

## **The Adelaide 2008 City to Bay Fun Run, my first Fun Run.**

***By Steven Ellison, 22nd September 2008.***

Early in 2008 I started walking to help me loose weight. As a 49 year old podgy overweight man who had sat at a desk for the past 20 years and had given up smoking I had decided it was time to start looking after myself. Through the early part of 2008 I started using a treadmill for between 10 and 15 minutes a day. This progressed rapidly over a few months until I was walking 50 KM a week on a treadmill. Keeping motivation going was difficult and so I was switching between seeing how far I could go in a given time to seeing how quick I could walk a certain distance. In early April I realized that the City to Bay fun Run was 12KM in length and that this would be a good comparison for my exercise progress. I managed 12KM on the treadmill in a little over 118 minutes and was happy with that.

Near the end of April I felt quite achieved when managing to complete the 12KM in just on 100 minutes. At this stage I had only flirted with the idea of entering the City to Bay. Then the incident that encouraged me to.

I bumped into a neighbour of more advanced years than myself and felt so impressed with myself for managing 12KM in 100 minutes that I had to brag. Well, my excitement was short lived when he revealed he had entered the City to Bay event for the past couple of years and that his last time was just over 90 minutes. Admittedly he is a very fit person and by all accounts has been for most of his life but I was younger so should be able to do better than that.

This lead to continued treadmill work during the week and a street coarse of 12KM on the weekends in an attempt to improve even more. Progress seemed slow when I managed 94 minutes in June. In July this reduced to just over 83 minutes followed by 82 minutes in August and 81 minutes in September. I was ready. If I could do this in the City to Bay it would place me in the top 100 12KM walkers home based on the 2007 results.

In the weeks leading up to the event I had thought about my goals. Since Christmas I had lost 16KG's, I had improved my fitness enormously and had pondered on what I expected my result to be from entering the City to Bay. I had decided I would like to beat 80 minutes but expected to finish in under 86 minutes.

People read strange things into events. When I received my entrant number, 20008, it seemed like a positive sign. It just seemed like a good number. Intelligent people just don't think that way and I thought I was intelligent.

Well, enough with how I got there, I arrived at North terrace at 7:05am on event day. A little earlier than intended but at least I was there. I had no idea what to expect. I had intended to go with the neighbour but he had fallen victim to a stress fracture and was unable to participate.

The one thing he had told me was to make sure I start near the front as it's a devil trying to get past a sea of slower people.

What could I do now that I was there so early. Walk a little to warm up and listen to the regular announcement. There was already a large crowd of people which was swelling every minute that ticked by. I was impressed at how well organized it was and how informative the announcements were. There were constant reminders that the 12KM walkers should congregate on the parade grounds. At around 7:45am I noticed that a lot of 12KM walkers were moving into the compound against the recommendation of the announcements and felt compelled to join them if I was going to get a start near the front. Well, I managed to squeeze into a spot about 3 deep from the front.

I started chatting to a gentleman near me who offered some friendly advice. He had been in the event for a few years and suggested the start was not such a problem be remember to keep to the left at Kurralta Park to avoid the masses starting from there.

We watched as the time passed and the runners were sent on their way in three groups. The crowd of walkers began edging forward in anticipation of the start. I felt nervous as I was about to start my first City to Bay.

### ***What was about to happen I was not prepared for!***

The start was announced and I pushed forward. I could see a few people ahead of me as I pushed up towards North Terrace. This was not right! There were supposed to be 30 or so faster walkers in front of me so I could find a pace behind them. I hit North Terrace in the lead with four empty lanes directly in front of me. I could not hear anyone behind me and could only see a few runners straggling on the West carriageway as I pushed hard towards Victoria square. This experience could only be described as surreal. I held my pace and as I approached Victoria square contemplated joining the ever increasing number of straggling runners on the Western Carriageway. As I entered Victoria Square I started moving towards them until I was directed by an official to take the Eastern carriageway around the square to avoid the slower runners. This was difficult to believe, how could I be still leading the walkers after 1KM and were they really behind me. I could see nothing but empty road all the way to South Terrace. As I approached South Terrace I moved to the Western carriageway to join the slow runners to be further amazed at how many there were I had to dodge. I knew that just after turning onto South Terrace we would be approaching the 2KM marker. I turned the corner to be shocked. It was like a white carpet of people covering South Terrace as far as I could see. I had still not seen another walker and continued to be amazed.

