

MARATHON RUNNING  
IN  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
CENTENARY 21 August 1920–2020  
RE-ENACTMENT of the FIRST EVENT



**Notice No. 7**

**Wednesday 5 August 2020**

Well the Centenary Marathon, as it now seems popular to call it, is only two weeks away for most of us, but two people doing it in stages are starting on Saturday morning! Sue and Peter Worley have worked out an elaborate plan to cover the course in three stages over three weekends, walking 15km for the first two weeks and then the final 12.2 km on the Friday afternoon. Sue will start off at Victoria Square and when she finishes at 15km Peter will cover the 15-30km section. Then swap sections the following weekend. Finally walk together to from 30km to the finish. I'm excited about this and will be at Victoria Square on Saturday morning to start them off.

The situation with the Adelaide Marathon is looking promising and I understand the SARRC will be taking entries again soon. However things can change rapidly. That said, I've told some people that they can run the course (virtually) any time this year and receive the finisher's medal and the results will be updated. Also, some people have indicated they will run it on the Saturday or Sunday of the weekend of 22-23 August rather than Friday and they will be eligible for most of the awards. I'm still hoping to have some sort of presentation ceremony on the Friday. The course will remain open until at least 6pm given it will still be light then.

This week's featured runners are Grenville Wood and Desiree Letherby.

Grenville Wood moved to world-class level during the 1980s, finally breaking though the 2:20 barrier and then quickly moving up to sub 2:15. His performance of 2:12:50 in the 1982 Big M Melbourne marathon (picture above and on page 6) and others earned him selection in the first World Athletics Championships in Helsinki, 1983 and the 1986 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh. Yet he won the most important selection marathon of them all, the 1984 Olympic Trials in Canberra and posted a time of 2:15:50 but missed the qualifying time of 2:14:00 when gale force winds sprung up an hour after the marathon started and the selectors refused to take that into account, saying his performance was not up to standard! Megan Sloane (2<sup>nd</sup> woman) missed the qualifying mark of 2:40:00 by 25 seconds. Robert de Castella (pre-selected) said he would have had trouble qualifying in that weather. Wood also missed the qualifying time of 2:16:00 for the 1982 Commonwealth Games, by 22 seconds.

Desiree Letherby did not start running until well into her thirties. She was the first woman in South Australia to run under three hours and kept improving to reduce her time to 2:45:55 in the 1984 Olympic trials. She would have run near 2:40 in decent weather. Letherby won the Adelaide Marathon four times and was the first runner aged 40+ to win it. Her son Andrew became a world class marathon runner, being selected in the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester where he came 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2:13:23.



Australian distance running champion Desiree Leatherby jogging yesterday with her children Andrew and Teresa.

*The Advertiser, Wed 27 August 1980*

Already looking like he's ready to go, Andrew ran a PB of 2:11:42 in the 2005 Berlin Marathon. The Letherby family moved to Queensland in the late 1980s.

### **Volunteers**

Thank you to Steve Guy's wife Jenny for offering to help at the start at Victoria Square.

Thanks also to my son Thomas and Catherine for their offer of assistance.

We need a couple of marshals at the finish area to ensure the runners run more or less the same course for the final kilometre at Uni Loop.

### **The Course**

I have now measured the course up to the K-mart shopping centre at Firle (Shelley St) with a wheel (29436 metres) and taken lots of photos. A separate pdf document for the course will be made and sent to everyone to keep handy on the day.

### **Something old**

Rick sent me an email saying he was going to wear a knotted handkerchief on his head and his first marathon number. Thanks Rick.

### **Marathon Logistics**

While keeping this as simple as possible, there are some things everyone needs to know.

#### **The Start – Victoria Square**

The start line has been defined – see the photo in Notice 3.

I will be there from about 9:30am on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> August with Catherine and Jenny. We will see you off and take any warm-up gear you may not need. Please keep this to a minimum if possible, but of course the weather conditions may require additional clothing.

For those who don't know me I will be wearing a blue cap. If it is raining I will also have a red/white striped umbrella. I'll probably have a clipboard with me.

If anyone requires a gear bag to be at the finish I will park my car at the Central Market and these can be ferried to the car at regular intervals. Unless separate arrangements have been made everyone needs to start by 1pm. The finish area will be kept open until 6pm or later given it will still be daylight then.

### The Course

By the time of the event everyone will have access to course maps and photos of key points to ensure no-one gets lost, in theory at least. There will be no marshals or signs on the course, except at the finish to ensure you follow the basic path on the Uni Loop to reach the finish post having covered the full distance. All maps show where the toilets and drinking taps are and major shopping centres. It would be a good idea to carry some money with you.

### Getting in touch with us

Before race day: contact Ian Hill.

On race day: contact Catherine, who will be with me as I drive around the course.

Please do not ring her at any other time unless it is urgent.

Catherine will also take photos as we see you.

We will also carry a basic first aid kit.

