

THE SPARTAN

CLUB PATRON - Robert de Castella

November 2020

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

Dear Spartans. At the end of a longer than usual year, things are at long last starting to look up! I hope that the simple beauty of running has continued to nourish your mind, body and spirit throughout this unbelievable year. As we approach the last month of the 2020 spin-cycle, most of us have come out the other side as far more resilient persons. I have found myself doing much more running on a daily basis ... functional running ... for shopping, for library books ... as opposed to the usual going for a run. I'm sensing that for a while at least, we will appreciate the seemingly smaller and simpler things in life that we perhaps previously took for granted or walked past with an urgency on our way to more pressing matters.

On our property, I have been witnessing the intricacy and astounding engineering from just a couple of our shared tenants. I got up close through binoculars to witness from a respectful distance the engineering marvels of 3 spider webs and a couple of bird nests, one in our garage, both built without attending any human TAFE but rather from sheer instinct and the briefest of training from their extended family and community members. Like never before, I can more fully appreciate how these structures have been built by masters in their field of endeavour. I was and continue to be in absolute awe ... and I have personally found awe to be good for my health which is why I continually seek it all around and especially on my runs.

Yesterday, when I ran down to our local Westfield at Knox to replace a watch battery and phone cover, like most people I was walking around the complex as an avid observer taking stock of which shops had survived the carnage of such prolonged closure. Shoppers were walking and behaving differently as if studying the walls and ceilings for the composition of the building materials. Sport stores had long queues with marshals at the entrances controlling the numbers in store, perhaps indicating a preference to touch and try goods after months of online shopping.

On Committee, like the rest of the world we have had a year like no other. Apart from our very first meeting in February, all the others have been on this thing called Zoom, which most of us knew nothing about last year, yet this year most of us have gained a PhD in its use, including working from home wherever possible. I haven't set foot on any campus since

March as all classes and assessments have been on Zoom, which some students have preferred but most have significantly missed the on-campus interaction and engagement.

In 2021, as well as welcoming and working with Kai Ooi and John Zeleznikow to Committee, we are looking forward to getting on with some exciting proposed Spartan initiatives from last year which have since stalled and almost become a distant memory. We also hope to facilitate even more opportunities for Spartans to get together for some enjoyable events and to perhaps enable other Spartans to attend these particularly where they have previously clashed with events on their racing calendar.

We have two more Spartan events this year for which we hope some of you will be able to join us with family members and pets. As detailed on the website and in this Newsletter, we have the Spartans Club Run at The Tan on November 22 at 8AM and we have a Spartans Christmas get-together at Ferdinando Gardens in Hampton on December 20 at 11AM. While it certainly won't be fine dining, we will provide nibbles and beverages for both events so please feel welcome to come along, break some bread, share some laughs and clink some elbows if you have availability.

We would also like as many of us as possible to support the virtual events on offer, not only in the fundraising space but also, though it won't count toward our completed marathon total, this year's virtual Melbourne Marathon on any day of your choice from December 5-13, to support the tremendous job IMG has done during a forgettable year in event management worldwide. If not otherwise committed, please join the "Melbourne Marathon Spartans" team for whatever distance you choose. Please send us some pics in your Spartan singlet while participating in any of these events for the Spartans website.

"The most painful state of being is remembering the future, particularly the one you'll never have" – Soren Kierkegaard

CLUB RUN, November 22

The long scheduled November 22 Club Run will occur. We will be observing all protocols including masks and freedom from any symptoms.

We will meet outside the Observatory, Birdwood Avenue at 8am and run/jog/walk a lap or two of the Tan. Afterwards we can have a socially distanced drink, courtesy of the club, at Jardin Tan. Please wear your Spartan singlets so we can make a show. Parking for three hours is free on Sundays. We will run clockwise (up Anderson St hill) so if you arrive late, run in the other direction and you should meet up with a group.

