



# THE SPARTAN

CLUB PATRON – Robert de Castella AO, MBE

March 2026

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## SAVE THE DATE – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER

7.00pm for a 7.30pm start, AFL Dining Room, Melbourne Cricket Ground

### FROM THE PRESIDENT JAY FLEMING (S1012)

*And what is breath? It is the carbon dioxide and oxygen that come from the metabolism of every cell in that stranger's body. That is what you are inhaling, just as other people are inhaling your breath. So, we are all constantly exchanging bits of ourselves - physical, measurable molecules from our bodies. - Deepak Chopra*

Welcome to our March Newsletter Spartans, where we are further building on the theme of inclusion and connectedness! The footy's back and again I'm back to my usual apologising to others at the ground, in the room or on the phone for some of my language while watching Collingwood games!

Summer's over, as reflected in the familiar cyclic behaviours of our bird and animal friends and the flora in the Dandenongs is now exhibiting lovely autumn colours! I'm glad to be enjoying the calming routines of sport and weather as it helps counteract the lack of calm globally at the moment. I'm especially glad I'm not travelling overseas so much with work this year as I'm super happy to be enjoying beautiful Melbourne town.

Running solo in any location, particularly without headphones, tends to increase our awareness in the 'here and now' and enables our sight, smell, hearing and touch to amplify our connectedness to surrounding flora, fauna and nature generally. In addition to this connectedness with environment, we're also looking at options for Spartans to increase connectedness with each other, if they wish to do so.

Our club and members are united by several common ties and clearly the main one is the process of putting one foot in front of the other for long hours at a time during one event and repeating this over long sequences of years. To enable this sequence of longevity, there also has to be a clear focus on health and wellbeing as it's not easy to run 42.195 km once, let alone many times over several decades, as a lot has to be going on inside the body, for the body to safely do what is being asked of it! So, running long distances and keeping our body in great nick to be able to accomplish this over many consecutive years is an excellent starting point, but, that's really all it is, just a starting point.

A further expansion to what our Club stands for is to increase the **available options for harnessing** the immense power of connectedness between members, which tends to broaden the benefits from predominantly the *physical domain*, to also encompass the *psychological, spiritual and intellectual domains*.



The bolded part of the previous sentence is to underscore that our role is to provide options rather than be prescriptive, and clearly if Spartans wish to simply keep running and keep to themselves, and believe that some of the above is a bit of unnecessary new-age warm and fuzzy talk, we still love them as Spartans and respect everyone's choice.

However, we also know that there are many Spartans who would avail themselves of such opportunities if they were on offer as part of a regular framework for them to pick and choose according to the ebb and flow of their personal schedules and life circumstances throughout the year.

This is what we're endeavouring to offer through the upcoming *Trivia Fundraising Nights for IMF ... Spartan Ambassadors at parkrun* (article below). *Spartan Cheer Squads in the MM* (article below) ... *Spartan Runner Profiles* (article below). We did previously schedule *Spartan Pasta Nights* for several years on the Friday of MM Week, but there wasn't a huge uptake so they were discontinued after COVID, however if you would like to see the Pasta Night re-emerge, please drop us an email ... or please let us know of other successful connectedness initiatives you have seen work well interstate or overseas.

**All of the above takes time and effort to facilitate, and given that we are all volunteers on Committee, we are always inviting anybody in the Spartan Community to feel welcome to be involved, even a little bit, if you have skills, resources and expertise that can assist with any of the above or to perhaps contribute some of your own suggestions or tweaks.**

On Committee, we have also sought to broaden the scope and recognition of achievements to more accurately reflect the triumph of the human spirit. This year, we will be awarding our second *Pheidippides Award* to the Spartan with the net time closest to the cutoff time, which is now 7:30. Awards and recognition at previous AGM's have been confined to the extremely narrow and one-dimensional fastest net time. While rightly continuing to recognise the superb dedication and training that Spartans put into running fast times, we are now also recognising the superb dedication and training that runners put into running times that may appear less glamorous in the finishing results ... and yet both sets of runners have run the quickest time they were capable of on the day, so it beggars belief for one to be recognised but not the other. Additionally, we are exploring ways to further broaden the framework of recognition by providing the option of recognising the brilliant, sustained dedication of **Spartans in their 70's and 80's** (article below)

Something that is now well established at effectively promoting connectedness between members and is humming along nicely and continuing to grow, is the *Spartan Club Run* at 8.00am on the fourth Sunday of every month at The Tan. We openly invite Spartans' family members, friends, acquaintances and pets to come along as it's a lovely start to a Sunday morning from which you can either kick on to another activity or get back home by mid-morning if you have a heavy schedule.

Our Spartan numbers are increasing by 60-80 incoming new Spartans every year! We have a huge diversity of backgrounds, professions, personality types, health and fitness levels, family profiles and walks of life and we are quickly becoming our own little microcosm of the broader Australian society.

We all have fulfilling Spartan connections on our future horizon that we haven't even met yet and the sun will still rise if we never meet them but at least it's great to have the option of connecting during facilitated Spartan events, should we have the time and inclination to do so.