### The Finish

It's likely, subject to the wheel measurement, that when you reach the Uni Loop at the intersection of Finniss St and MacKinnon Parade there will still be about 1km to run. Proceed straight ahead to Frome Road and turn left onto the asphalt footpath rather than the Uni Loop gravel path. When you reach the roundabout turn left onto the gravel path as it follows War Memorial Drive. Upon reaching the soccer field in front of (the rear) of the old grandstand run behind the grandstand and head for the "Start post" of the Uni Loop and turn left to run the final 400 metres to the finish post. That will guarantee the full marathon distance. If your GPS watch is showing a little short keep going if you wish!

### Finish Time

Everyone times themselves and it will be moving time only, NOT elapsed time. It would be a good idea to stop your watch at the lights, toilets etc but don't forget to restart it. Some facilities require diversion of a few hundred metres and it would be preferable not to have this recorded.

### **History of the marathon in SA – 1980s**

There were 40 marathons held in South Australia during the 1980s, of which 37 were long-standing events, namely the State Marathon, the Whyalla Marathon, the Adelaide Marathon and the newly established Pichi Richi Marathon in 1982. In 1987 the State Marathon was incorporated in the Adelaide Marathon, therefore reducing to nine the number of separate State Marathons. The other three were the Olympic Trial and National Marathon Championships, both at West Lakes in 1980 and the Jade Marathon which started at Cleve on Eyre Peninsula in 1989.

By far the largest of the four long-standing events was the Adelaide Marathon which accounted for more than 90% of all marathon performances during the decade. The history and demographics of this and the other events are documented in:

<https://ausrunning.net/stats-sa-distance-events/SouthAustralianMarathonDemographics.pdf>

A summary of the key historical points from this article are:

- In 1980 Olympic Trial was the *only* world class marathon ever to have been held in SA
- There has never been a sub 2:20 time recorded in the Adelaide Marathon
- The last time a sub 2:20 marathon was run in SA was in the 1980 Nationals
- There has never been a sub 2:45 marathon run by a woman in SA
- Adelaide is the only mainland Capital City not to have hosted an Olympic or Commonwealth Games
- Wheelchair athletes competed in the marathon for the first time in SA
- Times close to world-class were recorded by race walkers in the Adelaide Marathon
- In the 1987 Adelaide Marathon Derek Turnbull of New Zealand set a world best time for a 60 year old male of 2:38:46

### **Marathons in 1980**

The first year of the 80s was the best for marathons in the State's history. The big event was the first, the Olympic Trial held at Easter on Sunday 6 April at West Lakes. There were 24 entrants who had met the qualifying time for entry, 2:40, including Elizabeth Hassall who had qualified at the Boston Marathon in 1979. She was given a race number because she entered as E. Hassall and when the race officials discovered who it really was they allowed her to run the race but didn't know what to do if she finished in the top three. It wasn't going to happen of course but they figured it was best to be diplomatic. Disappointingly, she did not start in the race because it was a golden opportunity for her to improve her best time.

Of the 24 entrants 14 started and seven finished. The winner was Gerard Barrett from Queensland whose time of 2:11:42 easily broke the state all-comers record. Second was Robert de Castella in 2:12:24 and third was Chris Wardlaw in 2:12:47. That was not quite the end of the show. Close behind in fourth place was Garry Henry in 2:13:11. Other competitors who had a realistic chance of qualifying for the Olympics, Bill Scott and David Chettle dropped out with injury or exhaustion. The others to finish were Len Johnson (2:22:24), John Stanley (2:27:58) and Iain Dobbie in 2:34:18, setting a new state Master's record.

I witnessed the closing stages of this race and all I could see afterwards were four walking skeletons! Barrett, de Castella, Wardlaw and Henry had given the race everything they possessed.

From my Demographics article of March 1986:

*In the book Deek, by Robert de Castella and Mike Jenkinson, Deek's coach Pat Clohessy summed up the event saying "It was a terribly hard race with five good runners fighting desperately for three Games places. I'm afraid several of them damaged themselves. It would have been better if Scott and Barrett had bypassed the race and relied on their selections for track events."*

*Clohessy was referring to the fact that of the six starters with a realistic chance of going to Moscow, only Deek emerged from the race unscathed in terms of his future. Bill Scott had already been selected for the 10000m and didn't need to run the marathon trial, which left Dave Chettle as the fifth "good runner". Chettle withdrew at 25km and Scott at 35km, both injured. Barrett had qualified for the 10000m but had yet to be selected, which is why he ran the trial.*

Next in 1980 on 8<sup>th</sup> June was the SA State Marathon easily won by Grenville Wood in 2:24:43 while Desiree Letherby won the women's title in a new state record of 2:57:13 and first under three hours. This had a record field of 154 entrants, 143 starters and 119 finishers. On 27<sup>th</sup> July the National Championships were held, again at West Lakes and in inclement weather Lawrie Whitty won in 2:19:00 from Grenville Wood in a PB of 2:20:26. Again I watched this race, eager to learn as much as possible in preparation for my second marathon in October.