SOCIAL MEDIA

New committee member Kai Ooi has set up a Melbourne Marathon Spartans Instagram account at <https://www.instagram.com/melbournemarathonspartans/>

Use #melbournemarathonspartans for us to repost. Contact us if you would like to be featured.

There are also some Melbourne Marathon Facebook groups including a "Melbourne Marathon Spartans" open to Spartans and aspiring Spartans.

A Substitute Marathon Sally Buckingham SF0138

On a farm in the country we are very fortunate that our lives have not been very affected. In fact, on a recent Saturday, my daughter, Emma, and I ran a marathon. As the Melbourne



Marathon was cancelled and as Emma wanted to run her first marathon, we decided to run from our house to Myrtleford which was the required distance. We set off at 5.15am with our 2 dogs and with my husband, Bob, following later as support vehicle. We had to contend with several 4 wheel drives roaring past and nearly hitting the dogs, but after that we had an incident free run. Bob picked up the dogs after 12kms when the dirt road became bitumen. That was our first drinks stop.

We had another at 21kms when Bob returned without the dogs. And after that he waited for us every 5kms and later every 4kms. Emma and I set off at a slow pace and as a result we were able to keep going without my usual dramatic decline. Knowing Bob was ahead with ample energy drinks and water made a huge difference to us mentally and physically. It's also a beautiful run as we ran first in the Rose River valley, then in the Buffalo River Valley and around Lake Buffalo and then the last 20kms through farmland. Our early start meant that the temperature only got hot in the last hour. It was a great run and I felt better than I have in my last 3 Melbourne marathons. In fact, having learnt that starting at a slow pace helps enormously in the second half, I will definitely enter the Melbourne Marathon again. My time was 5hrs 12 mins and Emma's was 4hrs 58mins. Emma is especially proud. Not surprisingly, I wore my Spartans singlet for the marathon.



Sally has run her ten Melbournes over the period 1986 to 2019.

COPING WITH THE COVID LOCKDOWN Jane Sturzaker SF52 with Paul Ban (S1177)

Jane runs with the Glen Eira Victorian Masters Club. She has legendary status in the running world, being only the second Australian woman to have completed 300 marathons. Just before the Covid restrictions she achieved that goal in Wangaratta in February 2020. Her goal was to complete 400 marathons at the beginning of 2023 when she turns 70, with her plan for 2020 being 37 marathons (to get some in the bank so she's not pushing it in the final year.)



If we think the restrictions have affected our goals, I wanted to feature someone amongst us who had running goals way beyond what most of us would dream of. However the pandemic has put an end to her plan for 400 marathons within the age time frame. Who knows when any official marathon will start again, let alone 37 this year.

Jane began running marathons in 1997. Her first taste of marathons on consecutive days was three marathons in three days at Lake Tahoe in California in 2011. However her passion for multiple marathons began from 2014 and came to a halt in January 2020. The majority of her marathons have been in the USA. Jane explained that to achieve consecutive marathons they have to be a driveable distance from each other. She enjoys being part of the convoy of like-minded runners who accumulate marathons for no reason other than the love of running. Jane stated, 'it's like being on a school camp, you see the same people on the road and at the events.'

Jane has also run sixteen ultra-marathons, with three of them being the Comrades 90k 'marathon' held in South Africa' in 2002, 2005 and 2008. However she admitted 'the Comrades took it out of me'. So after a back problem in 2012 that required surgery, she decided to focus on the more 'comfortable' distance of marathons utilising her walk/run technique.

The article is not meant to be another list of Jane's achievements, but rather one where a high-achiever has had her wings clipped and how she has coped. No more events rubbing shoulders with like-minded people and no more goals that gave meaning to life through the social side of running.

After initially ignoring the development of virtual events, thinking they miss all of the aspects of running that keep Jane going, she decided to enter one that was a doozy. Due to her international contacts, Jane became part of a team of twenty runners with the goal of running the 7020k around the Baltic Sea. The team kept in contact through Facebook and posted their times to encourage each other. Jane stated, 'instead of running on my own, sometimes in the dark and in the rain, I was running for the team.' The event was meant to take twelve weeks, with her team of over-achievers finishing in two weeks and deciding to run a virtual tour of Europe.