## Spartans & Parkrun

When Committee first started organising Spartan Club Runs around 15 years ago, we initially tried out Albert Park Lake for several months. Attendances were extremely low, and in fact sometimes it would be just a couple of us Committee members, rolling up to avoid a no-show.

We started seriously questioning whether it was even an option that anybody was seriously interested in as we were still figuring out what members felt being a Spartan was all about. Was it just a club that kept records and dispensed coloured garments once a year? ... and was it sufficient for members to gain a sense of belonging to an entity by meeting just once a year, twice if attending the AGM?

We simply weren't sure whether there would be any demand for Spartan Club Runs and we were also aware of other potential barriers:

- There were often competing events on Sunday mornings
- Many Spartans were not close to the CBD, therefore necessitating a long drive ... and back ... on a Sunday morning
- Some Spartans would schedule their long run on the Sunday so perhaps they wouldn't see a lap or two of Albert Park Lake aligning with that.

We decided to change the venue to *The Tan* as it was less wind-blown, more geographically friendly, had better train access, café and parking. We also felt we could reframe the last of the three barriers above for those with scheduled long runs as part of their training regimen ... by encouraging attendees to run a couple of laps with Spartans, have a coffee and chat ... and follow that with as many laps of *The Tan* as they wish, or perhaps squeeze in a couple of laps before and after the group run to match the kilometres of their usual long run at home.

The other barrier we have been aiming to reduce has been the tyranny of distance. Since we have Spartans living at all points of the compass and interstate and overseas, and since we have many Spartans regularly participating in parkruns everywhere, parkrun is an excellent option that can be organically harnessed for regular Spartan camaraderie.

We are aiming to further optimise inclusivity and connectedness for all Spartans ... wherever they live by increasing Spartan visibility at parkrun. If you're consistently unable to attend the Spartan Club Run on the fourth Sunday of every month, 8.00am at *The Tan* due to distance or the day of the week, please attend your local parkrun on a Saturday morning at 8.00am instead, as there is a parkrun just around the corner from all Spartans.

There is no dress code for parkrun, so please wear your Spartan singlet and make yourself known to your fellow Spartans, get a group happening, have a drink and send us some pics for the website! That is the main duty of being a 'Spartan Ambassador' at parkrun. We would love to see which parkruns have the most Spartans to enable further promotional opportunities for Committee.

**Please contact us to become a Spartan Ambassador at your local Parkrun!**

## Acknowledging Seasoned Spartans

We have had a wonderful suggestion regarding increasing the recognition and acknowledgement for our Spartans in their seventies and eighties.

This would be strictly optional as we are well aware that many Spartans are very private people who simply let their running and longevity do the talking and really have no interest in extra visibility.

However, we are also aware that many Spartans are extremely proud of their longevity and life management skills which have ensured they are consistently performing over the marathon distance into their seventies and eighties.

On Committee, we will explore what this acknowledgement and visibility would look like and provide further detail in the next Newsletter. **If you have any input, please get in touch.**

Thank you to Spartan, **Grayson Summers (S0290)** (44 MM), for this terrific proposal!



## Spartan Cheer Squads

**If you are not running on Sunday 11 October 2026, or have willing family or friends, please contact us to get involved!**

We are actively exploring the forming of two or three Spartan cheer squads at select points of the Melbourne Marathon course. This proposal was enthusiastically received when I recently discussed it with event organisers, and we have been encouraged to proceed with planning and get back to them.

We would like to increase the specialness of the Spartan race day experience, and I am excited by the prospect of Spartans being cheered by cheer squads and experiencing goosebumps as they run through the inspirational wall of music at two or three points of the race! Some suggestions for cheer squad members, resources and what this might look like:

- Injured Spartans not competing in the event or Spartans no longer running
- Family members of Spartans
- Spartan helmet, shield or armour plate or all of them
- Some vibrant Spotify musical beats blaring from a powered rechargeable portable speaker.

Similar to the Spartan Photo Point at the MCG Finish Line, a prime consideration for every proposal we put to race organisers is safety ... so we would be submitting a Risk Assessment and Risk Controls as part of the Spartan Cheer Squad proposal. **We'd love to hear from you!**



## The Rejuvenated Melbourne Marathon Course & Festival

The rejuvenated Melbourne Marathon – While it is impossible to make everybody happy, the consensus of opinion, including those of us on Committee, is that the revamped Melbourne Marathon event is a winner! We were briefed on upcoming changes at the start of the last week of February before they were officially announced on the Friday. Some of the initiatives included:

- Marathon starts at 6:15am and Half Marathon starts at 9.45am
- The 3.5-hour difference between the two flagship events will improve the on-course flow between certain events, while also providing far greater atmosphere for the slower runners in the Marathon, who normally grind away at the end on a fairly deserted course
- Safety has been improved by blocking off wider parts of St Kilda Road during the first ten km, along with less running on tram tracks between Anzac Station and Federation Square
- Fewer U turns and reduced elevation
- Scrapping of the 'slow course'
- Albert Park loop is now in the last third of the event instead of in the first third
- The Birdwood Avenue loop at the end is no longer.