The other two marathons in SA, Whyalla and Adelaide, were both won in under 2:30 by John Duck from Victoria (2:29:31) and Ian Graves from NSW (2:27:03) respectively. Jan Dobbie (3:33:48) and Desiree Letherby (3:01:23) were the female winners respectively.

Even the Australian Masters Marathon, held in conjunction with the Australian Championship but starting 15 minutes later, was won in 2:29:05 by John Bowers.

In contrast 1981 times were a lot slower by the men and the only sub 2:30 marathon was by Grenville Wood, again winning the state championship in 2:27:13. However Desiree Letherby continued to improve rapidly and won the women's state championship in 2:49:36.

The Adelaide Marathon was won by Steve Guy in 2:30:36 about 200 metres from where our re-enactment will finish, in those days opposite the Uni Gym which was knocked down several years ago. The 1981 finish was recorded on a VHS video and I took possession of that tape a few years ago with permission from the SARRC. It's fascinating to watch now and would be good to get it converted to DVD. Modern Race Directors would look at it in disbelief as adult spectators, children and dogs just wandered across the finish area willy-nilly as exhausted runners negotiated the muddy grassed oval.

I finished about 19 minutes behind Steve and I still remember the announcer Brian Chapman saying "here comes Ian Hill – he's the one with long hair" and my mum happened to be in the crowd with her sister pretending to be embarrassed! Chappie as we called him was one of the great finish announcers, much like Brian Lenton at Canberra – both entertaining.

Desiree Letherby broke her own record by nine minutes with 2:52:23, a long way ahead of Jenny Flood in 3:06:45 and Aija Svencis in 3:13:22.

Just when we thought 1981 was done for marathons a chance remark at a club training session in early December caused one of the “oddball” marathons in Australia to be established in Adelaide on Christmas Day and the tradition is still going! A woman at Adelaide Harriers training asked one of the popular clubmen around the place what he was doing on Christmas Day and he replied tongue-in-cheek “I’m running a marathon”! Next thing he knew he was!

The Fanatics Marathon was born and all going well will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> edition this year on Christmas Day. It is mostly a half marathon nowadays but there’s no reason someone cannot still run a marathon. It’s a social run (like our event) with no entry fee and no council permission needed. In 2019 I wrote a history of the Fanatics which can be found here:

<https://ausrunning.net/stats-sa-distance-events/Fanatics%20History%20-%20v6.pdf>

Read all about who the founders were of this event, the zany finisher certificates and the intrigue, the bribery and weird and wonderful stories of the Fanatics Marathon and Half Marathon, where getting lost on the course is not only a tradition, it is *expected!*

The first two marathons in 1982 were won by Steve Guy. The preview in the *Advertiser*, Friday June 4<sup>th</sup> 1982 stated that Grenville Wood’s absence with a knee injury leaves the standard at the lowest level for many years. Although the race lacks class it should be close with eight runners expected to push the nominated favourite Peter Schultz and record times of about 2 hours 30 minutes.

**Athletics**  
Unknown Peter Schultz is favourite for the Liffeslyle-Nordica SA marathon championship at West Lakes on Sunday. Grenville Wood’s withdrawal because of a knee injury leaves the standard at the lowest for many years. However, although the race lacks class it should be close, with eight runners expected to push Schultz and record times of about 2 hours 30 minutes. Former State representatives Steve Guy (best 2 hrs 30 mins), Alan Hanley (2:36), Gerry Hicks (2:31), Trevor Mitchell (2:33), Phil Afford (2:37) and Dave Martin (2:38) all have a chance of victory. Newcomers Michael Debonough and Bob Sweet also are expected to do well and may figure in the finish. Schultz has the best credentials though, having run a 2:32 marathon last Christmas in hot conditions. The women’s division could see the emergence of a new star in Anne Mann, 27, whose 2:56 credentials should give her the measure of Jenny Flood (3:06) and Helen Alderson (3:18). The race starts at 9 a.m. outside West Lakes mall and follows Frebner Drive, Frederick Road, Trimmer Parade, Military Road, Birtley Terrace, Bower Road and West Lakes Boulevard. Flinders University middle distance runner Pat Custance should win the Ern Jolly Memorial race at West Terrace tomorrow.

The race is unique in that the memorial recipient Ern Jolly is still alive, having returned from World War II after being reportedly killed.

## Marathon thriller to Guy

By ANDREW BOTH

Roseworthy Agricultural College winemaking student Steve Guy wins the Lifestyle-Nordica State marathon championship at West Lakes yesterday after the closest finish in the history of the event.

It was his first State marathon victory. His time was 2 hr. 28 min. 36 sec.

In a classic race of attrition the second, third and fourth runners finished within 70 seconds of Guy. Only 153 of 229 entrants completed the 32.2 kilometres.

Guy paced himself perfectly and took the lead with only only three kilometres left, beating fast-finishing Alan Hanley, pre-race favourite Peter Schultz and Bob Sweet, who led for most of the race.

Guy, 26, said later he had intended giving up running because of the pressure of being expected to win all the time but would now run in the Commonwealth Games selection trials in Brisbane in September.


