

## BLOG #4. The power of the mind...

April.

It's in the mind – what I've learnt about the importance of mental preparation

I think all of us embarking on our first 100km event at the Surf Coast Century understand that mental fitness is going to play a large role in our experience on the day. Resilience, toughness and coping are all elements that make up the mental equation.

Recently, I ran the Skymarathon at Buffalo Stampede and volunteered on the preceding two days of racing and was able to see the runners participating in the epic Grand Slam and thought that this month I'd share some of the points I learned along the way.

(The Buffalo Skyrunning Grand Slam comprises 26km, 77km and 43km runs on consecutive days with a total elevation gain of 9329 metres).

My run coach Shaun Brewster, of Brewster's Running, was one of the 30 individuals who signed up for the Grand Slam and one of 18 who completed it. I asked Shaun if he would share some of the mental strategies he used to complete the event because he viewed the completion of this challenge as a great test of his mental strength.

Some key areas he identified as important to his success especially in the absence of ideal training:

- Rest and recovery before and between each day – nutrition, massage, sleep.
- Be efficient during the run – Shaun used various cues to ensure his running/hiking technique was as efficient as possible.
- Keep the mind in check - never let the mind dwell on something negative. If something hurts, focus on what you can do to decrease the pain and do that. If you start feeling really fatigued, think about what will remedy that (taking in more nutrition, increasing fluid intake, dropping pace a little) and do that. Feel confident in your ability to fix any challenge that comes your way and get on with the job.
- When struggling mentally – create games: for example reeling the runner in front in, or not being overtaken on a particular section.
- Be grateful - ensure you don't let the beauty of the trail pass by. Notice the views, feel gratitude for being there. Gratitude is an extremely powerful emotion, and can literally change the chemistry in your brain to allow you to feel and work better.

I will be using Shaun's advice on mental fitness as my training ramps up over the next few months and hope that other Surf Coast Century rookies may find it useful.



## April run fun

April has been a fabulous month of running in beautiful places. I cannot help but reflect that we are so fortunate here in Australia. I concluded our Tasmanian family holiday with a run up Mt Wellington. Perhaps foolishly, I chose the track to the Lost World, and ended up with a far longer 'run' than I intended – more of a rock scramble really. There were great views from the top of windy Mt Wellington and the tailwind gale almost propelled me up the last section of road – I don't think I have ever run so quickly up a road incline!

My Skymarathon at Buffalo was pleasing: solid rather than spectacular. I would still like to get up those steep hills a little quicker, but all the training has paid off and I am certainly a stronger runner than I was before I put Buffalo on my race calendar. The whole weekend was fabulous, amazing atmosphere and Mt Buffalo itself has an incredible beauty that is very special to experience. Squeezing through Chalwell's galleries with 38-odd kilometres in the legs was pure comedy – possibly good practice for the bridge crawls in Surf Coast Century!

I had a fairly easy week after Buffalo before another family camping trip, this time at Wilsons Promontory. A group of us who are running various distances at the Prom race in June, including a couple who are also running the 2016 Surf Coast Century 100k for the first time, ran the 44km course in lovely weather. The Prom is my next race and at 80 kilometres will be my longest to date. I am so excited to run in such a beautiful location: the Prom is one of Victoria's natural treasures.

My last run for the month was on parts of Leg 1 and Leg 2 of the Surf Coast Century course; I am so excited for this race – the course is beautiful. Running along the beach under the cliffs on Leg 1 is experiencing the majestic Victorian coastline at its best. As I continue to build toward Surf Coast century, I am incorporating more running on the beach, while still maintaining some hill work in my training with a view to the Prom. And trying to train the mind!

April statistics: 271km with 8,604 metres of elevation gain.

Four months to go!