Jane has been able to keep up her social life through being in a team running long distance virtual events. When I thought of interviewing Jane for this article, I thought she would be talking about disappointment and the mental toughness needed to overcome obstacles such as the lockdown restrictions. However I found she has bounced back into another dimension. Jane admitted that initially 'I went into a dip' emotionally but then decided to refocus on another way to fulfill her passion without wallowing in the dip. Jane stated, 'after all, a marathon is just another social event.'

I have shared two Comrades ultra-marathons and the Marathon du Medoc marathon with Jane, along with a number of marathons where we have both been in the field. Some women are able to run fast and some very long distances, such as Shirley Young. However Jane has carved out her own niche enjoying multiple marathons, often consecutive. Her positive attitude to running has meant that she simply refocussed when the lockdown restrictions kicked in and reinvented herself as an international long distance virtual team runner. We all have our ways of coping after our running routines were taken away, with some of us still grieving the loss of events.

Maybe the lesson for us ordinary people is to remember why we run and find new ways to express that passion.

Virtual Runs Jay Fleming (S1012)

Virtual events have really taken the world by storm this year for very obvious reasons as virtual runs still enable participation and the organic high of running while providing the safety of social distancing. The major running festivals around the world are still working out their own best ways forward with the current technology in this space as unfortunately, given the events elsewhere in the world, there is absolutely no guarantee whatsoever that 2020 will be an isolated pandemic year. We look forward to ongoing conversations with IMG next year given the arrival of more sophisticated IT products. As the world running community and event organisers try to sift through various versions of what a new running normal might potentially look like going forward, Spartans Committee will seek to establish greater contacts with overseas events with the aim of learning from their approaches and sharing some of ours.

Among other inspiring accounts, I've really enjoyed reading in this Newsletter about Sally Buckingham's recent virtual marathon that she ran with her daughter Emma ... with support from hubby Bob and their two dogs. I'm also extremely grateful that Sally took the time to send in a few words about this as these beautiful achievements with family are also fantastic achievements to share with the greater Spartan family.

As I've mentioned in previous discussions, my personal belief is that we will need to get on the front foot regarding facilitating a separate space to recognise the achievements of Spartans Virtual Events. There are numerous well-documented reasons for virtual events, with currently available technology, to not be officially recognised as official finishes that increment the tally of 'actual' marathons finished so I won't go through them again here.

However, I would love to see us provide a separate space to recognise members' achievements by keeping a tally of virtual marathons completed.

Additionally, my personal vision for these going forward is for members to not only email us their evidence of results for recording but also some lovely photos of some of the stunning serenity or notable scenery of wherever they are running these marathon distances. I would love to see this leading to a far greater diversity of running images and increasing our Spartan website's content of informal, relaxed and human stories and images off the beaten track to balance those of official running events. Call me a bit old-fashioned, but to me there's something charmingly real about the two images Sally sent in that connects with me even more than images taken by professional photographers in official events.

The First Marathon

The Marathon race has its roots in the deeds of the foot messengers of Ancient Greece. Peter Moore (1948-2019), a Melbourne Marathon Spartan wrote this story after he competed in the November 1995 Athens Marathon while cycle touring in Europe.

That first Marathon is still the hardest. Just ask Pheidippides, Spiridon Louis or Edwin Flack.



The road to Athens starts among the olives, oranges, vegetables and gum trees on the Plain of Marathon, but soon degenerates into a dusty highway lined with tacky strip development and half-finished buildings. It climbs almost 200m from 10k to past 30k, before the final 10k runs down the centre of a typical Athenian street, jammed with hooting, polluting, chaotic traffic. This is no modern Marathon, flat as a tack profiling a city's grand boulevards, made for a speedster with a sprint. The surface is rarely smooth, with the ridges of a poorly filled trench stretching for kilometres, the roughness of a deviation around a Metro station, and the final sets of steps and slippery marble to the Stadium Track.