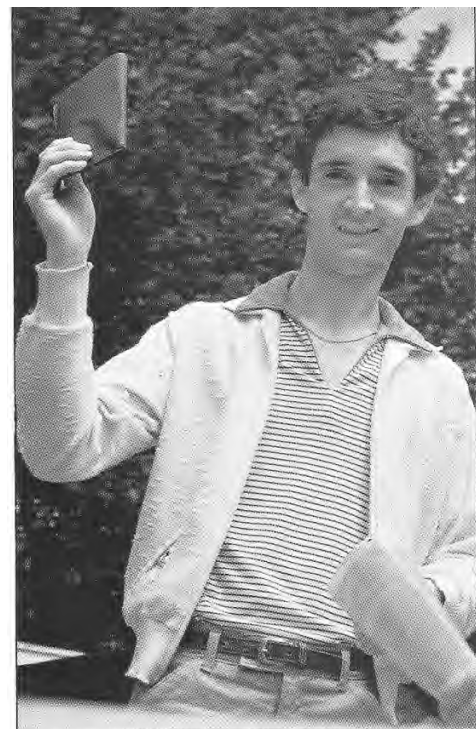
He has been doing about 160 kilometres weekly but doesn’t think he can run much faster and may turn to orienteering.

For Hanley, the race signalled a remarkable comeback from serious injury which looked like ending his running career.

Two years ago he collapsed because of illness and fatigue during a training run and was found unconscious beside a railway line at North Adelaide. He was taken to hospital. Where X-rays showed he had been running for some time with a broken leg.

Anne Mann, 27, won the women’s section yesterday in 2:56:48, finishing more than six minutes ahead of Jenny Flood, who set a State veterans record.

Men: S. Guy (Gov) 2:28:36, A. Hanley (WD) 2:35:17, P. Schultz (EH) 2:35:59, R. Sweet (AH) 2:39:46, B. Jones (AH) 2:33:05 (State veterans record), R. Midgum (AH) 2:35:12, T. Mitchell (SD) 2:35:44, P. Deane (SH) 2:37:56, M. Debonough (AH) 2:38:08, T. McCull (Ind) 2:38:29 (all qualified for Commonwealth Games trials).  
Women: A. Mann (AH) 2:56:48, J. Flood (EH) 3:02:50, A. Pearce (EH) 3:22:02, N. Palmer (Ind) 3:22:27, J. Lee (AH) 3:23:59, H. Alderson (Ind) 3:30:01.

Grenville Wood 2nd with his tickets to London.

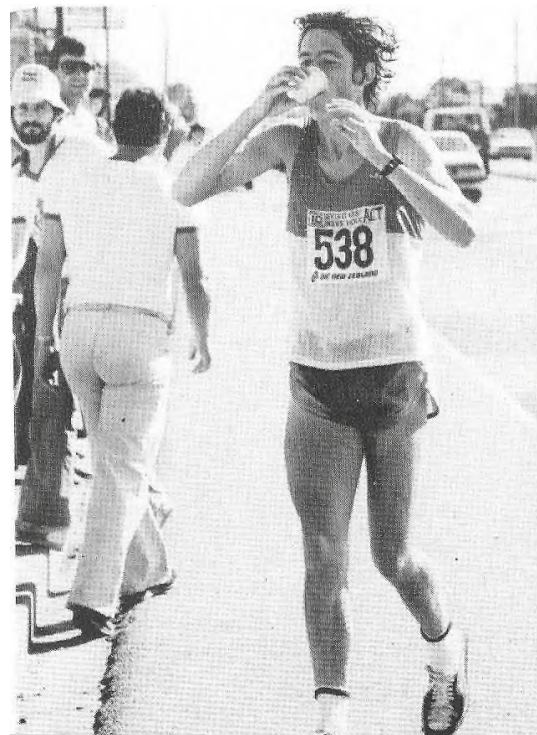
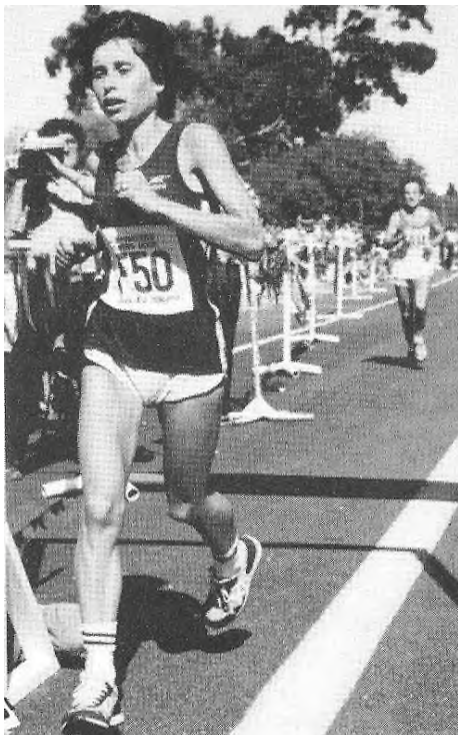
The race preview was sort of right in that it was a close race and this pushed the first four placegetters to times under 2:30. Not only was the race close, but it also got physical as Steve Guy received a hefty hip and shoulder near the end from an ex-footballer in the first four and responded by sprinting away to

a convincing victory by 200 metres. The race report in the *Advertiser* of Monday 7 June 1982 says that all listed finishers qualified for the Commonwealth Games trials.

