

THE SPARTAN

CLUB PATRON - Robert de Castella

August 2022

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FROM THE PRESIDENT **Jay Fleming (S1012)**

Even allowing for some seasonal confusion of weather cycles exacerbated by climate change, running past trees and shrubs bursting into full bloom usually means it's time to say ... "Welcome to the start of Spring Spartans!" We have Father's Day coming up, the Spartan President's age is about to start with a 6 for the very first time, and of course we have our first Spartans AGM for 3 years. I'm so looking forward to having so many of us gathered in the same room again! Monday September 12 will be a fantastic night and we really look forward to Kevin sharing his diverse journey with us as well as presenting incoming and milestone singlets, including some retrospective presentations for those presented during our 2020, 2021 virtual AGM's.

Something organisations and entities are also getting a lot better at is plugging into the magic of networking. It used to be a very limiting and such a 'last century' concept to believe that accepting a networking or promotional proposal from someone reaching out would somehow invoke the 'slippery slope' argument and the floodgates would somehow open requiring the saying of 'yes' to countless other such proposals as a precedent had been set. The reality is there are no floodgates and any hyper-vigilance against 'being used' is totally misplaced as organisations are simply reaching out to explore alignment with each other trying to forge a way forward in an uncertain world. On this theme, we have been approached by [RunNation Film Festival](#) who are back after a long COVID hiatus.

Inspirational artworks are fantastic for kindling our inner fire and frankly, I would rather attend these than works with themes that drain the human spirit. We have said yes to promoting, supporting and attending screenings of inspirational films, not only to support the enterprise, but also as an added reason for Spartans to get together for pre-movie drinks or a bite at a café like Borsch, Vodka and Tears just up the road in Chapel Street. I found last night's screening at The Astor Theatre attended by several Spartans extremely uplifting. I felt I was among 'my people' and I think most of us enjoy such alignment, regardless if the pursuit is crocheting, carpentry, cooking or running as we don't feel the need to explain our connection. It remains unspoken because they just 'get it'. We're among 'our people'

The other side of stifling lockdowns has seen a bearable COVID normal where we have been able to attend events regionally, interstate and overseas. After being repressed for so long, many Spartans have exploded into a frenzy of activity in diverse geographical locations and have been happy to share their experiences. I'm immensely proud to be part of such an inspirational group of individuals and I always feel uplifted after being in the company of Spartans, either on the phone, at meetings or at Club Runs. I'm even prouder of the fact that as a society, we are maturing to the point of being okay about sharing our remarkable experiences with others, as evidenced by the increasing number of written contributions being submitted. It has taken a while for the Australian culture to be okay about sharing and celebrating one's successes without it being misprocessed as skiting or bragging.

I'm continually in awe of what drives us to seek our breaking point ... to do something until we either pass out, break bones or otherwise need transporting to an acute care facility for medical or life-saving attention. Such moments rarely come to us during Zen stages of life where all is going smoothly, or mundane stages of life where we've just put the washing out on the line or emptied the dishwasher. Such moments usually find us during or after life-changing and profound episodes in our life where something snaps inside and we feel totally free with nothing to lose, and we make the decision to make the decision to find our breaking point. From my conversations with people, these life-changing events never felt good at the time but without exception, everyone I've spoken with has been eternally grateful these events came along to interrupt the previous life of sameness, drudgery and quiet desperation they were living without realising it at the time. They have been so grateful for their new approach to life and several have described life since as 'really living' instead of 'simply existing'. A couple have even wished their catastrophic episodes had happened earlier in life to snap them out of their old life and wasted years so they could start their 'real life' sooner. We look forward to speaking with such individuals on our Spartan podcast series so that those of us listening may vicariously experience their moments of awakening, until perhaps our own moments find us and we feel compelled or even OK to share them with others yet to experience their own. I think it's fantastic that none of us know what may find us! Love the beauty of uncertainty!

'Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose' – Janis Joplin

AGM GUEST SPEAKER, Kevin Cassidy

Kevin started athletics at school then joined Coburg Harriers aged 16. He loved the 800 and 1500 winning both at the 1976 high schools carnival at the old Olympic Park. In 1977 just before turning 17, he ran the State marathon championship at Point Cook in the days before the Melbourne Marathon in 3:26

He spent a few years on the AFL/VFL umpires list before the world of ultramarathons captured his imagination in 1985. Road and track races were all that was available back then and he ran many 50 mile, 100km and 24 hour events at a reasonable level.

Trail running began to become popular and the 100 mile distance was considered the ultimate test. He ran many trails around the country but the 100 milers back then were all in the US. He ran the four major 100 milers in the US during the 90s. All included heat, cold and altitude requiring time to acclimatize to the conditions. The four events were known at the time as the Grand Slam.