## AGM Guest Speaker

We are super excited to announce our Headline Speaker for the 2026 AGM! Apart from being a dedicated family man and an all-round classy human being, **David Staehr** is a seriously fast runner with a best time of 2:37 and despite being time-poor due to demands of personal and professional life, it's a testament to his dedicated training regimen that he consistently runs in the 2:40's.

During this year's AGM night, along with speaking to us and presenting incoming and milestone Spartans with their singlets, David will also be among the milestone singlet recipients and will be presented with his blue singlet as he will be running his 15<sup>th</sup> Melbourne Marathon this year.

We'll get one of the Legends to present him with his singlet for the photo! I am certain he will do his new colours proud over the next five years!



## Recovering & Pushing Through in True Spartan Spirit

Spartan Legend **John Dobson** is recovering well after a hip procedure recently, and we've kept each other in the loop over the last couple of years as we're both having the same procedure within three weeks of each other

- In February we all rejoiced with Committee member **Gavin Criddle** who received yet another all-clear for the third cancer he has defeated!
- Last year's Headline Speaker **Ian Gainey** is recovering well after a procedure that has significantly decreased his pain levels and greatly increased his quality of life.
- Spartan Vice President **Paul Basile** and family have been moving through an extremely difficult time after losing beloved Dad Sam.

## 50 Years of the Melbourne Marathon 1978-2028 & 40 Years of Spartan Stories

Approaching the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Melbourne Marathon, we are looking to provide the option for Spartans to be more than just a Spartan Number that we keep for life! As custodians passing through, on Committee we are looking to provide a repository where Spartans can voluntarily provide a little of their background narrative, their journey, their human frailties, their overcoming of struggles and perhaps their light-hearted side.

Please feel welcome to fill in a *Spartan Runner Profile* using the guidelines provided at the end of the Newsletter, to write your story, adding to it over a week/month as you are likely to remember certain snippets of your journey over a month that perhaps may not immediately occur to you initially, and just email it back to us as an attachment whenever you're ready, no timeframe.

You can provide as much or as little detail as you like and you can provide a photo if you wish, or not, totally flexible. If you would like to add/delete categories, please feel welcome to do so as the document is just meant as a prompt and to be a flexible starting point.

Please remember that none of this is set in concrete as you can email us with any edits or with any new accomplishments during your journey, so your Profile on the Spartans website will be a living document that you can update as your real-life story unfolds.

*In singing our song, in telling our story, in inviting you to say 'Hey, listen to me, and I'll listen to you', we're starting a dialogue. And when you do that, this healing happens, and we come out of our corners, and we start to witness each other's common humanity. We start to assert it. And when we do that, really good things happen.* - **Ethan Hawke**

*All stories are connected. In the end everything is connected.* - **José Eduardo Agualusa, The Book of Chameleons**

## SPARTAN STORIES

### Mainova Frankfurt Marathon 26 October 2025

CANDIDA BASKCOMB (SF106)

'Why are you coming to Frankfurt?'

Me – 'I'm running the Mainova Frankfurt marathon on Sunday.'

Customs officer – 'There's a marathon on Sunday?'

Me – 'YES! - 20,000 runners will take to the streets.'

Customs officer – 'Will you win?'

Me – 'We all win just starting.'

(STAMP sound in passport) and so we had arrived in Germany and its 7.15am local time, pitch dark, cold, and it was raining.

We go for a four-hour sightseeing walk, to stretch our legs, once organised at hotel in the city centre. I notice all the trees are yellow and dying and then I realise we are back into autumn again.

Frankfurt is very cute and is a central German city on the river Main, and features a real mix of impressive modern architecture in its skyline along with all its historic buildings. It hosts important trade fairs and many other events, an ironman triathlon and a marathon...which is sometimes rated as one of the six most important marathons with a relatively flat and fast course.

With a six-hour cut off the race starts from the city centre of Frankfurt at 10.00am, leading runners through the city past its fascinating skyline of old and new buildings. Then onto the district of Sachsenhausen and the residential district of Höchst with the course crossing the river twice. Runners then head back along the Mainzer landstrasse through the city centre again towards the trade fair tower, finishing inside the Festhalle on a red carpet!

Also, as part of this marathon event, there is the option to be part of a relay team. Those who do not wish to run the entire distance but who still want to experience a marathon can choose to run in teams of four. Members run part of the whole distance. Runner #1- 12.9km, runner #2 - 6.1km, runner #3 - 9.5km and runner #4 -13.5kms. These teams wear a yellow bib with 'Staffel' written on it. I have never run a marathon that included relay teams.

I had entered this event back in early January and could not believe I was finally about to run the Frankfurt marathon for real. I was a little concerned about running, with good reason. The only slight handicap I had (apart from being jet lagged) was a medical issue that occurred three days before we were flying out that required immediate antibiotics. We all know that the words running and antibiotics should never occur in the same sentence, right? Well, I was about to find out why.