Anne Mann had broken the three hour barrier in Canberra two months earlier and ran a similar time in winning the state championship in 2:56:48 from Jenny Flood in 3:02:59 and Avis Pearce in 3:22:02.

Guy's second win was in the inaugural Pichi Richi Marathon at Port Augusta in 2:40:10. This was a point to point course through the Pichi Richi Pass in the Flinders Ranges to Quorn and rose from sea level to over 400 metres at 35km before descending about 100 metres into Quorn. This was not a course for a PB, particularly if there was a strong northerly wind, as was the case in 1982. Women's winner was Helen O'Connor in 3:43:42.

The first two Adelaide Marathons were held in October and clashed with Melbourne's Big M marathon and also potentially faced hot weather. Therefore in 1981 the SARRC moved the event to August but in 1982 the day, August 29<sup>th</sup>, was the second hottest August day recorded. With a temperature of 28C times were slow, but winner Colin Neave from Canberra still smashed the course record with a run of 2:21:10. Neave's best at the time was 2:18:34 and it's likely there would have been a sub-2:20 in Adelaide if the weather had been cooler. Anne Mann continued her good form for the year and won the women's race in a PB of 2:52:24. Later in the year she ran exactly four minutes faster in Melbourne and subsequently retired from marathon running.



Anne Mann and Colin Neave in the 1982 Adelaide Marathon

*Photos from SA Running No.4, November 1982.*

After Adelaide the low-key Whyalla Marathon was held on October 17<sup>th</sup> and won by Iain Dobbie in 2:51:00 and the even lower-key Fanatics Marathon was on Christmas Day and won by Peter Schultz in the amazing time of 2:29:50.

In 1983 Joe Petkovic won the first of six consecutive State Marathons in a time of 2:25:38 while Wendy Hendricks won the women's title in 3:06:37. Robert Turner, SA's best wheelchair athlete won the title in 2:18:52. During Petkovic's six wins in a row he fended off six different runners-up! The sequence stopped in 1989 when Michael Bertelsmeier stuck with Petkovic for 42km but both were injured, Bertelsmeier with a hip injury and Petkovic with shin splints. In the end Petkovic could match a change-of-gear dash for the finish and lost by ten seconds. Petkovic rallied to win the state championship again from 1990-93.

The Adelaide Marathon in 1983 was run on the Gawler to Adelaide course for the final time and once again the winner came tantalising close to breaking 2:20. Paul O'Hare won in 2:20:27 from John Duck in 2:21:52, both from Victoria and Peter Schultz in a PB 2:24:44, which remains the fastest time by an SA resident in the event. Desiree Letherby again won the women's race in 2:51:15 from Maureen Moyle (2:57:19) and Helen Alderson (3:02:11).

The 1983 Pichi Richi Marathon was a battle between three runners who were obliged to run the 5km Gawler relays the day before and then travel to Port Augusta. Being in the same boat, it didn't matter and the race was won by Bob Barnard on his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2:40:44 from Peter Schultz (2:41:58) and Ian Hill (2:43:16). In fourth place was Phil Afford (3:00:12) who also ran the Gawler relays. Fifteen year old Sharon Morris won the women's race in 3:57:03. The men's results from the first two Pichi Richi marathons indicate that the hilly terrain slowed times by 10-15 minutes. The consensus was that 2:35 was possible in ideal conditions but only two runners ever broke 2:40 and the current record is 2:36:23 by John Csongei in 2017.

There were high expectations in 1984 about marathon running. Robert de Castella was hot favourite to win the Olympic Games marathon in Los Angeles and sensational newcomer Lisa Martin (as she was then) from Gawler and based in the USA was required to run the Olympic Trial in Canberra, even though she had debuted with a 2:32:22 run at Huntsville, Alabama the previous December. Two men from SA, Garry Henry and Grenville Wood were also contesting the trial with realistic chances of joining Deek in the Olympic team. As stated earlier the weather thwarted everyone's chances as the selectors refused to take that into consideration. Only Lisa Martin (pictured below) ran a qualifying time, 2:35:05.





Lisa Martin had a fabulous run at the 1984 Games and finished 7<sup>th</sup> in 2:29:03. She went on to greater things, winning the 1986 Commonwealth Games Gold medal in 2:26:07 and the 1988 Olympic Games silver medal in 2:25:53. In 1990 she defended her Commonwealth Games title in Auckland with a time of 2:25:28. In 1992 she won the New York Marathon in 2:24:40. Her PB was 2:23:51 at Osaka in 1988, then a world record for a women's only marathon.