The distance from Marathon to Athens is less than 40k, and the legend of Pheidippides famous last words, "Rejoice, we conquer!" was invented years later. (But lots of people do "die" on their run.) It is more likely that Pheidippides ran the modern Spartathlon, south from Athens over the rugged mountains of the Peloponnese in a fruitless quest for help from Sparta. It is the gruelling Spartathlon which first brought to prominence that latest Greek running phenomenon, the great Yiannis Kouros.

So why do people come from all over the world to run here? Simply because this **is** the birthplace of the Marathon. Here on the Plain is the Mound entombing the bones of the 192 Athenians killed in that famous victory over the invading Persians of the Greek King Darius in 490 B.C. There in the hills is the lowest pass between Marathon and Athens, the natural road alignment back into antiquity. And above all,

here is the Stadium of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, where the shepherd Spiridon Louis did his native Greece proud, the first Marathon and their only Gold Medal.

In the village of Marathon is a small square, where the blue line of the race starts, next to a running track being carved out of the rocky hillside. My race began with a surprise starting gun, as most of us were still milling around the Memorial. I jogged off down the valley with the tail, after a kilometre or so feeling the effects of the headwind which would persist all day.

A left turn off the main road, and we saw the leaders, two Turks competing in the Balkan Games, out in front. A circuit around the Tomb of the Athenians, this deviation adding the distance required since the 1908 London Olympic Marathon was extended to start outside Windsor Palace, for the convenience of the British Royal Family.



I had cycled the course and seen its difficulty, so my strategy is to run to finish and not to time. Although 5k in 23m 45s is too slow for me, I am content to just keep plugging along. Spiridon Louis did the same to outlast more fancied runners, including Australia's 1500m gold medallist, Edwin Flack, and lots more hares will come to grief on this course.

On to the main road again to the 10k mark, 22m 30s for that 5k felt good. Here the rise starts and I begin to pass people steadily, but the wind gusts up even stronger and I have to wonder about just getting to Athens at all! Some scruffy forests here, and the scars of summer's bushfires on the hillside, the Greek propensity for litter is evident everywhere and the guard dogs in various compounds are complaining in no uncertain terms. One rushes at another, through a stream of runners, watched by its smiling owner. From 10k to 15k is only 22m, helped by a couple of steep little downgrades to jar the shins of the reckless, but then we turn west and the hill steepens so the next 5k drops to 23m 15s.

More and more motorists are held up by the race as the morning wears on, but they are surprisingly phlegmatic and just sit and stare, albeit with their engines running hopefully. The permanent half way sign passes, then 150m later a van with a banner proclaims half way - which is it really?

Still passing people, I get to the head of a long strung out group and two Germans running together who pass me downhill but I ease ahead uphill. 20k to 25k and 25k to 30k are both down to 23m 30s, a last sight of the sea back over the left shoulder and ahead the 1000m bulk of the Imitos Range, shrouded in cloud, now blocks the way to Athens. A little further up and we can start to see the pass to the north where we will cross.

Now we have to share the road with moving traffic, and the police presence, overwhelming earlier when it was less necessary, becomes a bit patchy. We have had a sprinkle of rain at 17k, and get another cooling shower at 30k, but the threatening clouds racing up from the south have never delivered on their menace. Drink and sponge stations occur at regular intervals. While you can unscrew the top of a mineral water bottle and drink it on the run, a tetra pack of fruit juice with a straw definitely requires a stop.

At the traditional "wall" - 32k or 20 miles - this course flattens, and soon begins to drop. This is where if you still have what it takes, you can really let go! The Germans split, and I

try to stay with the faster one. As the slope increases, though running strongly I have no rhythm to go faster (too much cycling and not enough running), and have to settle back and watch him edge away.

