtown)

**EXACT LOCATION >**  
End of Haigh Access Road off East Coast Road  
just north of Okura Estuary (use Oteha  
Valley Rd off-ramp from Northern motorway)

**ROUTE DISTANCE >** 12kms return

**ASCENT / DESCENT >** 440m of each

**TIME TO RUN >**  
1hr 15mins (Elite) to 2hrs 30mins (Novice)

**TYPE OF TRAIL >** Out & back

**DIFFICULTY >** Easy-Moderate

**DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS >**  
Mix of well-formed & rough single-track.  
Bush, beach & a creek crossing.

**FEATURES OF INTEREST >**  
The historic Dacre Cottage  
in Karepiro Bay is worth a look.

**ONLINE REFERENCE >**  
See [Garmin Connect](#)

**BEST MAP/S >**  
Download the simple PDF map  
from the DOC website – it's all you'll need.



## RUN IT >

For the first couple of kms the track is well formed, having been recently upgraded. After crossing a bridge across a feeder creek to the Okura Estuary it climbs about 85m through beautiful nikau groves, pohutakawa and regenerating coastal kauri forest.

After cresting this first hill the track gets progressively rougher as it undulates its way through bush along the Okura River estuary and edge of the Long Bay – Okura Marine Reserve, finally dropping down a series of 110 steps to reach Karepiro Bay and historic Dacre Cottage (4.8 kms in).

From here you can follow the coastline at low tide, or cross the shallow creek and take the overland track, climbing steeply above the coastal cliffs, with good views of Karepiro Bay and the Hauraki Gulf, before dropping back to the Weiti River estuary and the turnaround point (6 kms).

Follow your nose back the way it came to return to the start.

## POST RUN GOODNESS >

There are no watering holes at either end of the track but you have the choice of hundreds of cafes dotted all over the North Shore suburbs not too far away.

*Trail Guide courtesy of Running Wild NZ*

[www.runningwildnz.com](http://www.runningwildnz.com)



# MORIALTA THREE FALLS

GRAND LOOP

## TRAIL TIPS >

### NEARBY TOWN/CITY >

Adelaide, 12 kilometres, 20–25 minutes from CBD

### EXACT LOCATION >

Morialta Recreation Area  
Car Park, Stradbroke Road, Rostrevor 5073

### ROUTE DISTANCE >

9 kilometres

### ASCENT/DESCENT >

300 metres

### TIME TO RUN >

50 minutes (pretty fast) to 1.5 hours (leisurely)

### TYPE OF TRAIL >

Loop

### DIFFICULTY >

Hard

### DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS >

Fairly rocky and technical single and double track, steep ascents and descents with twists and turns, a few creek crossings which may require getting wet in winter.

### ONLINE REFERENCE >

[Map my ness website](#)

### BEST MAP/S >

[Environment SA Brochure](#)

## RUN IT >

Plenty of local flora and fauna (it's common to spot kangaroos in Morialta) will be spotted on this beauty. It criss-crosses Fourth Creek, running through the Morialta Valley, and there are three waterfalls to see along the way (which dry out in the middle of summer).

Begin in the lower car park and follow the dirt path through the Recreation Area, past the hut, barbecues and playground. Continue on, not crossing any bridges, until the trail turns into Morialta Falls Road.

Follow the path on the side of the road to the top carpark, where the road ends. After passing through, cross the first bridge on your left and begin a steep climb of about 800 metres.

At the first intersection turn right and keep ploughing uphill. This is the first of three switchbacks encountered before the top. On the third switchback, turn right.

At the top of the climb, stairs on the right hand side lead down to Deep View lookout where you can take a breather and soak in the views before climbing back up to rejoin the trail. Turn right and take the downhill route.

It's a stretch of undulating technical trail before a short descent takes you into a clearing. Run past the descending firetrack and take the



singletrack that veers off the right hand side. A green signpost indicates this semi-hidden trail, which is part of the Yurrebilla Trail.

Descend until hitting the T-junction at the end; turn left and start running up to Second Falls. Passing the bridge on your right, continue the gradual uphill following the Yurrebilla markers. You'll skip across a couple of creek crossings before likely taking a break at the bottom of Third Falls.