The Expo was pretty empty, maybe that was because we had woken up so early, we were practically first in. We could walk the 10 minutes it took from our hotel which was great! First was bib collect and then my shirt pick up. I had bought one online prior as they are not free with entry. This was all easy and hassle free.

All the photos we took in front of the Frankfurt skyline podium and inside the giant medal were queue free, as was the participant wall of names... so I enjoyed myself and took my time.

There were heaps of European merchandise brands I had never seen before, the likes of which even kept my daughter busy looking. So, with expo done it was time to take a look outside to see where we would be starting in corrals on the main road.

Hoka is their main sponsor along with Rosbacher water (more about this water later). The main start arch was already in place over the main road and the wind was really cold; it got me thinking that maybe I needed to buy some more clothes to wear for the marathon and get myself a puffer jacket to wear afterwards. Yep, I had seriously underestimated the temperature of the weather here.



We did end up in the warmth of the shops while the wind was getting colder and colder and exhaling made us look like we were vaping. I decided to buy a thicker buff and a sports jacket to wear under my Spartan shirt in addition to my merino top. I am so glad I did!

## Race Day

No need to set an alarm to wake us with the event starting so late at 10.00am and daylight savings starting, so the clocks had turned back another hour ...there was plenty of time. When all ready to leave the last thing, my daughter did was attach an Aussie flag in my hair tie and off we went.

After a casual stroll down to the start line with my daughter who was now my photographer and drop bag support, we found ourselves stuck in a massive human crush of runners inside one of the halls which was grid locked with runners trying to get outside and some trying to get in. It was really not pleasant and we were not moving at all, eventually with mini steps we got out into the open which was literally a breath of fresh air and we were able to walk down to my start corral area relatively easily.

The Hammering Man was nearby watching down on us all. A 21-metre-tall kinetic sculpture – the man's arm rhythmically raises and lowers a hammer non-stop 24/7. At 10.00am, the event started. It was a good 20 minutes or more before my group started to move and then we were off and I had no idea how I was going to go.

The first 10 kms of the course is all city bound and because we had walked a great deal of the city on the morning we flew in, I recognised many of the landmarks we were now running past. Particularly the Eschenheimer tower that is part of the late medieval fortifications of Frankfurt and Main a major landmark of the city erected at the beginning of the 15th century. It was lovely to run past it, and then I felt really odd. I actually felt like I was floating and seriously doubted if I could continue. I guess I got my answer then about combining antibiotics and exercise - after five kms of running an odd feeling presented itself but after 10 kms this was an explosion!

I was thinking 'If I was to retire, near to our hotel would be the time to do it', but having Spartan runner mental assets, experience prevailed and I decided to just try to keep moving forward slowly and besides, the wind was so cold I needed to keep moving to keep warm.

The trouble was I just did not feel like running at all, it was such an incredible struggle and effort just focusing, so I walked a while. We then left the city crossing over the river Main and off into the suburbs and again we had visited this tree lined section the day before, since it is the home area of my German sprinter friend who lives in Melbourne now.

This kept me distracted as did heading into Höchst at the 28 km mark - it is a pretty little township with the old traditional German houses. The point of difference I really noticed on course, the likes of which I had not seen or should I say heard before, during any other marathons I had run, were the 46 bands or musical live acts... so loud they hurt my head which was already sensitive.

Also on course are 90 party hot spots where many people gathered standing in the streets drinking and cheering the runners along. This event is so spectator friendly and the cheering never stops. There is not a single stretch of the course that does not have someone cheering from it. Personally, I really did appreciate the support as I was now 'Jeffing', I had turned my beeper on just before the 20km marker and from then onwards I was in 'Run Walk Run' mode for the rest for the course.

Now a word about the water provision on course, the water is the famous Rosbacher water, poured by volunteers from bottles into cups; this water is amazing and my friend had told me about it! As a professional sprinter in his Frankfurt training days, all athletes and everyone can buy this water, it has 2:1 Calcium and Magnesium, and is a locally sourced mineral water that tastes slightly salty but the benefits are huge for muscles.



When he moved to Melbourne, he bought bottled mineral water assuming it was the same but he could not understand why he was now cramping up. So, this magic water really is next level water and I wish we had the same in Melbourne. I drank this water at every stop and then I tried a lemon Isofit drink that was quite nice...but I am not going to lie, I was holding out for the Coke at 36 kms onwards and this really helped me push on.

I was a bit worried about finishing by the 4.00pm cut off. I had forgotten about my elapsed time of 23 minutes or so and I only remembered this while navigating the longest straightest 4 km stretch of the course that is in bound towards the city and it was only then I relaxed a bit. At 4.03pm I was running under the start arch having meandered around the city again. My daughter had already text me saying she was three cheer squad girls up from the finish arch on the left. 'That's odd', I thought... 'cheer girls?'

Finally, the moment came when we turned left off the main road into the famous Festhalle and just as I entered under the doors to go inside onto the red carpet, to my surprise, I heard my name called out. 'Candida Baskcomb all the way from Australia'. Unbeknown to me, my friend had arranged this because he is very good friends with Roland Frischkorn, who is the most important man regarding everything sports in Frankfurt and he had told the commentator to put a marker on my name so they could see when I was coming in to the hall! That was nice!