Returning to the 1984 Olympic Trial, President of the SARRC, Bruce Abrahams, wrote a scathing article criticising the Olympic Games selection policy, backing this up with scientific evidence. From *SA Running* No. 10, June 1984:



**PRESIDENT'S PAGE**

**Let's have a full quota**

The Australian selectors have chosen our Olympic Marathon representatives. Robert de Castella with a best time in the qualifying period of 2:10:03, and Lisa Martin (2:32:22) are the only two selections for this prestigious event.

Grenville Wood won the Olympic Trial Marathon in Canberra on April 8 in 2:15:50 and Megan Nann was second to Lisa Martin in 2:40:25. They both missed selection by not breaking the Australian Olympic standards of 2:14:00 and 2:40:00 resp. Rob Wallace was second to Grenville in 2:16:48 and Mona Mann, third to Lisa in 2:41:23. They also missed selection.

Prior to the qualifying period, both Grenville and Megan had run faster times than the qualifying standards.

The Olympic Trial was held in gusty, atrocious conditions. The undulating course, with a record of only 2:15:16, combined with the wind, presenting an impenetrable barrier to both Grenville and Megan.

Now Australia has only two representatives in the Olympic Marathons out of a possible 42. The Australian Athletic Union and the Australian Olympic Federation tell us: "Too bad—we just don't have the runners who meet their standard."

We would all agree that the AAU's job is to ensure that our Olympians are international standard.

I am sure, and I know most of Australia's running community are sure, that Grenville, Rob, Megan and Mona ARE international standard and worthy representatives.

The problem stems from setting a time standard as the only (apparent) selection criteria in an event as unique and unpredictable as the marathon.

But how do you compare performances if not on time? There are at least four criteria that affect performances in marathons:

- Altitude change from start to finish. This is not simply point-to-point versus out-and-back.
- Effect of wind.
- Course roughness.
- Temperature/humidity.

We assume the course measurement is accurate—the new IAAF/AIMS standard is 42,195m (+ 0.1% 'long' course safety factor) measured in an approved way with approved instruments.

A recent paper by Dr. Ken Young of the National Running Data Centre in the USA, America's top expert on distance running statistics, made a detailed study of marathon courses and made some very interesting observations.

—The Boston Marathon which has an overall drop of 120 metres is 0.76% faster than a standard (no drop) course. This represents 1.09 for a 2:30.00 marathon.

The affect of wind is more complex, needing to be adjusted not only for changes in direction but also for the height of nearby buildings. On a standard 400 metre track, a wind of 17 kilometre/hour would slow the runner by 3% (6sec/km) or 4 mins/ marathon at Grenville's pace. This allows for the net affect of the wind—the tail wind aiding the runner and the headwind hindering. Ken's calculations gave Solazar a 06sec.-50sec. advantage in the 1981 New York Marathon world "record" of 2:08:13!

In Canberra, there was a savage head wind in the last eight kilometre of the race (this

was a tailwind in the previous 10 kilometres.) Young's calculation would show a net degradation of Grenville's and Megan's performances. But would it bring them **BELOW** the AAU Olympic standard? In Megan's case (missing by 25 sec.), almost certainly.

Curiously it is possible that Grenville's PB of 2:12.50 in the 1982 Melbourne Marathon (with a tailwind) could calculate to be a worse performance than his 2:15.50 in Canberra.

The stoney silence of the AAU indicate that they did not make any allowances in their selection criteria for adverse weather conditions. This is just not good enough in the light of all the current evidence by Young and others!

At the very least, they should re-examine the performances based on Young's calculations.

The two Olympic Marathons are the blue-ribbon events of the Olympics as far as community interest and media coverage are concerned. The Australian public want to see all our heroes in the greatest of all public events of the Olympics.

The AAU has missed the most rare of opportunities to promote distance running in Australia and to encourage and reward our top runners. Don't forget that Deek gained invaluable experience in Moscow.

It is too late for 1984, it must not happen again in future Commonwealth, Olympic and World Championships.

One solution is to include a team's event such as in the World Cross Country Championships in the Olympic Marathons.

A Marathon Team's Event would encourage maximum participation from all nations. The marathon, itself, is uniquely suited to a TEAM'S competition. The event symbolises participation and cooperation as well as individual excellence.

But for 1984, all the best to Deek and Lisa.

**Bruce Abrahams**

As noted Grenville Wood won the trial in 2:15:50. Garry Henry, who had been living in Adelaide for a few years, was not in his best form going into the race and finished 16<sup>th</sup> in 2:27:08.

The 1984 Adelaide Marathon had a new course which took runners down to Glenelg and back and then a lap of the parklands to finish on War Memorial Drive. The event was heavily sponsored and top runners from every state and territory (except WA) and New Zealand competed for the Farmers Union International Teams Cup. This was meant to be a dress rehearsal for the BIG one in 1986 to celebrate SA's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday (no fuss was made about that in those days). It didn't work. Based on finish times of the "elite", 1984 was a huge success while 1986 was a flop. There were only three men under 2:30 in 1986 compared to sixteen in 1984. The main reason was that there had to be a 1985 marathon in between! This simply killed the sponsorship momentum gained from the past few years.

