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# About 8k



Townsville Running Festival  
2014



# TRF done and dusted.....



**Michael Marrinan - Marathon**

*This was my first marathon. It was good getting to Pallarenda but met a gale on the way back. I had a target time of 3.30 and did 3.38. Had to beat Mum's best time which was around 3.45. Was too knackered to enjoy the festival and will do a half next year to suck in the extra bits like the displays. Will do a heap of marathons like Geoff and those old boys who have done 10.*



**Donald Hyland - 10k**

*This was my first 10k in a big event. I did 1hr 17min and it was a good day. Will do it again and try to go a bit faster.*



**Angela Howell - 10k**

*I did very little training leading up to the run because of a hamstring injury. Still felt good though and was 3rd in my age group.*



**Benjamin Ashkettle - Marathon (Set a new all-time all-course Townsville marathon record of 2hr 22min 49sec)**

*Rated the result better than my 2hr 19min in Texas last year, because the Townsville course was accurately measured.*



**Sherry Cox - 10k**

*My first 10k. First time I have got a medal in my life. Really enjoyed the party people on the lawn at the Esplanade. My goal next year is the half marathon.*



**Scott McInnes - Marathon**

*Happy!! Lasted another marathon, 5th in Townsville and 11 all up. The event is getting better, great coarse - Pallarenda is the challenging bit. Recommend it for anyone's first-up marathon.*





## SPEED BUMPS



KIWI optometrist **Collette Read** has enjoyed another successful holiday in the North. A Townsville marathon regular since her first-up win in 2010, Collette was third woman in 2011, second in 2012, fourth in 2013 and third again this year in 3hr 14min. A week later she won her 30 to 44-year age group in the Towers fun run. Collette is now half-way towards becoming a Golden Oldie like **Steve Titmus**, **Wayne Crase** and **Bernie Norris**, who finished their 10<sup>th</sup> Townsville marathon and were rewarded with permanent numbers. Well done everyone.

\* \* \*



Talking about Kiwis, **Toni Ferguson** gave a big thumbs-up to the mud and drizzle in the opening race of the Running Works' cross-country series on Saturday. A dirt-tracker from way back, Toni rated the puddly run around Bicentennial Park her most enjoyable ever in Townsville. **Col Ryan**, another scrapper, looked on a high too, probably because of the Pyramid a week earlier. The waterholes were tailor-made for **Mike Donoghue**, but he's resting a sore knee, hoping to be fit for an off-road marathon through the WWI battlefield of the Somme in France in early September.

\* \* \*



LIFE member **Peter Lahiff**, a nine-times Townsville marathon man, was happy with his decision to run the half-marathon at the festival. He won the over-75 division in 1hr 59min 42sec, equating to 5min 40sec/ km, a result placing him well up with his peers anywhere in the world.

\* \* \*



THE urge to persevere and prevail over 42.2km seems to run in the blood in NQ. This year's Tony Ireland Marathon finishers included **Pete**, **Kath** and **Greta Neimanis** and **Dee** and **Ajia-Moon Flynn-Pittar**. Pete and Kath were first and eighth respectively in the men's and women's 50-59 div and Greta fourth in the women's 18-29 div. Dee was second woman 50-59 and daughter Ajia-Moon fifth woman 18-29. Twenty years after **Isa Marrinan** ran her PB 3hr 44min Townsville marathon, son **Michael** finished his first in 3hr 38min and thanked **Isa** later for giving him a tough target to beat.

\* \* \*



WELCOME home **Stu Borwick**. Since being posted back to Townsville a few months ago Stuey has completed his 11<sup>th</sup> iron man race - at Port Macquarie in early April - run the Townsville half-marathon and is thinking of having a go at the Port Douglas half in November.

\* \* \*



**Jo Stacey** has made a date with a surgeon to fix the niggly knee that has proved a major speed bump this year. She hopes the operation next month will see her back on the road before too long. Meanwhile, Jo has become acquainted with nearly every course in the TRR calendar as a member of Mike D's blue cone crew. Onya Jo.