30k to 35k in 22m 40s, but 35k to 40k drops back to 23m although I am still picking people up ones and twos. The second German repasses, then the Stadium pops up in front of me before I expect it, up the steps onto the track to finish in 3hr 13m 45s. I'm feeling good, better than I have a right to, virtually even splits and good enough for 87th place.

A few minutes later the clouds open up, and those still on the road add wet and cold to their ills.

[This race is officially called the "Grigoris Labrakis Peace Marathon", after the leftist politician whose assassination in the early 1960s during Greece's slide into military rule is chronicled in the film "Z".]

The first photograph shows Peter during the 2011 Melbourne Marathon, the second is during the 2007 1200km Paris-Brest-Paris ride.

The Moore brothers, Peter S0277 (31), Barry S0727 (12) and Andy S0276 (33) between them have completed 76 Melbournes.

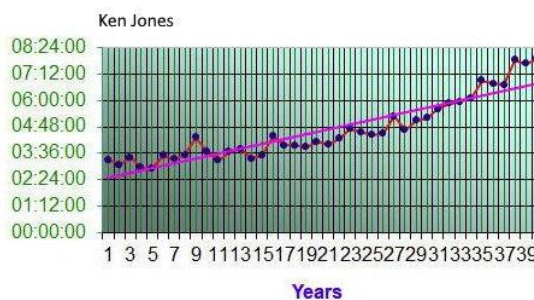
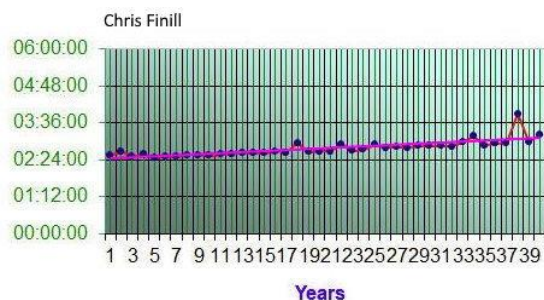
London Marathon "Ever Presents" David Foskey S0025

We haven't been able to find any other big city marathons with a club similar to the Spartans. The New York marathon comes closest by recognising runners who have [at least 15 finishes](#) but seems to pay most attention to runners who have had long streaks of finishes. Dave Obelkevich with a current streak of 43 (1976 to 2019) and 44 total finishes shared his story in the [June 2020 newsletter](#).

I recently discovered that the London Marathon has a group of runners, called the "[Ever Presents](#)", who have completed every London marathon from the inaugural 1981 marathon through to the 2020 virtual event. After the fifteenth London Marathon (1995) the group was acknowledged "by the powers that be" and they were awarded with a special commemorative medal, sweatshirt and a guaranteed acceptance for future Londons. All the EP's were 'club' runners and had run marathons before, only one of the original 42 had a PB outside 3 hours. To most of them the first London was just another marathon, albeit a big one. The original 42 have now been whittled down to 10.

The two graphs below give an indication of the performances of Chris Finill who at 61 is the youngest and fastest, breaking three hours in 2019. Ken Jones is oldest at 87 and his 2020 virtual marathon time was 7h53m. (Note that the London Marathon cut-off time is 8 hours.)

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The graphs of both Chris and Ken show the effects of aging but also show remarkable consistency: Chris broke his upper arm (humerus) at around 6kms in 2018 but still managed to break 4 hours to explain the bump in his graph.

Some of Chris's running highlights:

- Has run sub 3 hours in 5 decades - 1970s to 2010s (His virtual time in 2020 was 3h13).
- Represented England/ Great Britain 14 times at 100k or 24 hour ultra distance events.
- 14th World 100k Championships, Taiwan, 2003.
- Ran across America from California to New York in the autumn of 2011 in 79 days 22 hours.
- Guinness World Record holder for consecutive sub 3 hour marathons - 33 at London, 1981 to 2013.