In 1996, a friend of his, Mick Whiteoak (S85), got into his ear about trying swimming and entered Kevin in the Point Lonsdale 1.2km Ripview Swim. Kevin did one 1.2km training swim at the Coburg indoor pool requiring several stops along the way. As nervous as a kitten and convinced he'd need rescuing, he surprised himself by finishing and actually enjoying the experience.



In 2002, he met an English Channel swimmer while competing at the Emergency Services Games at the Police Academy [Kevin was in the Fire Brigade for 30 years]. Senior Constable Paul Maguire had just returned from swimming the Channel and Kevin was both captivated and awestruck by his account. When his running days died in 2006 with a variety of injuries, plans of an English Channel swim took hold and the freezing waters of the bay in winter became his new home.

This all lead to not only swimming the English Channel, but also conquering the Catalina to California channel and the circumnavigation of Manhattan Island in what is now known as the World Triple Crown of open water swimming. 2017 also saw a conquering of Cook Strait, a very treacherous and rarely conquered 26km body of water that separates NZ's two islands. In 2021, he was inducted into the Australian Marathon Swimmers Hall of Fame. He also achieved the goal of doing the major long distance swim in every state and before calling time on swimming in 2017.

Since 2017, his focus has been on Racewalking. His first serious winter in 2018 saw rapid improvements in all distances from 1500 metres to 20km. In those four years since, he has collected several state and national age group championship wins and competed in the recent World Masters Championships in Finland.

MILESTONES TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED AT THE AGM

As we all know our Club recognises milestones of any runner who has completed (or is about to complete) 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 or 40 Melbourne Marathons so it's important that when you have a milestone coming up you let us know. So, if you have an upcoming milestone or a past milestone that hasn't been recognised as yet, please contact Felicity Doolan at Spartans.team@hotmail.com or via Mob: 0411 405 529 as soon as possible as singlet presentations are currently being arranged. If you cannot find all your times still contact Felicity as she may be able to help.

**Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club
Annual General Meeting
Monday, 12 September 2022 at 7:00 pm for 7:30 pm start
Venue - AFL Dining Room, Melbourne Cricket Ground**

All Spartans and their families are most welcome. However, given the substantial cost of this event a \$5.00 charge will apply for all non-Spartans.

The only thing we do ask (for MCG Security and catering purposes) is that you let us know the names of all those attending.

RSVP by 1 September 2022 to either:

Felicity Doolan: spartans.team@hotmail.com or Mob: 0411 405 529
John Dean: jkdeano@hotmail.com Mob: 0481 328 494 or Ph.9337 7179

How to get there

AFL Dining Room – Level 2

Coming by foot: Enter via Gate 6A and take lifts 14 or 15 to Level 2
Coming by car: Enter via Entrance E off Brunton Ave. Park close to lifts 14 and 15 and take lift to Level 2

[Download a map of MCG showing directions](#)

THE MARATHON DAY TENT

IMG provides a tent for marathon day and we have someone there from early morning until the last stragglers arrive. Spartans are invited to leave their bags at the tent and financial Spartans can have a massage after the event. Drinks and fruit are provided. The tent provides a wonderful opportunity to share stories of the day as well begin the long process of recuperation.

SPARTAN STORIES

Incoming siblings Jackie Ginefra and Rodney Vella on page 4.

Lorraine Allen describes her transformation from couch potato to Ironman finisher starting on page 6.

Hugh Creamer tells us why he is running the Loch Ness marathon rather than the Melbourne marathon on page 7.

Matt Callaghan shares his experiences as a pacer in the 217 km Badwater event in Death Valley, starting on page 13.

SIBLING SPARTANS Jackie Ginefra and Rodney Vella (Incoming)

2022 will become our 10th Marathon Melbourne as a Brother and Sister Combo but thanks to Covid this should have happened two years ago. Never would either of us ever have thought over our lifetime that we would be running together yet alone running for so long to achieve this wonderful experience on October 2nd.



exhilarating and quite emotional.

After a week or so of recovery we both decided how good it would be to run a marathon in every state of Australia and there lay the foundation of our Journey. Our lives became entrenched in training runs, bike rides, gym workouts and quite a bit of research in what to eat, how to train and even what watch to buy. Garmin become our best friend 😊

We were joined by friends for some of our marathons but together we completed this journey over a 4-year period which encompassed Perth, Barossa Valley SA, Melbourne, Sydney Blackmores, Canberra, Hobart Cadbury, Uluru and even NZ- Christchurch.



My proudest moment was in 2018 when my daughter decided she wanted to run a marathon with me. We trained together for months alongside my brother and just two weeks out from the Gold Coast Marathon I rolled my ankle and that was it for me 😞 Although not able to run this with her I was content in knowing that my brother Rod would run with her till the end and this they did!!! I was both happy and sad at that very moment knowing I too should have been there. Little bumps happen along the journey and it is how you deal with those that make you stronger.