The new 1984 course finished within a few hundred metres of where it started, therefore negating any advantage from weather conditions and altitude. The winner was Steve Poulton from NSW who by definition set a new *course* record of 2:20:23 and managed to break the race record by four seconds.

Poulton was a 2:17 marathoner but once again the difficult weather prevented the winner from breaking 2:20. In his report in the results book Brian Chapman wrote "And the wind? Deduct 3 mins if you were sub 2:30 and 5 mins for a sub 3 hours". The women's winner was Gill Dunning from New Zealand in 2:46:31, also a race record. In fact, both winners' times remain the fastest in SA since 1980.

Runner up to Dunning was SA's Maureen Moyle in 2:49:59 and this also remains the fastest residential time for the event. Allan Sinclair from NZ was men's runner-up in 2:23:33. Robert Turner took out the wheelchair race in 2:20:01 and Timothy Thompson won the racewalk division in 4:16:27. The Teams Cup, decided on the times of the first two men and women, went to NZ from SA and incredibly, a tie for 3<sup>rd</sup> place shared by NT and QLD.

The 1985 Adelaide Marathon was controversial in that the organisers, needing a gimmick to maintain interest, decided to start the women's division fifteen minutes before the men. They tested the idea out in the Greenbelt Half Marathon and not everyone was happy with the arrangement. There were pros and cons. The advantage was that the women were the centre of attention for a while until they were caught by the men. The disadvantage was that the top women got carried away with the pace of very fast leading men upon being caught and in theory the men they were *supposed* to be pacing from never caught them. This disrupted their race. I believe there is merit in the latter argument as I have experienced it myself when reaching the half way point of a marathon just at the time the half marathon starts. It does disrupt your concentration and pacing.

The organisers relented and created a "couples" division where women could start with the men but they were not eligible for the podium. One such runner, Mabel Mitchell of Victoria had the second fastest time (2:56:28) but was not awarded second prize which went to Winnie Ng of Hong Kong who ran 2:57:40. Winner was Iris Cook of Victoria in 2:52:49. The men's race was won by Vivian Woodward from Tasmania in 2:21:36. This was the fourth consecutive year the marathon was won by a sub 2:20 runner who couldn't *quite* do it in Adelaide!

As stated above the 1986 Adelaide Marathon was a disappointment for the organisers who were hoping for the 1984-*projected* world-class field, five thousand entrants and one hundred thousand spectators. It was a worthwhile ambition and certainly plausible, but apart from the 1985 anticlimax, it seems all the available sponsorship money in Australia had been committed elsewhere. The race was still a success, with a record entry of 2750 and 1937 finishers, but the winning time was "only" 2:25:16 by Peter Bourgaize, who won no friends by saying in his acceptance speech that he didn't try hard because there was no prize money! Desiree Letherby won a record fourth Adelaide Marathon in 2:59:25 and at age 40 she was the first "veteran" winner overall.

The "body language" of the SARRC, evident by the poor-quality results book after all the glossy promotional material leading up to the marathon said it all. The party was over!

There was the inevitable decline in numbers running the Adelaide Marathon for the remainder of the 1980s but they steadied at around the 600 mark right through until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The concept of a "marathon festival" from 1990 kept the event financially viable. Another sub-2:20 runner, John Duck from Victoria notched up a hat-trick of wins from 1987-89 in the mid 2:20s and the women kept posting consistently good times with Leslie Watson of Scotland winning in 1989 with 2:49:49.

The two country marathons Whyalla and Pichi Richi continued with relatively small fields in the marathon boosted by well attended half marathons. In 1989 a new marathon was established at Cleve in the middle of Eyre Peninsula called the Jade Marathon. This was a point to point race to Cowell on the coast and therefore net downhill. It was won by Hugh Dearnley of Broken Hill in 2:40:34. Sylvia Dansie won the women's race on 4:06:19.

One other highlight of the 1980s was the well deserved win in the 1985 Australian Marathon by Grenville Wood in a time of 2:13:37. This served as a trial for the 1986 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh and Wood needed to run under 2:14 to qualify for selection. After the huge disappointment of the 1984 Olympic Trial fiasco with the weather and selection policy and previously, Wood missing selection in the 1982 Commonwealth Games Trial in Brisbane by 22 seconds, this time he prevailed with no assistance in the closing stages when it mattered. The high quality field of international entrants simply dropped away and Grenville won by six minutes!