The website provides a page for each of the EPs to tell their own stories and that of [Dale Lyons](#) is particularly interesting. Dale struggled over the finish line in 2018, on crutches, to achieve 39 finishes. Of the 39, at least three were aided by crutches and in 2015 he was allowed to use a wheelchair. Wait until John Dean (S20) learns that! He entered the 2019 marathon to record his 40th start but only ran 100 yards. This is similar to [Manny Karageorgiou](#) who started his 40th Melbourne Marathon knowing he would not finish. Peter Battrick (S5) is another Spartan who had 40 starts but 38 recorded finishes.

[Mike Peel](#) who looks after the website provided me with considerable help, describing his performance spike "in my case in 1984 I guided a clubmate who was a blind runner, hence my 4 hours plus. We were tied together with a piece of rope, crossed the line together but our official times are 10 sec apart!"

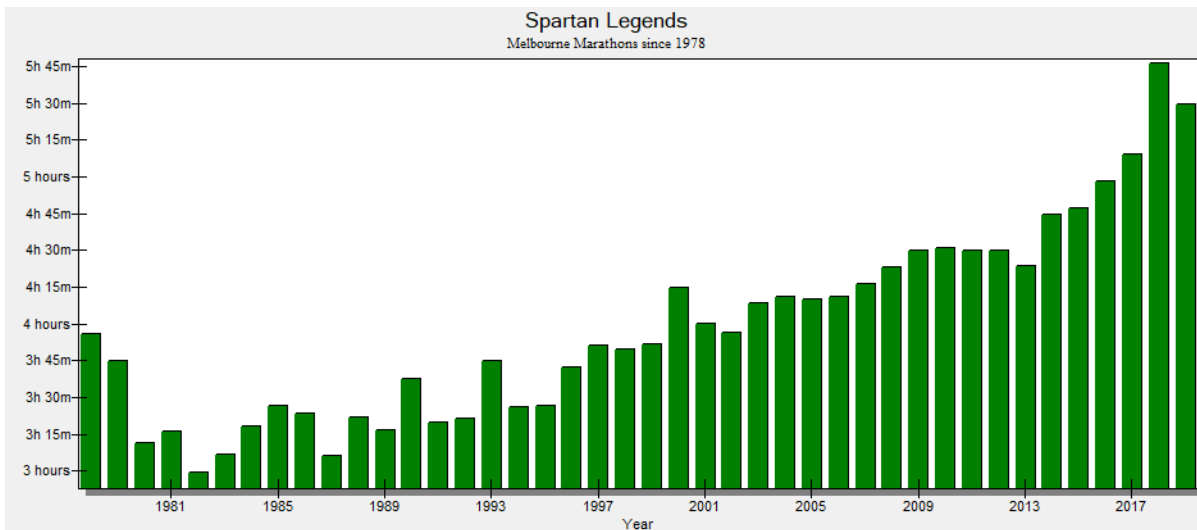
The "Legends" v "The Ever Presents" David Foskey S0025

It is interesting to compare "The Legends" with the "Ever Presents". One difference is that 1978 was the second marathon for Wayne Thompson and the first for the rest of us.

		Age in 1978	Best time	Best time at Age	Year 32	MM#	Year 66
David Foskey	S25	32	2:58:51	40yo	1978	1	2012
Roger Weinstein	S81	28	2:54:11	32yo	1982	5	2016
John Dobson	S21	27	3:02:49	36yo	1983	6	2017
Wayne Thompson	S78	26	2:40:36	29yo	1985	8	2019
Bruce Hargreaves	S39	25	2:57:30	36yo	1985	8	2019