Both Rod and myself have slowed down on the Marathons over the past few years but our goal is to continue with Melbourne and become part of something special by becoming Spartans. We will continue running for as long as our bodies allow us

to and age will never be a barrier. The years we have given and the training we have put in will be worth every step into the MCG this October to become Spartans together 😊

MY RUNNING STORY Lorraine Allen SF11

I started running when I was around 25 years of age as my partner George (now hubby) ran to stay fit for tennis so as the saying goes if you can't beat them join them. I was a smoker and carried a bit of weight at the time in fact I was pretty much a couch potato so it was a challenge just to get started.

When I completed my first 2.5km walk/jog the first thing I did when I finished was have a cigarette! Well needless to say that did not last and I gave up the cigarettes, lost a little weight and kept at this running fad. As the weeks went passed I could run the whole 2.5km then 5 km. My aim was to get to 10km and enter my first fun run event distance of 14km (how hard can another 4km be) needless to say I was spent by the end however I thought this running caper is a good thing and so went on to do half marathons. I am not fast but found I had good endurance.



After a couple of years I saw an advertisement for the Big M Melbourne marathon and 'Deek' was showing us all how good marathon running was so I said to George why don't we do the marathon. He thought I had lost my mind however in 1984 we stood together (and finished together) at the start line of our very 1st marathon. *(Picture at left)*

We trained hard and as everyone does has a time that they would like to do and ours was to break 4 hours. We could do ½ marathons in around 1 hour 40 minutes back in those days so 4 hours

should be heaps of time. Well I don't have to tell anyone reading this story how wrong this line of thinking can be. It took us until our 3rd marathon to break the elusive 4 hour mark albeit by minutes.

My memory of finishing my 1st marathon will never fade. Family members were at the finish to cheer me and George across the finish line. We wandered over to a tree for some shade as it was a warm day and both of us just slid down the trunk to the ground, there was our first mistake having no idea how quick you stiffen up and then trying to get up off the ground. They almost had to carry us home from that point. We had a family barbecue to celebrate our achievement not for one minute realizing just how much 42.2kms takes out of you. The next morning I vowed and declared "never again" (not the last time I've said that) I thought I had done some serious damage to my muscles as I could barely get out of bed. I thought my body would never recover but of course my body and mind did recover. I got hooked on this marathon running challenge.

I ran the Melbourne marathon most years after 1984 and as the years passed I noticed this green Spartan singlet with 10 years on it and thought I want one of them and to become a Spartan. Thinking I had to run 10 Melbourne marathons in a row! 10 marathons (can't be too hard) and as most of you know it just snowballs from 10 as long as the body holds up 15 marathons become the next challenge and before you know it you're heading for number 25 and then the biggest challenge is to make it to 30 marathons.

I have had many running partners over the years. George from memory did 11/12 marathons and became a Spartan, then a good friend did a few with me and in the later years my brother ran with me. He was planning on becoming a Spartan, he was half way there, however a very nasty ankle injury the day before his 6th marathon put a halt to his running days.



I have been very fortunate in the sense I have not suffered a lot of injuries over my running career as I took up triathlons and I found the cross training extremely helpful in keeping injuries at bay. With my marathon running and triathlon training it gave me all the endurance (body & mind) needed for these long events. I am now a lot slower than I was when I started but I still enjoy challenging and pushing myself.

To this day I have completed 31 Melbourne marathons, 9 Great Ocean road marathons (45km), 2 Hobart marathons, 1 Gold Coast marathon, 1 Shepparton marathon, and 12 marathons at the end of an Ironman triathlon (3.8k swim/180.1k ride/42.2 run). I have every intention of still fronting up to the start line of the Melbourne marathon for as long as my mind and body allow me to.

(Ed: Lorraine is the second female Hall of Fame member)

MY RUNNING STORY Hugh Creamer S180



I was born in Glasgow, but migrated to Australia at 4 years of age. As I turned 75 this year I figured that I should run at least one marathon in the country of my birth before age catches up with me (it is breathing down my neck at the moment).

I was also diagnosed with Parkinsons Disease in December 2017. So training and competing is getting a little more problematic as time progresses. However, I plan to use the Loch Ness marathon, even though it will mean missing a Melbourne run, as a fund raising event for ['Fight Parkinsons Victoria'](#).

One story that I tell folk when they enquire about my marathon adventures is - I set out on my first one (the second Melbourne) thinking that it was just an extended 10km run and that I should

be able to achieve a sub 3 hour time as my best 10km road time was 32 minutes. I got to the half way mark at Moorabbin Town Hall in about 1:35, but then it took me 3:44 to finish. I realised that I needed to train more for the marathon and put in a year of serious distance training, resulting in the next Melbourne in 2:44. So although I took 1 hour of my first run time it then took me 5 years of hard training to knock 15 minutes off and get down to the 2:30 mark.

