

THE LONG HAUL

Think you could run a marathon? PAT CARROLL tells how to push the limit and live to tell the tale

When I went to watch the start of the 1982 Commonwealth Games marathon I was very much a novice runner, my CV consisting of a single 2hr 48min marathon I had run only a month earlier. For me, everything changed during that race when I witnessed Rob de Castella win his epic duel with Tanzania's Juma Ikangaa. I was inspired.

WHY I LOVE MARATHONS
Distance running events attract more competitors than any other sport and events domestically and internationally continue to pull record numbers. Half marathons and 10km races are often used as stepping stones towards the 42.195km Holy Grail. Completing any distance event can bring great satisfaction but the marathon carries the most prestige. Once you have

completed a marathon you are a member of a very exclusive club. This is why I love it. It's an event where talent alone isn't enough. Shorter races are achievable off a limited campaign but not the marathon. It needs a long preparation involving a high level of commitment and dedication and you need to be very aware of the pace you are capable of maintaining. I ran in the Gold Coast Airport Marathon numerous times and the support I received from fellow runners and bystanders was amazing. My breakthrough race came in 1988. I can still feel the lift I received from the crowd when I was two minutes clear at the 25km mark. As the race progressed my body was crying out to stop but my training and the race day adrenaline helped me through. Once I crossed the line with a win and a personal best my body shut down and a slow walk

was all I could manage. I had stared the marathon in the face and milked my body for all it was worth. I was living. My unorthodox entrance to the marathon as a fun runner let me experience it from a non-elite (2hrs 48mins) and an elite (2hrs 9mins 39secs) perspective. In both cases I can still recall my finish-line emotions. My debut marathon was the only time I shed tears of joy. My later role as a coach and mentor to non-elite runners reinforced what I already knew – that the reward is the same for everyone. Completing a debut marathon or breaking through the next goal barrier is just as rewarding as being first across the finish line.

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No pain, no gain: Pat Carroll welcomed the chance to push his body to the limit. Each to his own.

WORDS OF ADVICE
Preparing for a marathon is more difficult than the event itself. The marathon is the execution of all your epic two- and three-hour training runs, not to mention the sessions that add variety and improve speed. The marathon is the day where everything finally comes together. How long do you need to prepare for a marathon? You can never start soon enough. It's not the hours, weeks or months that make the difference. Consistent training over many years, designed to hone speed and improve endurance, will return the greatest reward. The last 10km is where most runners with a limited preparation will naturally run out of energy stores. A long and healthy preparation improves a runner's ability to store energy and it's the final quarter where all of the banked kays are called on. I really enjoyed being in marathon campaign mode. I welcomed the challenge and the opportunity to achieve a personal best and possibly even a win. I welcomed the fact that I was placing months and years of preparation on the line. There was no backing up the following week for another try if I failed because two or three marathons a year is all your body can handle.

MARATHON TRAINING TIPS

- 1 TAKE STOCK OF YOUR CURRENT "RUNNING" FITNESS.** Fitness from non weight-bearing sports such as cycling and swimming will not help your ability to absorb a high volume of running. A green runner with a red level of enthusiasm is a recipe for disaster. Too much running too soon will almost certainly lead to a major injury that can sideline you for months.
- 2 VISIT A SPORTS PHYSIOTHERAPIST TO DISCOVER IF THERE ARE ANY MUSCLE GROUPS THAT NEED TO BE LOOSENEED.** A poor hip alignment will need to be addressed before you increase your weekly kays.
- 3 LOCK IN A REGULAR SPORTS MASSAGE,** perhaps every couple of weeks.
- 4 RUN ON SOFT SURFACES AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.** Grass and dirt trails will reduce the stress on your body.
- 5 RUN IN A PLEASANT ENVIRONMENT,** even if it involves driving to a venue.
- 6 FOLLOW A STRUCTURED AND MANAGEABLE TRAINING PROGRAM AND LOCK IN SHORT-TERM GOALS.** You need to confidently run one or two half marathons before you tackle a marathon.
- 7 JOIN A RUNNING GROUP.** Two weekly group runs and two solo runs is a healthy combination.

ESSENTIAL BUYS

Preparation is the key to surviving the marathon. PAT CARROLL shows you where to start

Energy Gel Packs

A convenient energy top-up when you're running for long periods of time as well as pre and post work-out. They're available in numerous flavours so make sure you lock in your favourite prior to race day. **GU Energy Gels** are good, \$3 each or \$65 for a box of 24.



Fuel Belt

If you don't mind carrying a tad extra weight you'll find a **fuel belt** beneficial when drink stops are hard to find. From \$49.95 for a dual-bottle belt. Go to www.fuelbelt.com for info and www.cassons.com.au to buy.



Runners

By far the most important decision to make is what to wear on your feet for all those kays. I've found **Mizuno shoes** and apparel to be first-class but make sure you go to a proper runners' outlet and find the right shoes for you.