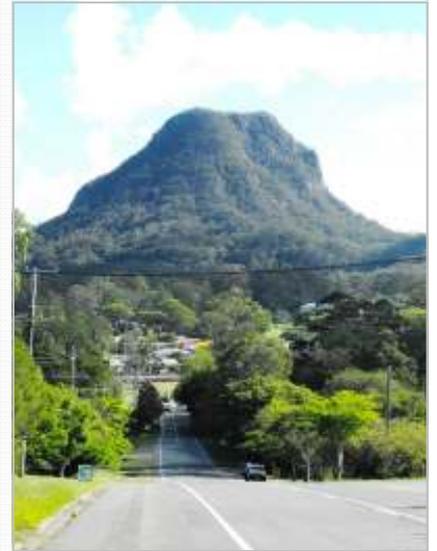
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## POMONA - KING OF THE MOUNTAIN *by Craig Budden*

For most amateur runners, the holy grail is the sub-3 hour marathon but I've always set my sights a little higher – 448m above sea level, to be precise. That's the height of Pomona's Mt Cooroora, scene of Australia's best mountain race, the legendary King of the Mountain (they're not as progressive as Townsville – there is still no Queen of the Mountain).

Pomona is a beautiful little town in the Sunshine Coast hinterland – just inland from Noosa. It has a village feel, the people are incredibly friendly and the bakery, alone, makes it worth the trip. Dominating Pomona is the impressive and intimidating Mt Cooroora. It's a volcanic plug (similar to the nearby Glasshouse Mountains), so rather than rising gently out of its foothills, it juts skyward in a gravity-defying manner. As seems to be the case in every town with a dominant peak, there is an annual race up and down that peak. Pomona has a 3-day festival based around its race which draws 10 000 people each year. This is the signature event for the



region, with all sorts of sporting and cultural events across the weekend - rides, bands, market stalls - all just a prelude to the feature event – the Bendigo Bank International Mountain Challenge (the official name for the main race of the Wimmers King of the Mountain Festival). Words don't really do justice when trying to describe the course. The length used to be listed as 4.6km but now the claim seems to be 4.2. For what it's worth, my GPS watch says it's 3.8km - 1.9 each way. However, I've never been confident of the accuracy of GPS watches when the terrain is this steep. It certainly feels at least twice as long as the watch readings suggest.

The start line is at 110m above sea level and the first 1.4km is quite civilised. A steep climb out of the town is followed by a sharp descent into a deep gully and then a long, steady rise through the forest to the base of the mountain proper. At the 1.4km mark, the altitude has increased by 51m.

The next phase is extremely steep and on a faint footpad – it's similar to the goat track (the real goat track, not the Cudtheringa) but rougher and there are no steps. In 200m across the ground, another 81m of altitude is gained.

Now, things start to get really interesting. The main climb is on dangerously steep rock. The GPS will show you only cover 300m in distance but gain 206m in height. This section involves hands as much as feet as runners scramble up the rock face. Three batches of aluminium stairs and a metal chain can help with the climb and knowing how and when to exploit these is critical.

From the summit, a short loop sends runners back down the same route. If you haven't already questioned your sanity, you certainly do on the way down. Even as someone who loves a wild descent, I can admit this is madness.....but it's exhilarating madness! Fitness, technique, balance, quick thinking and luck all play their part but what is needed in great quantities on the way down is courage. A mistake here could be dire but thankfully, once you've ascended the mountain, the oxygen isn't getting to your brain and you don't think about the risks.

Once back on the forest trail, the main challenge is trying to run with completely spent quads (anyone who's run Walsh's Pyramid will know what I mean). The secret weapon is the crowd. There is enthusiastic support along the forest trail but it increases dramatically as you approach town. From about 1km out, you hear the roar and it spurs you on. You can feel yourself getting stronger as the noise gets louder and you become desperate to get closer. There is a big screen in the main park, showing parts of the race and marshalls radio back progress, so the anticipation as runners approach gets the masses into a frenzy. Before the race, runners are introduced and a race program lets spectators link numbers and names. Consequently, some



people cheer you on by name – a definite boost on the course, especially climbing out of that final gully.

I'm not sure when I first heard of this race but I remember deciding, as a teenager, that I would complete it one day. Naturally, having lived within 2 hours of it for most of my life, I waited until I moved 1300km away to finally turn intentions into action and enter the thing. My first campaign was in 2007 and my expectations were minimal. I had read about the sub-30 club (for those able to finish in under 30 minutes) but I'd never run the actual course so didn't know if that was attainable for me. When I ran 30:49 on my first go, I immediately had a new goal – I needed to join that sub-30 club. Unfortunately, I snapped my ankle later that year and couldn't run for 18 months. Then a combination of injuries and travel meant I couldn't get back to Pomona until 2012.

The 2012 attempt was doomed from the start. I arrived back home from an overseas holiday 6 weeks before the race and thought I could compensate for the brevity of my preparation by increasing the intensity. The predictable result was a badly torn hamstring. I went through the motions of competing in the race but was not able to train properly in the 3 weeks leading up to the event and got to the start line well below full fitness. To my surprise, I ran 31:05, came 13<sup>th</sup> overall and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the veterans category, pocketing \$125 prize money along the way. I was buoyed by this result, reasoning that if I could run 31:05 half fit, the sub-30 was within my reach.