I fully intend to wear my Spartans Hall of Fame singlet for the Loch Ness event, and will do my utmost to promote the Melbourne marathon and the Spartans Club.

(Ed: Hugh is a Hall of Fame member having completed 32 Melbournes with a best time of 2:30:55 in 1985)

Tropical Carrot cake **Anne Ziogos SF45**

Ingredients

1 cup plain flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon mixed spice
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raw sugar
1 large carrot
200 g crushed pineapple
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnuts crushed
2 eggs, beaten
5 tablespoons olive oil or vegetable oil



Method

1. Sift all dry ingredients in a bowl
2. Add all wet ingredients and mix well.
3. Grease and flour rectangular baking tin
4. Bake in a 180-degree oven for 35-40 minutes (always check to see if the cake is fully cooked by inserting a skewer)

Let the cake cool before icing.

Icing

250 g crème cheese, 1 tablespoon yoghurt, 1 teaspoon vanilla essence, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sifted icing sugar
Mix all ingredients together and spread on the cool cake.
ENJOY!!!!

See [collected recipes](#) from previous newsletters.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER? David Foskey

Do you have a story about your path to becoming a Spartan, or would you like to pay a tribute? We prefer articles in the range of 200 to 2000 words, but that's a guide only. Contact us to discuss at djfoskey@ozemail.com.au If you have missed a deadline, don't worry, there is always the next issue!

If you have some photographs that you would like to add to our [photographs collection](#), please send them in!

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

If you would like to be added to our mailing list or if you know someone who might like to join, [please use this link](#)

We have lost contact with many of our older members. If you know a Spartan who doesn't receive our emails and is on email, please encourage them to use the above link. We deliberately limit the number of emails we send, and all have an unsubscribe link.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOW BEING ACCEPTED FOR 2022/2023

The Spartan financial year is 1 July to 30 June, so fees for 2022/2023 are now being accepted. Can't remember if you have paid for 2021/22? Look up your name via this link: <http://melbournemarathonspartans.com/financial-spartans/>.

\$20 via EFT: Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club BSB: 633-000 Account No: 139201743 Please include name and/or Spartan Number	Cheque for \$20 via Post: "Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club" PO Box 162 Rosanna Vic 3084 Please include name and/or Spartan Number
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You can also now [pay online](#).

If you are a current member, you do not need to fill in a Membership Form* but please advise of any changes to your contact details via spartans.team@hotmail.com. OR*: download the [membership form](#) and email or post it in.

MERCHANDISE AT THE AGM AND EXPO

The club will have available caps, visors, copies of "The Wall", mugs, tattoos and bib clips. The "new T-shirts" and [Spartan jackets](#) will not be available at the MCG but must be pre-ordered for delivery by mail. The merchandise can also be purchased at the Expo tent which IMG kindly provides.



Helen van der Nagel (SF0043) is shown at left wearing the new 10 year T-shirt. [Check out the other options](#) available, including a generic training shirt which can come with long-sleeves.

Our caps, mugs, stickers are described [here](#).

We have some copies of Doug Wilson's book "Kundalini Running" available for \$20. Contact Jay Fleming at flemingjay2@gmail.com.

We still have copies available of "[The Wall](#)" at the bargain price of \$10.



We have clips that can be used to secure race numbers to race tops. They have been adopted by many clubs here and overseas, and look as if they were designed for our logo. The selling price is \$5 plus postage.



Caps and visors are available in black or white, priced at \$25.



Anyone seeking a jacket or vest will be pleased to know that we now have a [Melbourne based supplier](#).

SPARTANS' CLUB STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To advance the sport of marathon running to athletes of all ages and abilities and to encourage and assist all runners to achieve Melbourne Marathon Spartan status.

To provide a platform and environment for runners to receive and to build upon their achievements enabling progression through the various Spartan milestone singlet colours.

Assist in the promotion and publicity of the Melbourne Marathon and the charities it supports.

BENEFITS OF BEING A SPARTAN

The Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club is a club consisting of marathon runners from all walks of life, ages and abilities that have achieved Spartan status by having run ten Melbourne Marathons.

The benefits of membership include regular newsletters, organised training runs, being presented with a Spartan singlet after ten years and subsequent milestone Spartan singlets each five years, the opportunity to attend our AGM and hear a top-line guest speaker.

In normal years we have a tent where bags can be stored securely. After run refreshments and free massages are provided as well as the opportunity to rest and chat.