Then I heard another loud name called out this time from my daughter! 'Moo!' It is her nickname for me and just like she had said, she was three dancing cheer leader girls from the finish arch on the left and I saw her and waved. Spot lights were flashing, music was playing and it was warm and fun inside, and I crossed the finish arch line in 5:40:07 net and I was truly very, very relieved that was over.

A quick chat to Freya as she followed me at the side barrier and we arranged to meet at the letter S (for Spartan) outside in the official meet area. I walked for a while and then finisher medals came and we were also given a plastic poncho to wear to keep warm and then a beer? I declined the beer, as being on medication the alcohol wouldn't be great, sadly, I didn't realise it was alcohol free and the benefits would have been good for me, the carbs and sugar etc, but not feeling like myself, all I grabbed was a doughnut and a banana and walked on outside to meet my daughter.

It was so cold and the wind was still full on. She took a few quick photos before I piled on the new puffer jacket and windcheater for the 10-minute walk back to our hotel. It was then that I realised this was the 42nd Mainova Frankfurt marathon and coincidentally my 42nd marathon to date. Indeed, my toughest and most challenging yet and now you know why.

Back at the hotel it was time for me to shower and to pack... we were to fly to Venice early the next morning where all those bridges and steps were waiting for me!



## My Running Journey to Becoming a Spartan **KIRSTY GWYNNE-JONES (S1597)**

In 2011 I was enjoying an outdoor bootcamp, of mostly strength exercises and a little running. Most 'bootcampers' started training for the 10.5k Pichi Richi. I joined, running 56:57. Then I ran my first half at the tiny Orroroo Half Marathon in March 2012 (1:52).

At a 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party, in January 2013, I ran into my old school friend Sally Beggs. As half marathons were an increasing feature of both our lives, we had one of those enthusiastic running chats we runners are renowned for. The Boston bombing happened that April and Sally rang me and said 'we are not going to let them take our sport away, we are going to run a marathon'. I took a few weeks to come round to this idea, while Sally ran her first marathon in Adelaide. By October I was ready to run my first marathon, the Melbourne Marathon.

Seeing the Spartans tent at the Expo sparked Sally and I to aim to join! MM was wet and I remember the pain of walking down stairs afterwards.

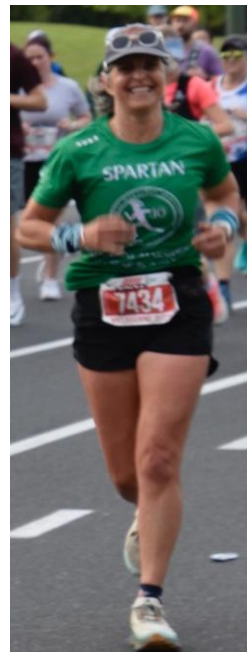
There was also the fabulous after glow and sense of achievement that kept me excited for future runs. I ran a 3:50. Right from the start I was hooked and knew I was going to run a lot more marathons.

In May 2014 I ran the Barossa Marathon in 3:38 and realizing it was a Boston Qualifier (and that Sally had already run a BQ) I encouraged Sally to try for another BQ at the Adelaide Marathon. I ran the half that day and remember waiting at the finish line while constantly checking my watch, she ran 3:42 and as agreed (if we could both do a BQ in the year window) we applied for Boston.



2015 saw me run my marathon PB at Boston. It was a freezing day, not getting above 8C. The madly exciting and encouraging atmosphere with bands, DJ's, roadside cheers, including being offered homemade lemon slice, towels and beers, got me to the finish line in 3:35.34.

Travelling back from Boston Marathon in 2015 Sally and I meet Howard a fellow Melbourne Marathon runner who has now become a friend. I followed up with a second MM running 3:48. Sally was not my only school friend running the MM, Jane, who I had accompanied while running when we were at boarding school, also ran. Later I ran with David Alley who was running around Australia and got the record for doing so. As we jogged along Highway One on one of his daily 82-3k runs, he told me 'it's more mental than physical', I have never forgotten this golden advice.



April 2016 saw the start of Clare Valley Parkrun. My husband jokes Parkrun is my church and this is not far from the truth. Currently I have run 261 parkruns on 32 courses and volunteered at 192 Clare Valley Parkruns. While my Parkrun PB is at Lochiel (22:31), Clare Valley Parkrun has my heart.



I have made so many friends in and we have gone on to celebrate many running events and personal milestones.

I've done all sorts of crazy things including dressing up as cow to cheer on runners in the Clare Valley Half Marathon with these mates.

In 2016 I ran my first Pichi Richi Marathon. This is a beautiful event in the Flinders Ranges and I think where I first met my running mates Ian and Peter. I ran MM in 3:51. I remember losing my hat in a wind tunnel on St Kilda Road but I picked up a visor later in the race.