Don't get me wrong, I knew then what I know now that they had to catch up sooner or later as there are so many quicker than I. This was busier than trying to skateboard down Rundle Mall on a Saturday morning. There was a strange overwhelming pleasure coming over me as I passed each runner that had broken down to a jog or walk. It's a hard thing to describe. I was bewildered by the sea of people but had still not noticed another walker go past.

Turning onto Anzac Highway I knew the 3KM point was close. Still no sight of another walker. Passing the 3KM marker I glanced at my stopwatch which I had started just before the start of the race and it displayed just over 17 minutes. I was on track for my sub 80 minute finish. I knew I would slow a little before the end but it still looked promising. I was not to look at my watch again until the end. Almost relief, a walker slowly passing me, somewhere around the Army Barracks. I looked at him and what I saw was an impressively fit looking gentleman that looked a little older than I. I upped my pace a little to match him I only maintained this for a little while until I let him go. Around this time I had a small surprise. A girl that had been standing next to me at the start ran past me! I had to look twice but sure enough it was either her or an identically dressed twin. She was slowly moving ahead when we came within sight of an official and she broke back down to a fast walk. I did not check her number as I was not really that interested, I was racing myself! I walked past her and did not see her again for some time until she ran past me again. It sure is a shame when people have to fool themselves.

Approaching Kurralta park I noticed a tall Walker, technically precise, walking much quicker than I, who sailed passed me. Very impressive, I was never to see him again. Strangely though, shortly after that I passed the walker I had noticed earlier as he had slowed considerably. That was indeed surprising.

Keeping to the left at Kurralta Park was unnecessary as they were not yet due to start so the existing sea of runners was all I had to contend with. The thickness of this sea had continued to increase the further we travelled. Just after Kurralta Park I was focusing on passing three young men running ahead of me when while I was approaching I heard them discussing that they should not see their friend until the end as he was a 12KM

walker and they were runners. I just couldn't help myself, as I passed them I turned and walked backwards and while pointing to my number said to them, "I am a 12KM walker so you might want to get a hurry up as your friend may not be to far behind!". They increased their speed and jogged next to me as I got back into my walking stride and asked me if I was the first. I told them that there were others ahead of me so, no. They thanked me for giving them the motivation and slowly picked up their pace and disappeared into the crowd in front.

It was hard when we turned the corner at Morphetville and could see the tall buildings in Glenelg for I knew we still had a quarter of the distance left to go. It looked so close yet it was so far.

I was now striding a solid pace and had no idea how many walkers there were ahead of me. The crowd was so thick there was no way of seeing them if they passed more than 2 meters away. Passing Brighton road and approaching Gordon Street an ambulance passed me and turned into Gordon Street. Strangely the number of entrants had thinned a little here. Heading along Gordon Street a young lady was running next to me at my pace. She was focused directly ahead and seemed to be struggling a little.

I could not help myself when I turned to her and said, "what a lovely day for a walk" to which she turned to look at me, saw my 12KM walking number, let out a single expletive and bolted. I guess you had to be there but I thought it was hilarious. I was then able to focus my mind on my pace to keep a strong pace all the way to the finish. On crossing the line I stopped my stopwatch and took a look and was really happy to find I had achieved what I had set out to do, better than 80 minutes for the 12KM. My watch displayed 1 hour 19 minutes and 11 seconds. I had started it before the start and stopped it after I crossed the finish line so although, while writing this, I do not have my official race time, I do know, it was better than 79 minutes and 11 seconds.



Crossing the finish line.



Lynn and Myself ½ an hour later.

WOW, this was an experience I will never forget and for many reasons I would never have expected.

What can I say, Great Event, excellent organization, fabulous weather and fantastic people. Congratulations must go to the organizers of this event. Job well done.

Actual time recorded 1:18:43, 35th out of 8,542 12KM walkers who finished.  
Please note, this can be read online with a finishing photo at <http://www.pcsa.net.au/>  
Official results can be found at <http://www.city-bay.org.au/>