Life Members

Paul Basile, Peter Battrick, Rod Bayley, John Dean, John Dobson, Peter Feldman, Jay Fleming, David Foskey, Jack Fredrickson, Christine Hodges, Ken Matchett (Dec'd), Conor McNeice, John Raskas, Peter Ryan, Colin Silcock-Delaney, Maureen Wilson, Ron Young (Dec'd), Shirley Young (Dec'd)

COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE		
President	Jay Fleming	0418 374 783
Vice President	Paul Basile	0439 718 281
Treasurer	Rod Bayley	9077 7192
Co-Secretary	Anne Ziogos	9592 4481
Membership Secretary	Felicity Doolan	0411 405 529
Co-Secretary	Vicky Chung	
Committee	Kai Ooi	
Committee	John Zeleznikow	
Webmaster	David Foskey	0432 146 747
Committee	John Dobson	0412 688 287
Committee	John Kaparelis	0447 447 448
Committee	Colin Silcock-Delaney	

PACING THE BADWATER 135

Matt Callaghan S1269

For most of the year, Lone Pine, California, is a small and quiet mountain town, used as a base for walkers taking on the Mount Whitney trail from Mt Whitney portal to the summit of the highest peak in the contiguous United States and also as a launching point for trips into Death Valley. For 5 days each summer however, it is home to Badwater 135, often called the world's toughest footrace. In July, this year, I was in Lone Pine as a pacer and crew member to Ted Williamson, one of 94 runners aiming to finish Badwater in 2022. As it is a unique event and running experience, the Spartan committee asked me to tell you a little bit about it and what it's like to be involved.

Firstly, a tiny bit about the race itself: if you have never heard of the Badwater 135, check out the Wikipedia page https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Badwater_Ultramarathon, the event page <https://www.badwater.com/event/badwater-135/> or any of the number of documentaries on YouTube (such as <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dI3laLhbCsw> or <https://youtu.be/dGT3Rw7sl4s>) In a nutshell, however, it is a 135-mile (217km) ultramarathon from the lowest point below sea-level in the US through Death Valley (the hottest place on earth) at the hottest time of year, running on roads too hot to run on, with heat bouncing off the tarmac hot enough to sear your calves, into head winds warmer than a hairdryer and with the added fun of 5,000m of vertical climb and the final 21km heading up to straight up a mountain. In a word, it's "bonkers!" Less than 1,000 people have ever finished the race and claimed the prestigious "Badwater Buckle" (arguably the most coveted finishers medal in ultrarunning).

100 people are chosen to compete at Badwater every year (the entry and application process is very rigorous – some always drop out so there are often a few less at the start line) and they are amongst the most accomplished ultrarunners around, so being able to hang out with them for a couple of days was a fascinating insight into the outer fringe of a fringe sport. There was an unusual mix of American bravado and ultra-humility that comes with taking on the "world's toughest footrace" and knowing you are probably going to puke on your shoes at some point during the race. Certainly, there was a lot of nervous excitement amongst the runners (and amongst the crew too) as this is genuinely the end of the line on a very, very long ultra-running journey for most of them. After Badwater, there is nowhere to go.

Secondly, a little bit about Ted: Ted discovered running quite late, only starting to run at the age of 51 (like our Mr Kaparelis, he had been into body building previously), but has thrown himself into it with a passion and has now completed over 70 ultras (a lot of which are 100km and 100 milers) and well as countless marathons. To progress from non-runner to taking on the "world's toughest foot race" for the 2nd time (he completed it in 2019) between the age of 51 and 64 is beyond remarkable.

Ted and I met on the plane from Boston to LA after the fateful 2013 Boston Marathon, and due to events of the previous day, we fell into an in-depth conversation about the day and all things running. It turned out we were both heading to South Africa in a few months to take part in Comrades, so we decided to stay in touch (we have since run Comrades together three times - he has beaten me 3 times 😊). When he asked me if I would be keen to be on his crew, I jumped at the chance. The opportunity to support a friend with such an epic running challenge, to experience pacing/crewing at Badwater and even just to experience Death Valley in July was one I couldn't turn down.

Over the early months of 2022, Ted formed his crew, which in the end consisted of 3 people (most crews are 4 to allow rotation and sleep): one medic, Mark, that would act as the crew chief as he had crewed Badwater previously; Brendon, a 100-miler race director from Florida; and me. As Mark is almost a non-runner and Brendon was coming back from injury, the bulk of the pacing would be down to me, so Ted said I had to prepare to pace for

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up to 130km. As most of that would be during the heat of the day, it would be more power walking than running, which meant training to be on your feet in 50c+ conditions for a very long period. Using the Badwater University website, which is basically a collection of training/preparation tips, my training plan included between 120 - 180kms+ a week of running and walking, weight training and, most importantly, three months of sauna acclimation (building up to 1 hour a day in the sauna).