In 2017 I ran my first 100k, over three days with my friend Emily. Later I ran the Hubert 50km followed by another Pichi Richi Marathon, while my mate Aaron ran a half that day in jeans! I completed my fifth MM in 4:03.

In 2018 I again ran the Hut to Hut 100k, this time in two days. MM 2018 saw me run 4:25 on a hot day. Getting a selfie with the watermelon goddess Lucy Bartholomew was a highlight of MM 2019 (4:11).

When Parkrun was suspended in February 2020 my friend Tim, came up with a great alternative and created The Social Distance Running Club. A group of us took turns to create a different run each Saturday (5 to 7km). The course was posted on Facebook each Friday night. That weeks' organiser marked the course by 8.00am and the unique rubber ducky markers were left out until midday.

There was loads of creativity on these runs/walks including an Easter hunt, and eventually a marathon joining many of the courses.

On 12 December, I ran the MM that didn't count (virtual). Due to the heat, I started at 4.00am and of course included Clare Valley Parkrun. I created my own challenge in April 2020 aiming to run as many half marathon distances as I could. I made it to 72 halves.

In 2021 I continued my challenge running 100 halves that year. As the MM was postponed to December and with borders only opening days before, Sally and I decided not to go. My eighth MM was in 2022 (4:43). Followed shortly after by UTA 50k (8:08).

In February 2023 I did a running coaching course and began a local running group. The idea of the group was to keep myself honest by doing intervals and other speed work every Wednesday morning at 6.00am. We have kept this going and still meet every Wednesday to run. April saw me run the McLaren Vale Marathon in 4:26. That June I flew to Melbourne where Sally picked me up and drove us to the fabulous Traralgon Marathon (4:32). On a regular Wednesday running club run in September I tripped and broke my arm. I went to Melbourne regardless of not being able to run and watched my 16-year-old daughter run her third half marathon, and of course caught up with Sally.

2023 started with a family trip to Vietnam and some stunning running including running part way across the Long Bein Bridge in Hanoi. This bridge was constructed by the same company that built the Eiffel Tower. It was bombed during the war and in typical Vietnamese fashion was remade with both old and new pieces.

2024 was the brutal year. With a pinched nerve in my glute that I felt every step of the MM, but nothing was going to stop me after missing 2023. Thankfully Sally became a Spartan that day! I took a grueling 5:06 to complete my ninth MM.

On 12 October 2025 I finally reached my goal of 10 Melbourne Marathons and becoming a Spartan. I was aiming for an under 4:30 marathon and was stoked to run 4:29.25! Wearing my 10-year runner t-shirt was as awesome as I knew it would be, getting shoutouts, nods and smiles from other Spartans and aspiring Spartans.



## The 42<sup>nd</sup> Athens Marathon 'TC Authentic' MATT ARMS (S1413)

### A Melbourne Marathon Spartans Experience

It was 5.30am, dark and balmy as I queued to ride the marathoners' coach from Syntagma Square in Athens to the ancient town of Marathon, to start an event that does not need an introduction.

Once the countless coach loads of athletes arrived at the old Marathon stadium, we all waited under any cover we could find as the rain set in. The track had a historic sense about it, with an odd and antiquated raised walkway surround, and small ground level under crofts that allowed many runners to find a dry pre-race space to shelter.



The rain did clear for our 9.00am start, and each of the 16 or so waves of athletes started. It was a huge volume of participants that began the marathon (over 16,000) and the pace was consequently slow for the first 3 kms.

As we progressed, the enthusiastic village atmosphere appeared with the field of athletes running through each small Attica town to be welcomed with 'bravo, bravo, bravo' and the sounds of loudspeaker music and an epic festival of supporters. Town after town this occurred – which was just marvellous.

The course was initially flat but then transitioned into a 1350 ft climb then a 1100 ft descent. My approach was to start comfortably slow, and then to negative split the balance of the distance. I ended up passing about 3,000 runners, making me realise I had not seeded myself suitably in the field at the start.



As we all approached the first part of the climb, I noticed a familiar green singlet top worn by a runner ahead of me. Yes, the same green Spartan singlet top that I was wearing. My comment to this Aussie (whose name I still don't know) was 'We seem to be everywhere mate'.

The climb was quite the grind, and the sun was kind of taxing. My heart rate was slowly rising throughout the run, but when we reached the peak, the last downhill stretch brought both a reduced heart rate and a smile to my face, knowing there was only 8 kms left to run.

The highlight of the marathon was the winding route through the Athenian streets toward the famous ancient Roman Panathenaic Stadium (which is made entirely of marble from the Hadrian Roman Empire period, and where Roman Chariots used to race). We turned the last corner to meet the crowded spectacle of the ancient stadium and a welcome completion of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Athens Marathon – a pilgrimage. I can recommend to all.



Baklavas, Souvlaki and Mythois Beer were fringe benefits of being in Athens. Such a fantastic vibe and wonderful support from the local Greek community – Bravo, bravo bravo....!



