

Tim Rowe

THE LAST MONTH has flown by, as they seem to do when you're putting in the solid weeks. I've covered some kilometres and run some great speed sessions in the build up to the Gold Coast Half Marathon. Running has been far from easy since my debut over the marathon distance in Canberra. The disappointment of running much slower than anticipated was overshadowed by the loss of my sister Soph, who was critically ill at the time of the race. Soph lost her seven year battle with secondary breast cancer at the young age of 34 - five days after I crossed the finish line.

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I think she was waiting for me to finish the race as I was racing in her honour. The past couple of months have been really tough for myself and the family but having a focus like running really helps in terms of keeping your head on your shoulders and maintaining goals, ambitions and an overall structure to life which I think could easily be lost otherwise. It's these goals, ambitions and structure that make every runner a unique, exceptional and very special sort of person, and no matter what your level of running, I think you know what I mean when I say that. We are superior people of course!

So back to training; I live and train with good mate Ben St Lawrence in the leafy suburb of Centennial Park, Sydney and we have together, smashed out some solid training over the past few weeks. This may as well be a dual training diary as we pretty much do the same sessions week in week out. Our squad, led by coach extraordinaire Sean Williams has gone from strength to strength with athletes such as the Saint, Lara Tamsett and Harry Summers proving that they can match it with the best in the country; not to mention, having a good time while doing so! Their recent results have positively impacted on the dynamics of

the squad and have paved the way for us all to start believing that the impossible, is actually quite the opposite.

Personally, I have taken a different approach to my training ever since getting injured late last year. Moving away from the theory of total annihilation in sessions and long runs (even sometimes recovery runs) I've found that I'm giving my body the chance it needs to recover in time for the next training session. Don't get me wrong, the pain train still makes an appearance once or twice a week, just not every time I go running! A few changes that I've made in the lead up to Gold Coast Half Marathon include:

Hill Repeats

Incorporated into my longer runs: I run up a nastily steep 200m hill six times on my Wednesday run and 2 - 3 times on my one hour Monday run (depending on how I feel). I focus mainly on form, not speed, and this is helping me strengthen my hips and glutes (areas which I have trouble strengthening). I also do 4 - 5 uphill strides after my long runs (excluding Sunday). As well as a means of strengthening my body, this is also to prepare me for the City2Surf, as I fell off the pace on Heartbreak hill last year. ➔



■ Rowe finishing third in the 2009 NSW 5000m Championships. IMAGE BY DANIEL GREEN.

↳ Physiotherapists - I have come to understand my body's weak points and have a strength program tailored to suit my biomechanics. Gary Howard at 'Easy Tiger Massage' has also been instrumental in keeping me out of harms way and as a result, I am running the fastest I ever have and am able to train much more consistently day in, day out.

Slower Recovery Runs

(5min/km + pace): This has definitely damaged my ego - being regularly overtaken by overweight 'corporate joggers' or mums with prams - but this has really helped in terms of recovery and stretching the legs out.

Diet

I've tried to be pretty strict on myself lately and have stripped back because of it. Feeling fit and looking fit go hand in hand in my head and it is more of a mental thing than anything. Just to confirm, Seany thinks my arms are still TOO big but I'm not sure how to get rid of them. Any hints please let me know!

It's these small changes that I've made that are really helping me stay on top of things mentally and physically and are allowing me to train to the best of my ability which will hopefully in turn, be reflected on the roads this winter season.

After Ben returned from the USA a few weeks back and others in our squad such as Harry Summers and Steve Thurston really starting to fire, training has taken a new face at the front of the squad. With a formidable and sometimes unforgiving pack to train with, it seems that on days where you don't quite have it, someone else will take up the charge and all you need to do is put the head down and hang on. I find this is key in terms of my progression as an athlete. There is no way in hell I would push it so hard if it wasn't for the guys I train with and I have said that countless times after hard sessions, especially after a 9-5 day at work. Running is an individual sport, but it is the collectiveness and camaraderie of the squad that will get me there; Sean has been instrumental in creating an environment to develop this logic and foster its continuity. As you can see in week two of my diary, we had a camp down the South Coast. Training at some points four times a day in freezing conditions; up and down sand dunes, beach tempos at near race pace, long runs with massive hills and endless strength sessions are more than enough to bury even the fittest of us, but it's the squad mentality that keeps you going. Our theory was that if it didn't kill us, it would only make us stronger, fitter and faster. We're still standing so here's hoping!

On a lighter note, some of the funniest things come from sessions when Park Rangers or members of the public, get in the way of a Sean Williams

training session. There is one ranger in particular with a dirty great moustache who tends to cause a ruckus any time he is on duty, whether it's him parking his four wheel drive in the middle of our 2km loop, or random pompous, poodle walking women getting angry at us for running on the road when our track is too wet to train on, Seany is always standing up for us runners and it's his passion and dedication that he shows for the group and our training, that inspires us to achieve our very best individually.

So looking ahead to this winter I'm excited to see what my legs can do. Hopefully pump out a good time at the Gold Coast Half Marathon and then kick on to some other road 10's/ XC races with the main aim being the Zatopek 10,000m later this year.

It's funny actually, how things can change so fast. This time two years ago I had recently graduated from the ANU with a Bachelor of Commerce and was following my dream of becoming an executive big wig at KPMG. I was in fact one of those overweight 'corporate joggers' that now overtake me on my recovery runs. If I was told that in two years time I'd be writing a training article for R4YL, I would've laughed it off. But, here I am. I hope that this gives you an insight into what it's like to train with myself and our squad.

A recent article written by Len Johnson suggests a possible "groundswell building here" in relation to the current state of Australian middle distance running. I have definitely noticed a change in the air with recent outstanding performances from Aussies at home and abroad, and as an athlete it is great to be a part of it. Hopefully with time, patience and consistent training, we will all be able to reach our future goals and continue to improve with every step we take. 🏃

■ Rowe competes in the 2008 WXC Trial at Stromlo Forest Park. GETTY IMAGES.