I flew into LA on the Friday night before the race (starting on Monday) and, after an almost sleepless jetlagged night, got down to breakfast on Saturday morning (where I was due to rendezvous with the others) to discover that Mark had had to pull out of the event due to covid. As the crew chief and medic (plus the crew member with Badwater crewing experience), as well as being the crew van owner, Mark was the most important member of the crew, so discovering that he couldn't make it threw an enormous spanner in the works very early on. Ted, Brendan and I all seemed to take this nonchalantly in our strides, but I think we were all quite panicked under the surface. As an absolute superstar, Mark still allowed us to use his brand-new van (American supersized version, of course), so we picked it up from his house (he was the only LA based member of the crew) and started to make our way across to Lone Pine, the location of our motel for the two nights before the race start and "Badwater Central." En route, we stopped off at an enormous Walmart and bought around \$300 USD worth of supplies for the race (food and drinks for Ted and the crew, missing medical gear etc), which was basically everything except the ice (a quick note: we spent nearly \$500 AUD on ice during the race).



Picture: Food for the race (missing from the picture are two more eskies)

We attended the very low-key runner/crew check-in, and generally prepared ourselves for the upcoming endurance ordeal by trying to relax as much as possible, but it was clear we were all getting nervous about having just 2 crew for the event. As this meant that neither Brendan or I would be able to sleep at all during the 48 hour race, we felt it would place Ted's race at a much higher risk, so in the end we decided to put out a message to see if anyone would like to crew the race. Strangely, as Badwater has such a pull in the US ultrarunning community, people travel over there every year on the off chance of getting on a crew, so we were able to find Glenn, a 60-year-old US Navy veteran, an accomplished ultrarunner and a previous Badwater crew member, at the last minute to come onboard. I admit that I was extremely relieved to meet Glenn and know that we would have an extra pair of hand. Meeting such a nice guy and believing that we would all get on well under very tough and sleep-deprived conditions put me in a much better frame of mind for the event.



Picture: Ted at runner check-in



Picture: The Badwater 2022 runners

Unfortunately, the night before the race (Sunday), Ted had an extremely bad night's sleep, so he woke up feeling very out of sorts. He was also up at 6am, which is a full 14 hours before the race starts, so he was now facing being awake for more than 60 hours. Once we had all woken, we went for a long and leisurely breakfast (it won't surprise you to hear that every café in Lone Pine was ram packed with runners and crew), had a crew meeting to discuss the event and responsibilities, packed the car and started to make our way into Death Valley, along the route to the start line with a few scheduled sightseeing stops along the way.



Picture: Sightseeing stop in Furnace Creek

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Although it was extremely hot when we arrived in Stovepipe Wells (the 42-mile mark in the race and the first point the runners can have a pacer join them) for lunch, the heat couldn't account for Ted's sudden wobbly condition. He was having a really bad time of it and he struggled to walk from the car to the restaurant (maybe 50 metres), so clearly there was something significantly wrong (and definitely not how you want to be feeling before taking on Badwater). Ted called Mark (our crew chief, who had to pull out of the event due to covid) to consult with him, while Glenn went off to organise a room for Ted to lie down in for a couple of hours. Mark advised Ted to rest for a couple of hours and then just see how it goes during the race (I think if he had seen Ted's condition at the lunch table, he may have advised him not to run, despite how important the race is). Two hours in a dark room seemed to help Ted, so we headed down to the start line to begin his race. At 8pm he headed off on the 217k adventure; the sun was dropping but it was still 50c.



Picture: Ted and his crew at the start line



Picture: Ted starting the race and taking it easy to begin with

Now that the race has started, I should let you know what responsibilities the crew has (I will mention pacing duties later, when we get back to Stovepipe Wells at the 42-mile mark in the race). The conditions of the event mean that fluid and caloric intake need to be monitored very carefully; over or under hydration, heat stroke and stomach distress are very common. Every 1 – 2 miles (1.6 – 3.2kms – roughly 12 – 25mins at Ted’s starting pace) we would give Ted an ice-filled 400ml bottle (with either water, water with endura, Dr Pepper, ginger ale, coke), give him something to eat (with roughly 80 – 150 calories – depending on the gap), give him any medical support he needed (massages, vaseline, blister care, icing, chapstick for the lips, painkillers/anti-inflammatories etc), prepare and dress him in ice-scarves (a neck garment full of ice), talk to him about what he would want at the next stop, then prepare it all, write down it down (with times, temperature etc), wait for a little while so that we didn’t arrive at the next stop too much before Ted (when – not if - the runner is in distress, it is better to be behind them rather than already ahead of them), then leapfrog to the agreed next stop (1-2 miles). There was very little time to rest at all, so it was clear we were also going to be awake for all or most of the race too.



Picture: crew vehicles waiting for their runners a few miles into the race.

