



MARATHON EFFORT – FIRST HALF UP HILL!

An 87km marathon is hard enough to complete, but when the first 45 kms is pretty much all up hill the effort becomes even more grueling. This is the challenge faced by Justin Gallagher who leaves on Wednesday to compete in one of the world's most intense marathon events.

The Comrade Marathon 2008 to be held in South Africa and commences on 15 June with more than 11,000 entrants from all over the world.

Starting at sea level in Durban, the runners encounter five major hills popularly known as the "Big Five". The race finishes in Pietermaritzburg which sits at an altitude of 650m.

Justin ran the New York (NY) Marathon with his wife in 2005, fulfilling a dream of Stephanie's. Neither of them were runners in fact 10km's was the furthest both of them had run. After 2 years of enjoying family life Justin was looking for a training goal to work towards and the Comrades was still in his head from runners he and his wife had meet in NY. After researching the race for a month to know what he was getting himself in for, he starting training for the biggest race of his life.

"I was keen to see where my limits were both physically and mentally and over the last eight months of training I have definitely worked that out," Justin said.

"Without doubt, the biggest challenge has been balancing training with three little girls, aged under six years of age, working 55 hours a week and maintaining a healthy relationship with my very understanding wife, Stephanie."

"My goal is to finish in under nine hours and the official cut off is 12 hours," Justin said.

Justin is also raising money for the Cerebral Palsy Foundation.

"I suppose having three, beautiful, little girls myself you realize how lucky you are. One in every 400 babies born in Australia each year will have cerebral palsy. It is the most common physical disability yet little money is spent on finding a prevention and cure. Stephanie saw an interview with a little girl with cerebral palsy on television who was the same age as our eldest and was so touched she suggested we support the charity," Justin concluded.

You can support Justin and make a donation by logging onto www.cpfoundation.com.au and following the prompts.

To arrange an interview with Justin please contact Marisa Chilcott on 0418 118 632

Photos can be downloaded from the following links:-

<http://www.thespasticcentre.com.au/JasonGallagher1.jpg>

<http://www.thespasticcentre.com.au/JasonGallagher2.jpg>

<http://www.thespasticcentre.com.au/JasonGallagher3.jpg>

Page 2

MARATHON EFFORT – FIRST HALF UP HILL!

2008 Comrades Marathon information

ROUTE DESCRIPTION THE "UP RUN"

THE BIG FIVE AND OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

The start for the up run is at sea level in the centre of the harbour city of Durban, and finishes in Pietermaritzburg at an altitude of 650 m. On the way runners encounter 5 major hills, popularly known as the "Big Five" which are briefly described in the following narrative, interspersed with other landmarks and points of interest.

Almost directly from the start outside the Durban Post Office, the ascent to Pietermaritzburg begins with a steady climb up Berea Road to the summit at Tollgate, where today there is neither toll nor gate. After a brief descent another climb takes the runners to 45th Cutting, so named after the British 45th Regiment of Foot (Sherwood Foresters) who constructed the cutting while stationed in Natal from 1843 to 1859. The first of the "Big Five" Cowies Hill is the next landmark of note.

COWIES HILL

Coming up from Durban, Cowies is encountered approximately 14 km from the start and is a moderately difficult climb rising about 137 m in the space of 1,5 km. Although this does not sound too difficult an obstacle so early in the race, the preceding 14 km is a relentless ascent, to an altitude of nearly 300 m at Westville, which warrants its inclusion in the "Big Five"

FIELDS HILL

After the descent from Cowies Hill and the easy flat section of Pinetown's Old Main Road, this hill (namely after an early pioneer) is approximately 22km from Durban and rises some 213m over a distance of 3km. It offers a foretaste of things to come.

BOTHA'S HILL

After breasting the crest of Field's Hill some respite is offered by an undulating but reasonably flat section to the village of Hillcrest. After a short descent from Hillcrest, Botha's Hill offers another challenge with a somewhat lesser altitude rise of some \pm 150 m, and covering a distance of 2,4 km, but is nevertheless taxing. At the top of this hill lies a landmark well known to all veteran Comrades runners in the form of the boys of Kearsney College who have gathered in numbers outside the famous school's gates since the beginning of Comrade's long history, providing much appreciated support to the weary runners. Their vociferous and enthusiastic support together with refreshments and any other assistance needed has helped lift the flagging spirit of many a runner and encapsulates the school motto *Carpe Diem*.

In the 7 km stretch from the top of Botha's to the halfway mark, there is a fairly steep but short descent known as Alverstone, which is recognisable by the radio and TV transmitting mast clearly visible on the left.

At the end of the flat section after the sharp descent, runners encounter the *Wall of Honour* on the right hand side of the road, overlooking the Valley of 1000 Hills. This wall was created as a permanent landmark to honour the achievements of runners who have completed the epic journey between the two cities.

Just round the corner, through the cutting is *Arthur's Seat* a niche cut into the cutting wall, which legend tells us was the spot where the famous Arthur Newton, 5 times winner of the 1920's, used to sit for a breather while out running. Today runners are urged to pay homage to Mr. Newton with a greeting and a flower, which legend has it, ensures a great second half of the race.

A couple of 100 metres beyond this lies Drummond which marks halfway, and is immediately followed by the fourth "Big Five" hill, Inchanga

INCHANGA

Immediately after reaching the welcome milestone of the halfway mark, runners are confronted with this monster. It winds relentlessly for 2,5 km and also rises some 150 m in altitude, but at this stage of the race seems far more difficult than the preceding hills.

The descent of some 2 km is more gentle and is a welcome relief. The bottom of the Inchanga descent is marked by Mayats Store on the right.

The route now follows a generally flat and slightly undulating landscape through the tiny villages of Cato Ridge and Camperdown and passing the Ethembeni School for Handicapped Children who line the route with enthusiastic support for the runners. Harrison Flats lies just before Cato Ridge and is an uninspiring flat section of approx 2,5 km, which to the leg-weary runner seems endless.

Approximately 19 km from Pietermaritzburg is the highest point on the route (870 m) at a point known as Umlaas Road. This point is unremarkable as is not reached by any noticeable hill, and is largely unnoticed by most runners. A landmark is a concrete water tower which is visible on the other side of the freeway which passes near the route on the right at that point.

POLLY SHORTTS

This is the ultimate in heartbreak hills. It lies in wait 80 km away from Durban and is often the make or break point for even the top contenders. The climb is 1,8 km in length with the summit at an altitude of 737 m, (a rise of nearly 100 m) and while this is 133 m less than the highest point on the course, it is a formidable obstacle to any runner with two back-to-back standard marathons behind him.

FINISH