Shirt

The **Nike Men's Race** singlet is a lightweight, breathable shirt. It has that moisture management "Dri Fit" technology, which keeps you drier, cooler and much more comfortable from the start of your run to the finish. Yes, all the way. It's almost cheating. \$60



Sunglasses

Your epic training runs will be far more pleasurable with eye protection. Adidas sunglasses are comfortable and extremely light. **Adidas Supernova**, \$289.95



Watch

Baseline Timex watches are affordable and offer everything that a novice marathon runner requires. To record your splits throughout the race you'll probably need an **Ironman 50 Lap Seek**, \$130

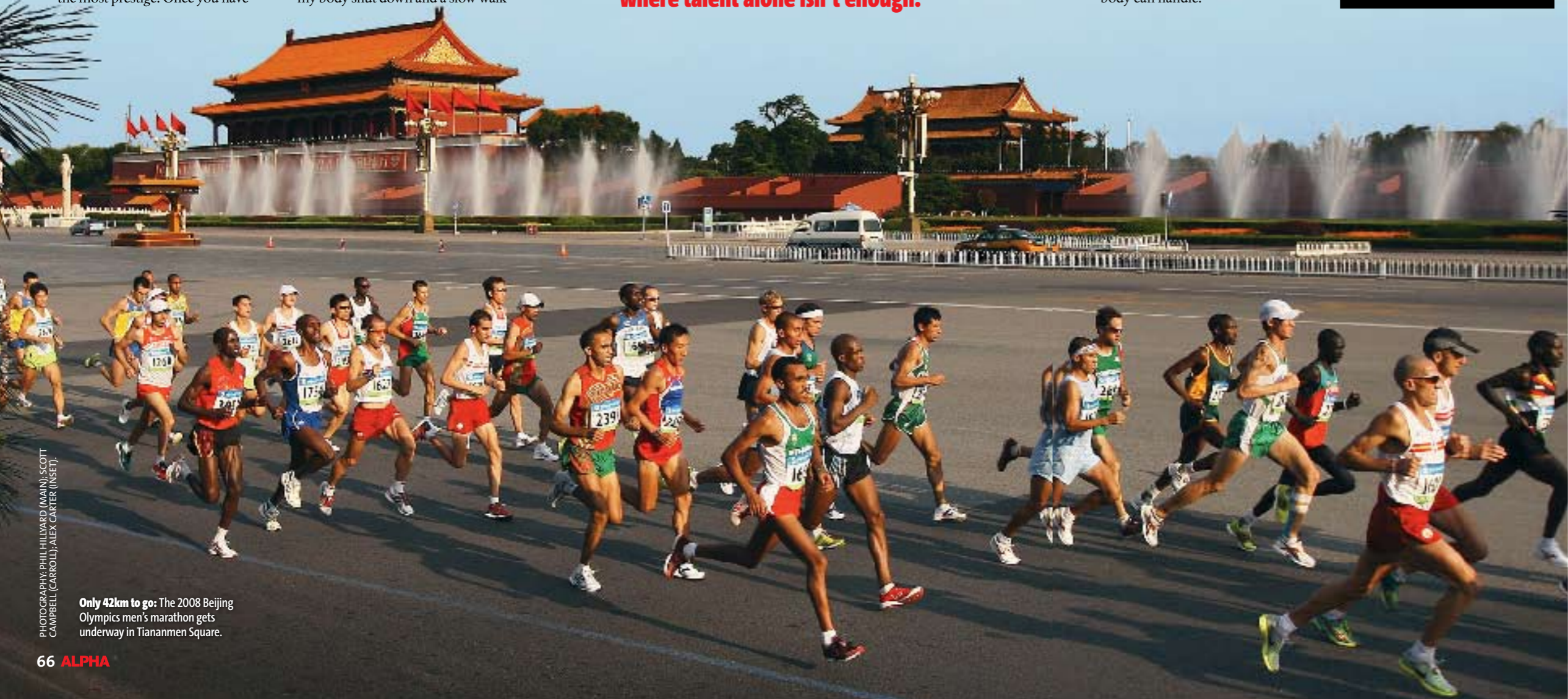


SCHOOL'S OUT

ONLINE COACHING Online coaching will provide you with a structured, manageable program that will keep you motivated and focused on your goal. Try coaching from the man himself: www.patcarrollonline.com
CLUBS Sydney Striders holds a 10km race series on the first Saturday of every month at various locations, as well as regular group training runs. www.sydneystriders.org.au
Sean Williams is doing a great job with his squad (Centennial Park, Sydney) and caters for runners of all abilities. www.sweatsydney.com.au
PCRG (Brisbane) is one of Australia's most supportive community running groups. Sessions cater for runners of all abilities and the annual Gold Coast Airport Marathon is the group's main focus. www.patcarrollonline.com/group-runs.htm
MORE INFORMATION Anything that's ever been discussed about running will be found at CoolRunning Australia with previous discussions archived into relevant categories. A great source of information and the latest news. www.coolrunning.com.au
A relatively new player on the internet scene, The Runner's Tribe is building a strong following. With a healthy collection of running videos as well as interviews with running legends. www.runnerstribe.com

RACE DAYS

- The Gold Coast Airport Marathon (July 5, pictured right) is Australia's premier marathon. The course is fast, weather is ideal and the scenery is picturesque. www.goldcoastmarathon.com.au
- Unlike other marathons, Canberra (April 19) doesn't have any supporting events apart from a 10km race the previous evening. It's a pure marathon that continues to attract a large field. www.canberramarathon.com.au
- The Harbour Bridge, Mrs Macquarie's Chair, Centennial Park and the Opera House. The Sydney Marathon (Sep 20) takes in all the famous landmarks and is a truly memorable experience. www.sydneyrunners.com.au
- The Melbourne Marathon (Oct 11) is one of Australia's oldest marathons and the only one where you start out of the city and finish in the MCG, which is absolutely priceless. www.melbournemarathon.com.au
- The Mudgee Marathon (Aug 22 and 23) is perfect for first timers. Nice country air as well. www.mudgeetriclub.hwy.com.au



PHOTOGRAPHY: PHIL HILLIARD (MAIN); SCOTT CAMPBELL (CARROLL); ALEX CARTER (INSET).

Only 42km to go: The 2008 Beijing Olympics men's marathon gets underway in Tiananmen Square.