In the August 1985 edition of *Australian Runner* Len Johnson wrote a fitting summary of Wood's long battle for international recognition during the 1980s. From page 10:

*Grenville Wood's win continued his excellent form in Australian Races. Leaving aside his failure to finish in the 1983 World Championships, Wood has consistently shown himself to be one of Australia's foremost road runners. His second behind Lawrie Whitty in the 1980 (pre Wang) Australian Championship was a break though from a series of 2:30 marathons.*

*In 1981, Wood was third in the Nike Canberra Marathon in 2:19:08 and fifth in Vancouver four weeks later in 2:19:49. The next year he came tantalisingly close to the Commonwealth Games standard of 2:16:00 twice, with a 2:16:45 for third in the Beppu Marathon in February and a 2:16:22 for third (second Australian) in the Australian Championships and trial. Just before the games he was second to Deek in the 25km Road Championships, in 1:17:02 to 1:17:31 and finished off the year with another second, this time to Bill Rodgers in the Melbourne Big M in a personal best of 2:12:50.*

*That second earned Wood World Championship selection, but he withdrew from the race after 25km. To cap off a bad year he finished a distant second to Juma Ikangaa in the Big M in 2:19:57.*

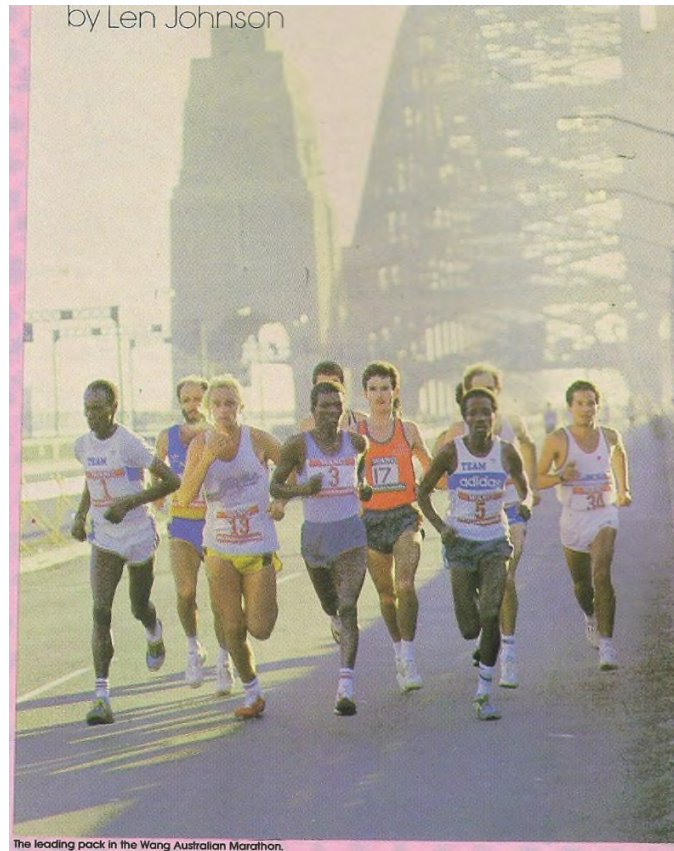
*Wood won the Nike-Avon Canberra Olympic Trial in April 1984, but his 2:15:50 was well outside the selection standard of 2:14:00. His two 1985 marathons have yielded 2:13:40 for seventh in Tokyo in February and then his win in the Wang Australian.*

Note that Johnson mentions another three sub-2:20 international marathons not listed at [ausrunning.net](http://ausrunning.net) and therefore Grenville Wood has run *ten* sub-2:20s, not seven as I had stated in last week's notes.

Photo credits:

Pages 1, 6: Grenville Wood – Big M Melbourne Marathon 1982 – results book

Page 12: Vedat Acikalin – Live Action



This photo accompanies Len Johnson's article in *Australian Runner*, August 1985. Wood (17) is in the middle of the 11-strong leading pack in the early stages just off Sydney Harbour Bridge. Note Gidamis Shahanga (1) at far left. Next to Shahanga is Garry Hand of the ACT who finished third in 2:19:18. Number 13, Des O'Connor of Ireland with 2:11:45 credentials unfortunately clipped the heels of another runner soon afterwards at the first water station, crashed heavily and was out of the race. Johnson had stated that many from the bunch were *seemingly* unbeatable but Wood beat the lot!

Grenville Wood went to the Commonwealth Games in 1986, started well and kept up with the leading pack for the best part of an hour but could not maintain contact as the race hotted up at half way. He struggled home and finished 15<sup>th</sup> in 2:26:48. One notable dropout was 1984 Olympic bronze medallist Charlie Spedding.

Wood's career had some striking similarities to that of Brenton Norman, SA's best marathon runner of the 1970s. Norman ran in the 1974 Commonwealth Game in Christchurch, NZ and finished 14<sup>th</sup> in 2:24:39, a race where John Farrington finished 5<sup>th</sup> in 2:14:04 and Derek Clayton was a DNF. Like Wood, Norman won the Olympic Trial in 1976 in 2:17:05 but was not selected. Incredibly the Australian officials allowed Ross Hayward, a 2:27:05 runner from Victoria to take the third spot in the 1976 Olympic marathon because he was "already there" as a racewalker. The other spots went to proven marathoners Chris Wardlaw and David Chettle.

Wood retired from marathon running after that but has maintained his fitness and still competed at shorter distances.