I already had my running plans secured for 2013, so 2014 was established as my date with destiny – one last shot at the goal which had evolved into something of an obsession. My last 2013 obligation was the Fairfield Waters run on September 21. From that point on, my gaze was firmly fixed upon July 27, 2014 - Pomona King of the Mountain. Every aspect of my training after that was designed with Pomona in mind. My already hill-heavy running program had even more altitude injected as I flirted with injury, trying to squeeze every last bit of performance from my long-suffering body. It wasn't just running – there were also whole-body workouts, meticulous injury management activities, endless physio, course studying and even a training camp on location (OK, "camp" may be a bit misleading – I stayed in a luxury resort in Noosa). Several times, I pushed it too far and produced minor hamstring tears but if I've developed one area of expertise from running, it's accelerated hamstring rehab. More troubling was the Osteitis Pubis I developed in the final months of preparation. Fortunately, I managed to settle this down as well and arrived in Pomona the day before the race as fit as I have ever been.

Race day saw me following my now-familiar routine, with the main challenge being to manage anticipation and keep nerves under control. My partner, Lorna, and I left our bunker at the Cooroy Motel and headed into Pomona about 12:30pm. It was 26 deg, way hotter than usual and I wasn't feeling optimistic about a fast time. We soaked up the atmosphere of the festival for a while before I headed into the backstreets to warm up before the race briefing at 1:45. After the briefing, it was time to pin on the number plates and go to the runners' enclosure for the introductions.

The introduction of competitors is an interesting feature of the race. One by one, runners are called up and while we run up and down a 200m loop in front of the main crowd, the MC gives a summary of our story and the crowd is incredibly generous in its support. We all grumble about this part and wish we could just get on with the race but truth be told, it feels fantastic. One of the reasons this is my favourite running event (and several other out-of-towners have said the same thing) is the warmth of the people of Pomona towards the runners. They genuinely appreciate that you are prepared to put in the effort and give their town a reason for a festival. It doesn't matter that they don't know you, they will cheer you with all their might and to be cheered by strangers is a touching experience. It's not a festival where the race goes on in the background; everyone and everything stops for the big race. People will wish you well before the race or congratulate you after it as you



pass them in the street. They also know the significance of the sub-30 club and it is a goal for many. The policeman who breathalysed me on the way home after the race in 2012 asked what time I ran and upon hearing the answer, immediately encouraged me to come back and break 30.

Another aspect of the introductions (I'm not sure if it's an advantage or a disadvantage) is hearing everyone else's credentials. The field is limited to 100 and when you apply, you have to summarise your running achievements. The organisers certainly don't restrict the race to elite runners but the field is a quality one. This event has a sister race in New Zealand and category winners from there get sponsored entry into the King of the Mountain and vice versa. Several of the regular competitors have represented Australia. This year's starters included Aaron Knight, who lived in Townsville in 2005 and won the King of the Castle and Castle Hill track race, as well as completing a 2:51 marathon. He now lives at the base of Mt Bogong in Victoria and has continued to excel in mountain running, with a 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Bright 4-peaks challenge to his credit.

Finally, all of the pre-race fanfare was over and it was time to get down to business. As we toed the line and waited for the starter's gun, I felt surprisingly calm. This race was very important to me and I'd thought of little else in the weeks prior. I had run the race in my head 1000 times, working through all manner of possible situations and how to respond but when the 3pm start arrived, it was just another race and I approached it no differently from how I approach a garden-variety club run.

At 3pm, the gun went off, the crowd cheered and we all surged up Memorial Ave, turned left into Hospital St and headed off to take on the mountain. Most runners try to attack from the outset but I just wanted to settle in to a nice rhythm and build steadily towards the summit. Consequently, I found myself about mid-pack early on but I was not concerned – I knew my race plan and was paying very little attention to anyone else. I made up quite a few places on the descent into the gully and by the time we reached the start of the serious climb, I was in 37<sup>th</sup> place but more importantly, my split was 6:02 – right on target.

As the track steepened, my training and strategy began to pay off. I ran the entire mid-section, where most people walk nearly all of it, so I worked my way through the field at a good rate. Similarly, on the main climb, I was able to run the stair sections and a couple of other parts where others couldn't get to their feet. With legs and lungs burning, I managed to break into a trot on the summit and at the halfway point, I was in 9<sup>th</sup>. My progressive times were 9:34 at the start of the big climb and 18:35 at the top. I was right in the sub-30 hunt and it was all riding on the descent.