As the race started at 8pm and pacers aren't allowed until the 42-mile (67km) mark, Ted had to spend the first night running alone. Unfortunately, it was clear right from the start that things were not going the way he wanted, and that he was struggling with something (as we later all tested positive for covid, it is likely that this was the cause). He was not moving as well as he would like and was already disorientated quite early into the race. In fairness to Ted, the heat on the first night was very difficult to handle; the coolest it dropped to was 42c and there a very warm headwind all night.

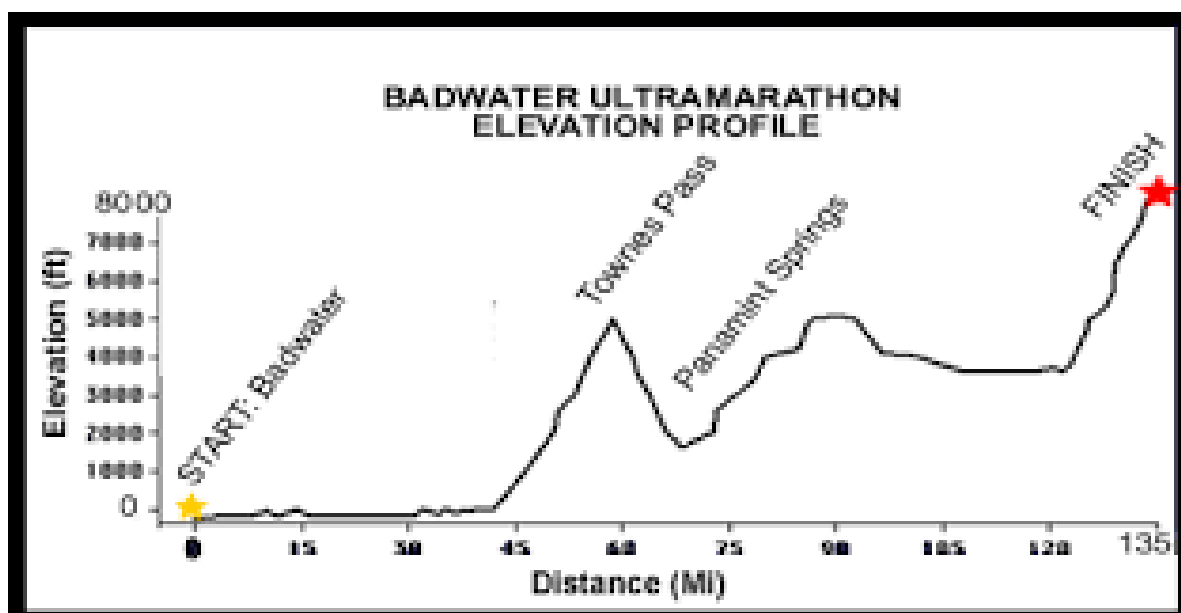
The first cut-off point in the race is at the 50.8-mile (81.75km) mark and runners have to reach it by 10am (there are three waves of starters at Badwater: 8pm, 930pm and 11pm – this is set by the National Park Service so that there aren't too many crew vehicles bunched up at the start), so that meant Ted has 14 hours to make it which sounds relatively straightforward, but it is really difficult to describe the heat and wind. Getting out of the air-conditioned crew van into the heat was like being punched in the face, so running in it (as well as being alone in the pitch-black - it gets really, really dark in the desert) is extremely challenging. Most runners do make it through the first cut-off however, which I find remarkable and inspiring, but all the runners mentioned how hot and hard that first night was.

As the night wore on and Ted's condition didn't improve, it was becoming clear making the first cut off was going to be tight. I joined Ted as his pacer at Stovepipe Wells to try to get him there on time. Pacing duties at Badwater are similar to pacing duties at other ultras (motivation, keeping a steady pace with an eye on targets and carrying food and drink for the runner – let me say that wearing a running vest in 50 degree heat is quite uncomfortable), with the added duties of spraying the runner with chilled water (I was spraying his head and across his shoulders and the

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water evaporated before it even reached the middle of his back), making sure the runner stays on the white line as much as possible (running on the tarmac is so hot that the extra heat going up through the shoes can have a serious impact and I spent so long on the tarmac that my shoes melted to the point that I had to throw them away) and ensuring that he had sufficient ice in his ice scarf etc. The main challenge at Badwater is keeping your core temperature down, so we were using all possible tips and tricks to help Ted (and ourselves) with that.