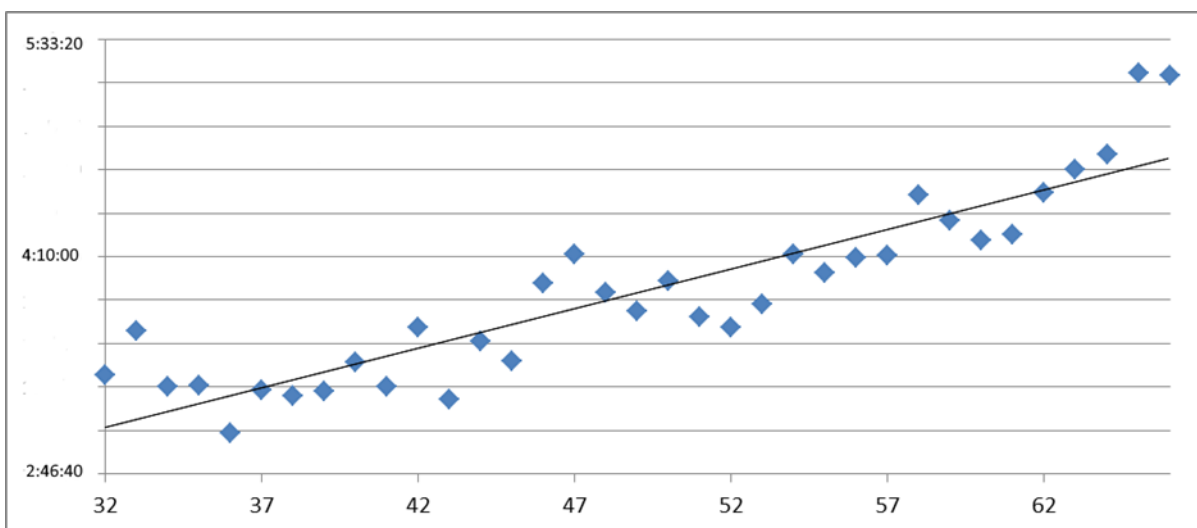
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The graph below shows our average time year by year. It took us a while to work out what we were doing as shown by the improvement from '78 to '82. After that we started slowing down.



Another way is to compare our average times when we were all the same age. I chose an age range of 32 to 66 to ensure that all five have times for that age, as shown in the shaded columns of the table above which shows the years each runner was 32 and 66. It also shows the age of each runner when they ran their fastest Melbourne.

An average time was calculated for each age using the data stored in our database. The trendline here shows a little less of our learning curve but otherwise the only conclusion to be reached is that we have been unable to completely defy our ages!



COMING EVENTS

Sunday November 22, 8AM - Spartans Club Run at The Tan, Observatory, Birdwood Avenue
December 5 – December 13 – Melbourne Marathon Virtual Event
Sunday December 20, 11AM – Spartans Family Christmas, Ferdinando Gardens, Hampton

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

SPARTAN MERCHANDISE



Spartan buffs made a great mask for running before being ruled ineffective. We are selling them for \$16, postage included.

Top row: David Foskey, Michelle Tham, Vin Martin, Jay Fleming, Barry Moore, Greg Shilo
Bottom row: John Kaparelis, Jon Holmes, Helen Ferrucci-Nobile, Candida Baskcomb, Vicky Chung



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.

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

If you would like a Spartan jacket you can order [here](#).

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

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](#)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOW BEING ACCEPTED FOR 2020/2021

The Spartan financial year is 1 July to 30 June, so fees for 2020/2021 are now being accepted. Can't remember if you have paid for 2020/21? Look up your name via this link: <http://melbournemarathonspartans.com/financial-spartans/>. If you are not there you haven't paid so here's how:

\$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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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.

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, being able to avail of refreshments and free massage after finishing the marathon.

Life Members

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

COMMITTEE

President	Jay Fleming	0418 374 783
Vice President	Paul Basile	0439 718 281
Treasurer	Rod Bayley	9077 7192
Secretary	Anne Ziogos	9592 4481
Webmaster	David Foskey	0432 146 747
Committee	John Dobson	0412 688 287
Committee	John Kaparelis	0447 447 448
Committee	Colin Silcock-Delaney	5598 6090
Committee	Felicity Doolan	
Committee	Matt Callaghan	
Committee	Vicky Chung	
Committee	Kai Ooi	
Committee	John Zeleznikow	