The descent was where I had my doubts. I knew I was fit enough to break 30 minutes but I wasn't sure I still had the bottle. My practice runs in April were a little too timid for the sub-30 club and I had been plagued with doubts ever since. Was I now too old and sensible to let myself go on the downhill? The answer, apparently, is "no". In the heat of the battle, I threw caution to the wind as I hurled myself over the edge of Mt Cooroora. I belted down the rough track like I was 18 years old, ricocheting off trees, swinging off the chain and catching several near-topples in the nick of time.

Unfortunately, I must have bumped my watch at some point and put it on a different view. This meant that the time was in a tiny font and I couldn't pick it up as I glanced mid-air at my checkpoint. I got to the bottom of the mountain section without knowing how I was tracking (very distressing for a data freak like me). It wasn't until I steadied myself a little down the track that I was able to get a look at my time – 24:55 and I was already well clear of the mountain track. This was excellent news – sub-30 was well within my grasp but my legs were dead. I couldn't remember feeling this empty in the legs before. I did everything I could to maintain pace – I stayed calm, concentrated on technique, picked the most efficient lines and pushed as hard as I could. It felt fast but as you all know, sometimes you can feel like you're flying when you're actually shuffling.

Getting close to town, the crowds started to work their magic. As I burst out of the final gully, their encouragement got the adrenaline pumping and my intensity lifted to near maximum. I re-entered the streets of Pomona in full flight and sprinted along Hospital St to the generous cheers of the crowd. I even got into the spirit and obliged the kids hanging over the fence



requesting high-fives.

Rounding the corner into Memorial Ave is a tense moment. I don't allow myself to look at my watch, outside of my 5 designated checkpoints, so I don't know if I'm succeeding or failing until I round the last corner and see the clock over the finish line. It's 110m downhill to the finish from the corner but with seriously depleted legs. Experience tells me that I need at least 17 seconds to get home from here, which means that no more than 29:42 can have elapsed on that clock when I first see it. As I rounded the corner and looked for the clock, sweat in my eyes prevented me from knowing the time for a second. As my eyes cleared, I saw the clock and it read 29:12. I was going to make it! There was no need to sprint at this point but every aspect of my training had conditioned me to give everything I have, so I attacked the last 100m with everything I could muster. The crowd responded to my effort and in turn, I lifted again in response to their support – it's one of my fondest sporting memories.

I crossed the line in 29:28. At first, I was too exhausted and short on oxygen to register the result but after finding a place in the runner's enclosure to sit, pouring a bottle of water over my head, unlacing my shoes (yes Tony, I do that after every race) and starting to catch my breath, I began to appreciate that all of that time and effort had been worth it and I had finally achieved my most coveted running goal. I heard Lorna call my name from beyond the barricade and I could see how happy she was for me and I felt as good as running has ever made me feel.

As it happens, I finished 9<sup>th</sup> overall, 2<sup>nd</sup> in the veterans' category (to Aaron Knight) and won another \$125 but for me, all that matters is that I ran sub-30. The certificate I received for doing so is only 21cm by 14cm and has no financial value but it says "Welcome to the sub-30 club" and as such, is one of my most treasured possessions. Anyone who has ever had to work hard for a goal that mattered to them (i.e. most of you) will know exactly what I mean.

If anyone is interested in entering the King of the Mountain, feel free to ask me about it. As you can see, I am happy to discuss it at length (and I have photographed the entire course). It's a great event, expertly organised and a lot of fun but will not be everybody's cup of tea. There are obvious similarities with the Great Pyramid Race in Gordonvale but it's not quite the same animal. Pomona is nowhere near as long but is a lot steeper, so it is a bit more dangerous and extremely intense. In short, the Pyramid is a bit like being suffocated, where Pomona is more like being stabbed.



# RACE REPORT CHARTERS TOWERS 9TH AUGUST 2014

By Michael Fitzsimmons

About 30 from Townsville travelled up for the Healthy Lifestyle 10k fun. The course climbs gently for about 2k and then hits the base of a hill before a steeper climb. Then downhill via steps finishing with a meandering run through town and park. It was a friendly atmosphere and great to see so many kids running in school uniform. This year's winners were **Gabriella Springall** and **Tesfa Nethery** (both from Townsville).



**Lee Kirby** was first veteran home in the Great Pyramid Race at Gordonvale. It was **Lia's** first Pyramid. She says "It was the hardest course I've been on but really enjoyed it .. the views, the camaraderie, the crazy steepness of it and the joy in finishing. Will probably be back but not for a couple of years .. definitely pleased James took me training on Castle Hill beforehand"



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