**What are the Chances? FELICITY DOOLAN (SF80) MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY & LIFE MEMBER**

So, on a cruisy November Saturday, two dads are watching sport at their local park...they are strangers but strike up a conversation. They are both distance runners. *A coincidence.* They both just ran the Melbourne Marathon. *How about that.*

In fact, they have both run a lot of Melbourne Marathons. *Wow, how interesting!* And they both just became Spartans, like just. *No, that's crazy!* So, they share their Spartan numbers. Which just happen to be consecutive. *NO WAY!*

**Please meet: Thomas S1628 and Blair S1629**



For those who frequent the AGM, you would know we love a 'fun fact' about our new Spartans – we'll save this one for their milestone singlet presentation at the AGM in five years time ... no pressure gents! Happy Running.



**Harmony Week PAMELA YOUNG (SF93) SECRETARY**

*Imagine all the people. Living life in peace. You. You may say I'm a dreamer. But I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us. And the world will be as one. John Lennon*

In 1971 John Lennon penned the music and lyrics to *Imagine*, a song that is as relevant today as it was then. Over the past 55 years many of us *have* imagined and hoped for the world to be 'as one'. Despite human beings having intelligent and complex brains with the power to interpret our senses, control our movements and behaviour, and are also responsible for the qualities that define us, we seem to be incapable of creating a state of harmony, at least on a global scale.

Whilst it seems the planet may forever be deprived of overarching harmony; the practice of inclusivity, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone in our microcosms, our communities, our 'little worlds' if you like, are an imperative, and a conduit for change. Harmony is a state of being, and it resides within us and in the way we interact with others.

Harmony Week began on Monday 16 March and it ends this Sunday 22 March, when we have our Spartan Club Run at *The Tan*.



Harmony Week asks everyone to consider what harmony means, to us personally and to the people we are close to, and the communities we move through. In the case of the Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club, that means our fellow Spartans, who come from many different backgrounds, cultures and faiths.

As Spartans, we are most fortunate to have running as a panacea for unrest and a pursuit that brings harmony to our lives. In the Spartan realm we are privileged to have the capacity to do what many world leaders are unable, or, unwilling to, that being the ability to foster mutual respect, care and understanding within our diverse membership.

Across Melbourne, organisations and clubs, like ours, are doing good work and in many ways counteracting bias, ignorance and intolerance.

*Imagine all the people. Sharing all the world. You. You may say I'm a dreamer. But I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us. And the world will be as one.*



## EVERY SPARTAN HAS A STORY

Do you have a story about your path to becoming a Spartan, or would you like to write a tribute?

We prefer articles in the range of 500 to 1000 words. Please email your story and photographs to [pmaieyoung@gmail.com](mailto:pmaieyoung@gmail.com). Please use **MMSC Newsletter Submission** in the subject line. A Word document, 10pt Arial, with no formatting is preferred.

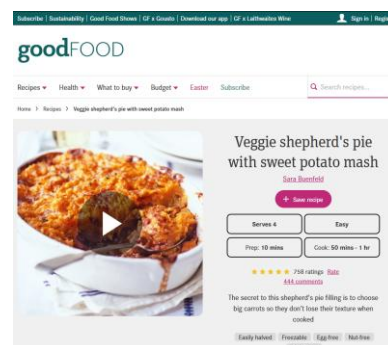
If you have missed a deadline, there is always the next issue.

If you have some photographs that you would like to add to our [photographs collection](#), please email them to [djfoskey@ozemail.com.au](mailto:djfoskey@ozemail.com.au). We hope you are inspired by the Spartan Stories in this issue.

## Spartan Healthy Recipe

President, Jay Fleming, has enjoyed preparing and eating this lovely **Veggie Shepherd's Pie with Sweet Potato Mash**, which he is sharing via the link below courtesy of goodFOOD.

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/veggie-shepherds-pie-sweet-potato-mash>



## SPARTAN MERCHANDISE

Enquire about the new additions to our Spartan merchandise range:

- Spartan pens in a variety of colours
- Spartan bottle openers
- Crop Tops

Merchandise is available for Spartans to purchase. Many members have come to enjoy the many [items available](#) which can all now be ordered online through [this link](#).

## 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.

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The Spartan financial year is 1 July to 30 June, so fees for 2025-2026 are now being accepted. The membership fee is \$45. Current financial Spartans are listed [here](#).

<p><b>\$45 via EFT:</b></p> <p>Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club                  BSB: 633-000                  Account No: 139201743</p> <p>Please include name and/or Spartan Number</p>	<p><b>Cheque for \$45 via Post:</b></p> <p>Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club                  PO Box 486, Camberwell,                  Victoria 3124</p> <p>Please include name and/or Spartan Number</p>
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You can also pay through our on-line Square site, using [this link](#). 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](mailto:spartans.team@hotmail.com) OR download the [membership form](#) and email or post it in.

## BENEFITS OF BEING A SPARTAN

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

The benefits of membership include [regular newsletters](#), being presented with a Spartan singlet after ten years and subsequent milestone Spartan singlets every five years, and the opportunity to attend our AGM to hear a top-line guest speaker.