Re-trace your steps to the Second Falls Bridge on your left. Cross it, have a look over the cliff-edge, and continue all the way to Kookaburra Rock Lookout, which is another prime spot for a rest as there is almost always a strong breeze blowing.

Look for the unmarked Hogans Hill singletrack, which heads uphill from Kookaburra Rock lookout. This is the final climb, and it is very steep. If in doubt, go higher. Keep climbing past the wooden bench until you meet Norton Summit road, then turn right and descend the singletrack.

This is the final downhill – just follow the singletrack down (look out for mountain bike riders) until you reach a fence down the bottom which you'll jump before crossing the road and turning right. After 100 metres turn left to follow the trail back down to the carpark.

## POST RUN GOODNESS >

You're probably going to be hungry, so head down to the Rostrevor Pizza Bar [www.rostrevorpizzabar.com.au](http://www.rostrevorpizzabar.com.au)

It's a classic family run pizza shop, with an award winning cheese pizza. The pizza sizes are very generous, but if you are ravenous it is possible to devour a whole family size pizza between two.

If you need to cool down and refuel after running the whole way up Hogan's Hill, make the 10 minutes drive to Gelato Bello [www.gelatobello.com.au](http://www.gelatobello.com.au)

There are heaps of flavours to choose from and you can buy two litre tubs if you want to save some for later indulgence. Common favourites include the rich and smooth Nutella, and the deliciously tangy Lemon.



## THE SWEEP >

**Celebrating the true heroes of trail running, the ones who battle it out on trail for the longest time. They may be last, but they're among the toughest...**

**Name** > Wayne Bowler

**Age** > 45

**Profession** > Accountant

**Event** > Speight's West Coaster, NZ

**Distance** > 30km

**Category** > Masters

**Trail running for** > nine years

*Image* > Total Sport

[www.totalsport.co.nz](http://www.totalsport.co.nz)

“Towards the end those climbs just seemed to get bigger and bigger! I came over the last one to see the finish in the distance but unfortunately it meant I had to try and run if I was going to break seven hours. Exhausted but very happy, I just made it. But then just getting to the finish makes for a successful day.”

# SUBSCRIBE?

So, you and I. We don't really know each other that much yet, do we? We met randomly; was it friends who introduced us or were we seeking each other out in that forest of free-for-all that is the Internet? I mean, we know we have a common interest – trail running. Great start to a relationship. But does that mean we gotta run off to the altar of capitalism and get hitched? You saying I do and proffering your credit card as security of your undying adoration; me, like any dutiful partner, spending your money and, if I'm in the mood, reciprocating with a bit of dirty talk. But really, should we rush things? I mean, this is the age of discernment. Rushed love can be sweet but also short and, you know, I'm in this for the long haul. So I tell you what – hold your credit card for now. I'm not saying I'm easy, but let's just say for now I'm free. Let's run the trails together, mull over the latest bit of kit together, gossip about who's doing the wild thing – and see if we like each other more than just a passing fancy? Then, once I've shown you there's a little depth to my deeds, then maybe we can get hitched as a proper couple in magazine matrimony via the church of Latter Day Subscriptions.

Until then, I'll be on the downloadable, free and easy.

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# HARDCOPY?

## YES PLEASE...

We love our e-zine. It may be online, all glowing and fresh like a spring morning on your screen, but we reckon you can still smell the grit and stomped on possum poo wafting across the wireless net, direct from our pages to your living room as real as if you were clomping (sorry, floating like a butterfly, buzzing like a bee) through the wilderness yourself.

Yet we like real dirt, too. And we know that while getting juiced up about a good trail bolt by reading about it is great for the motivation, nothing beats the real thing.

And so it is with a magazine. In this world of virtual everything, there remains something rich and satisfying about touching something, including the paper and print that has captured, in the blood of our contributors (ink), all those trails and tribulations we love so much.

But we do prefer our trees standing, to weave through mainly. So we've come to the decision that less is more and we are collating the very best of *Trail Run Mag* every two editions for biannual limited print run *TRM Collectors' Editions*.

The first is due out later this year (end November). So, if you want one, speak now or forever lament your tardiness. Once they are sold out, there's no reprinting.

**Copies will be AU\$20+P/H from Australia to wherever you reside.**

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