

## MANDY TOWLER'S 10<sup>TH</sup> PICHİ RICHİ MARATHON WIN

by Ian Hill

### *Including a history of the women's course record and overall participation*

Mandy Towler won her tenth Pichi Richi Marathon on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2017 when she finished the event in 3:28:40. This was the thirteenth time she had run Pichi Richi and she was runner-up from 2011-13. Mandy has run this event every year since 2004 except 2007. Her times have been remarkably consistent, ranging from 3:36:45 in 2004 to 3:19:03 in 2009.

Twice Mandy has placed second *overall* and in 2008 ran 3:29:49 to finish less than five minutes behind Paul Greenwood in 3:25:08, the slowest winning time ever. In 2010 Mandy ran 3:25:53 behind Stuart Elliott's 3:11:38.

Mandy Towler has broken the course record twice; in 2006 when she ran 3:23:39 to narrowly break Helen O'Connor's 21-year old mark by 19 seconds and in 2009 when she lowered her own record by over four minutes with 3:19:03.

The full details of Mandy's Pichi Richi Marathon career are:

2004: 3:36:45 1<sup>st</sup>  
2005: 3:31:29 1<sup>st</sup>  
2006: 3:23:39 1<sup>st</sup> in new course record  
2007: did not run  
2008: 3:29:49 1<sup>st</sup> and second placed overall  
2009: 3:19:03 1<sup>st</sup> in new course record  
2010: 3:25:53 1<sup>st</sup> and second placed overall  
2011: 3:21:14 2<sup>nd</sup> behind Nicole Butterfield who set a new course record of 3:13:16  
2012: 3:20:45 2<sup>nd</sup> just six seconds behind Ally Benbow who finished in 3:20:39  
2013: 3:31:05 2<sup>nd</sup> behind Julie Starke who finished in 3:23:50  
2014: 3:29:43 1<sup>st</sup>  
2015: 3:22:18 1<sup>st</sup>  
2016: 3:23:38 1<sup>st</sup>  
2017: 3:28:40 1<sup>st</sup>

Mandy Towler's ten wins in the same marathon is unique in Australian marathon history and she joins a distinguished group of fifteen other women worldwide who have also achieved ten or more wins in the same event. One of them, Anna Balosakova of Slovakia has done it twice in separate events. Including Mandy, eight women have won ten marathons in the same event while three each have won eleven and twelve, one has won thirteen times and Kate Jenkins of Scotland and Nathalie Vasseur of France have won fourteen Moray and Châteaux du Médoc Marathons respectively.

According to the [ausrunning.net](http://ausrunning.net) database Mandy has now finished 44 marathons which include fifteen Adelaide and all six Barossa to go with her thirteen Pichi Richi Marathons, an impressive 34 marathons run in South Australia. Her interstate marathons include Melbourne six times, Rottneest Island twice and once each at Gold Coast and Sydney. Her overall PB is 3:11:12 at the 2006 Adelaide Marathon. Mandy's *slowest* marathon was her first, 3:48:47 at Adelaide in 2001. Every other finish has been well under 3:40 and most are under 3:30. Fifteen are under 3:20 and four under 3:15.

### Course Record

The course record for the women's race has been set six times. By definition the winner of the inaugural event in 1982, Helen Morris, established the first course record of 3:43:02. In 1984 this was lowered to 3:33:10 by sixteen year-old Sharon Morris (no relation to Helen) who won for the second time. Next year Helen Morris, by then known as Helen O'Connor, reclaimed the record with a time of 3:23:58, a mark which stood for 21 years until Mandy Towler managed to finish just 19 seconds faster in 2006. In 2009 Mandy lowered her own record to 3:19:03 and two years later Nicole Butterfield smashed it by nearly six minutes, setting the time at 3:13:16 which still stands.

### Participation

Mandy Towler's Pichi Richi Marathon finish in 2017 put her in equal second place for the most done by a woman. Way out on her own is Helen O'Connor with twenty-one finishes and Mandy joined Susan Bardy and six-time winner Marilyn Bevan on thirteen. Following on the list are Jane Bennett with nine, Sally Buckett and Julia Thorn with seven, Janine Crotty and Sue Worley with six and Margaret Bursill and Libby Hogg with five finishes.

For comparison with the men, Trevor Hogg finished the first twenty Pichi Richi Marathons, missed 2002 but then went on to complete four more for a total of twenty-four. Second is five-time winner Michael Slagter who joined Helen O'Connor on twenty-one and next is Brian Glover who has walked his way to sixteen finishes. Following Brian is a select group of five, all on fourteen, namely Peter Kotsoglous, Rod Martin, Ross Martin, Stan McCartney and Phillip Wakefield.

### Multiple winners

As previously noted, Mandy Towler's ten wins at the Pichi Richi Marathon puts her in world-class company. Before Mandy even started running marathons Marilyn Bevan had won six times, with her best winning time of 3:40:04 occurring in 1996, her final win. Marilyn's first Pichi Richi finish in 1986 was in a time of 5:05:03 and she subsequently improved over the next few years to secure her first win in 1989 with 3:54:20. Marilyn ran another three PRMs after her sixth victory, the final one in 2004 with a time of 4:13:24.

Other multiple winners with three each are Helen O'Connor, Jane Bennett and Janine Crotty while Sharon Morris won the event twice. Fastest winning time for Helen was 3:23:58 in 1985, Jane 3:55:47 in 1997, Janine 3:51:52 in 2001 and Sharon 3:33:10 in 1984. Both Jane and Janine ran a faster time without winning; Jane with 3:46:08 in 1996 and Janine with 3:49:56 in 2002.

Amongst the men Michael Slagter stands out with five wins, in 1994 and 1996-99, his fastest winning time being a train-affected 3:01:16 in 1994 when he had to wait 2 minutes 25 seconds at the railway crossing at Stirling North. In 1995 Michael ran 3:00:08! Next is inaugural winner Steve Guy with three wins, each in a different decade! In 1982 he won in 2:40:10, establishing the course record which stood for five years; in 1995 he won in 2:46:51 and in 2001 he was victorious in 2:53:59. Steve ran the event two more times, being third in 2007 with a time of 3:06:42 and twenty-ninth in 2011 with 3:54:43. A number of men have won twice, namely Peter Tutty, Ian Hill, Kelvin Marshall, Yilma Woldgabreal, Mark Bloomfield and new course record holder John Csongei.

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