Importantly, membership guarantees you entry to the Melbourne Marathon via a special link that is **only for financial Spartans**.

Our [monthly Sunday runs](#) enable members to do a lap or two of *The Tan* at their own pace and enjoy a social coffee afterwards.

We have a stand at the pre-marathon expo to meet with members, exhibit some of our memorabilia and sell merchandise. On marathon day we have a tent where bags can be stored and you can gather afterwards to debrief, celebrate and enjoy the company and the achievement of finishing another Melbourne Marathon. Refreshments and free massages are also provided.

In 2021 we began photographing Spartans just past the finish line to create a [gallery of finishers](#).

COMMITTEE	
<b>President</b>	Jay Fleming 0418 374 783 <a href="mailto:flemi230727@myyahoo.com">flemi230727@myyahoo.com</a>
<b>Vice President</b>	Paul Basile 0439 718 281
<b>Treasurer</b>	Vicky Chung

<b>Secretary &amp; Newsletter Editor</b>	Pamela Young
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Felicity Doolan <a href="mailto:spartans.team@hotmail.com">spartans.team@hotmail.com</a>
<b>Committee</b>	Kai Ooi
<b>Committee</b>	John Zeleznikow
<b>Webmaster</b>	David Foskey
<b>Committee</b>	Candida Baskcomb
<b>Committee</b>	John Kaparelis
<b>Committee</b>	Peter Seal
<b>Committee</b>	Gavin Criddle
<b>Committee</b>	Vilem Podreka

**LIFE MEMBERS**

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

## 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 does not 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 option.



**Melbourne Marathon Spartans Club**

ONCE A SPARTAN ALWAYS A SPARTAN

## SPARTAN RUNNER PROFILE

**Spartan Name:**

**Spartan Number:**

**Email & Mobile:**

(in case we need to clarify something; not for publication)

**Purpose** – to get to briefly know something about the person behind the Spartan number ... and to enhance inspiration and connectedness for members.

**Participation** – strictly voluntary as running is often a solitary pursuit and many runners are quite happy being private individuals.

**Level of detail** - providing any information that you are comfortable providing for some or all the below prompts is totally optional. If per chance you would like to contribute something about your journey that isn't included in the prompts below, please feel welcome to do so. There is no word limit as it's meant to be an organic initiative.

**Photo** – please feel welcome to upload your preferred pic next to the Spartan logo (optional)

**Timeframe for completion** - Documents such as this tend to be most effective when completed over a space of time (perhaps a week or a month) as various memories about your personal journey will keep coming to you over that time that may not occur to you initially.

Rather than being a definitive final document, this is a **living document** that your future accomplishments and challenges can be added to by simply emailing any edits to [spartans.team@hotmail.com](mailto:spartans.team@hotmail.com). Profiles will be stored on the Spartan website and will be password protected. Committee will release further details regarding this.

**Your suggestions are welcome** – As this is an initial draft of this concept, if you would like to see other features included in these profiles, that you have perhaps seen work well elsewhere, please let us know.

### Topics to Prompt You

**First spark of awareness for health / fitness:** This could have been a TV sitcom, movie or fiction plot, an irrepressible family member, roped in by a competitive schoolmate/work colleague, watching someone go through rehab or a near-death experience.

**Origins:** Where did you grow up and how did your early environment shape your introduction to running?

**The first time:** Do you remember your first meaningful race or run? What made it significant?

**Influences:** Who were your early sporting role models - whether personal mentors or elite runners like Deek or Kerryn McCann or perhaps champions from other sports ... and how did they influence your approach to running?

**Turning Point:** Was there a specific season, race, or setback that marked a turning point in your development as a runner?

**Training Philosophy:** How would you describe your training philosophy, and how has it evolved over the years?

**Relationship with Pain:** Distance running demands comfort with discomfort. How have you learned to manage pain, fatigue, and doubt?

**Discomfort or Pain:** How have you learned to distinguish between discomfort you can push through versus genuine pain when the body is in serious trouble?

**Training / Overtraining:** How have you found your balance? Examples of events or injuries?

**Greatest Challenges:** This could be overcoming a disability or impairment, injuries and rehabilitation.

**Balance:** How do you balance running with work, family, and life outside the sport?

**Defining Performance:** Which performance best represents who you are as a runner, and why?

**In the Zone:** Can you think of an event when you just kept on getting your second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth winds and just coasting past struggling runners in the last 10km?

**What has kept you going:** It can be extremely difficult to maintain the required mental and physical level! How have you kept on keeping on keeping on?

**Identity Beyond Results:** When you strip away times and medals, what does regular running mean to you personally?

**Who has your running inspired / influenced?:** This could be friends, acquaintances, family members or perhaps even people in your neighbourhood regularly driving past.

**Legacy and Perspective:** When future runners read about you, what do you hope they understand about your journey and the sport of distance running?

**Favourite chill activity / hobby:**

**Favourite music genre / bands:**

**Favourite movies / sitcoms:**

**Email your Spartan Runner Profile to:** [spartans.team@hotmail.com](mailto:spartans.team@hotmail.com)