The 8 miles from Stovepipe Wells to the cut-off is all up hill (as part of a 16.5-mile uphill stretch – with 5000 ft of vertical gain - to the top Townes Pass) so it is a difficult section to make up time. I worked out what pace we need to achieve to get Ted through the cut-off on time and then gently kept him on track to give him a chance. The heat was picking up again as we made our way up the hill (creeping back towards 50c) and we were moving straight into a headwind (I had to reapply chapstick every 3kms) so the going was difficult. As it looked like Ted wouldn't make the cut off, he had to push the pace so much that he rinsed himself to get there. He was wobbling all over the place for the final kilometre and was leaning on me quite a bit (not technically allowed but it was either that or he would have fallen into the scrub at the side of the road). As we reached the cut-off marker, Ted was moaning aloud and digging deeper than any runner I've seen. He crossed the marker with a minute to spare and had to stop moving immediately; he was completely spent. Even crossing to the road to get to the crew car saw him take a tumble as he couldn't hold himself up anymore.



Ted had to take an hour's rest which gave the crew a chance to rest. That hour turned into nearly two hours, which helped Ted but also meant the temperature was hotter as we set off again to finish the Towne's Pass hill. The wind had also picked up and the channelling effect of the pass meant that it was like running into a hot wind tunnel. The stretch was extremely tough but we eventually made it to the peak to reveal an incredible view into the Panamint Springs valley. Unfortunately, it had taken so long and Ted's pace had slowed so much that it was now impossible for him to make the next cut-off at Panamint Springs (72-miles). All of the crew kept Ted up to date with the times and required pace, but I'm not sure he was able to process information anymore, so his pace didn't change much. At this point, the three crew had basically written off Ted's chance of making the cut-off (even though we still had 20km to go).



Picture: View down into Panamint Springs

As we hit the flat, straight section, the event temperature peaked at nearly 54c and it was incredibly difficult conditions to run in. Adding the dead straight road to the equation and the feeling that you weren't make any forward progress and that you would never reach the cut-off, made it as difficult mentally as it was physically. As the miles ticked down, it looked less and less likely that we would make the cut-off in time, but out of nowhere Ted found a supply of energy reserve that I did not believe he had left. We started to reel in the runner and pacer ahead of us, and having that target kept Ted going. As we entered the final 3 miles before the cut-off, I worked out that we still had no chance to make it, but again Ted reached deep within himself to push the pace. It's hard for me to describe those final kms into the Panamint cut-off, but I can honestly say that I have never been more surprised by, or prouder of, someone. As 64 years of age, Ted showed an energy and a will to succeed that I wouldn't expect of a 20-year-old. It was basically a repeat of the last cut-off with us crossing the line with a minute to spare and Ted even more empty than earlier in the day. At this point he'd been running for over 115km brutal heat, having been awake for 37 hours, so he was allowed to be a bit tired.



Picture: the long stretch into Panamint Springs

There was another 2-hour food rest for everyone before Ted and I headed up Father Crowley (a 13km uphill section) in the pitch black (2nd night now). By this point, Ted had a runner's lean developing and the constant snaking uphill (with no end in sight) was not helping it. The 13kms took us 2.5 hours, so that should give an indicator of how tough it was and the condition Ted was in by that point. The rest of crew wasn't in much better condition by then, but they were able to grab povernaps as the 2-mile sections were taking us quite a while. Unbelievably, however, Ted was able to rally to make the Darwin cut-off (90.8 miles) with 20 minutes to spare, and it was beginning to look like that, against all odds, he might pull off the impossible and finish the event. No sooner had I begun to think that, however, and start to plan for another full day of pacing (not having slept for two nights), when the wheels fell off Ted's run (that's how quickly things can change in this event). Ted's runner's lean had become so severe that he was beginning to double over and was unable to make quick forward progress. At the 95-mile mark, we spoke with the race medical director, who effective advised him that it would not improve without rest. At that stage, it became clear that, this time, it was genuinely impossible for Ted to make the next cut-off time at Lone Pine (123 miles) and that he was now at risk of causing himself long-term damage if he tried to push on, so he very reluctantly decided to stop his race.

"Leaving it all out there" is a term often used, and mostly when it hasn't been, but I can hand on heart say that Ted left it all out there. I have absolutely no idea how he managed to run 95 miles in that heat with the medical symptoms he was showing shortly before the race. Even though he didn't finish, I have never seen such an incredible display of effort and determination. If I had even 5% of that, I would be proud of myself.



Picture: Ted's feet after the event. They would have been much worse without the crew's work on them during the race.

Marathons and Ultramarathons make us dig deep, but Badwater makes you dig down to places you never knew existed within you. To witness it up close and be a part of someone's attempt was a great privilege and a truly humbling experience, and even though I am still not recovered 3 weeks later, I would highly recommend it to anyone who has an interest in ultras. I would not recommend running the race to anyone 😊

In case anyone is interested, here is an interview Ted did about his Badwater 2022 experience on the Florida Trail [Runners podcast](#) (Ed: This is a long podcast- Ted talks about his team from about the 30 minute mark. At around 49 minutes, Ted pulls out.)