

Report by Jackie Fairweather on her debut 100km race – Gold Coast 100 7th June 2009

(Ed Note; Jackie Fairweather (nee Gallagher) is a former world triathlon champion (1996), former world duathlon champion (1996 & 1999) and bronze medallist in the marathon at the Commonwealth Games in 2002. Jackie was voted Australian Sports Woman of the Year in 1996 and Australian Triathlete of the Year in 1993 and 1996 amongst a host of other achievements. She currently works as a senior sports consultant t at the Australian Sports Commission specialising in the high performance area.)

Ok this is an epic report – but I figure I'll only run my first 100k once and it was a long race! The report is for posterity... (in fact this is a cut down version – you are lucky!)

Well after achieving my 2008 goal of sub 4:00min/km for 50k, I figured the 'logical' progression for 2009 was sub 5:00/km for 100km. Early this year I picked out the inaugural Commonwealth Championships 100k in Keswick (the 'w' is silent), England in September as my major goal race for the year. Ian Cornelius from AURA had told me it wasn't essential for me to run a 100k to qualify for the Commonwealths Team, but I was keen to somehow experience one if I could work it in. I had Gold Coast 100 in the back of my mind but was worried it was a bit early, I wouldn't have done enough work, and if I ran Canberra 50k I wouldn't be recovered in time.

After Six Foot track (off a solid summer of 115k/wk) I decided not to do Canberra so GC100 was again a possibility, but then I had a few weeks of being really run down and barely doing any training. Then in early May I joined a few friends for a running holiday in NZ where I put in a big aerobic 10days including 4 x 4:00-7:30hr days (in 8 days including Milford, Kepler and Routeburn Tracks – awesome!) totalling 260k+. I came back from that trip and felt GREAT and started to entertain the idea of GC100 again. At x-c the Saturday after the NZ trip, I made the mistake of asking Trevor Jacobs what he thought of the idea of GC100... "Go for it Jac"! So I signed up! Don't think about it too much – just do it!

On the Friday before the race I flew to Brisbane – via Sydney after being bumped off my direct flight due to it "being overweight" (like I was going to make any difference!!). The upside was I got upgraded to Business Class (love it!). When I finally got to the Gold Coast (sans luggage ☺), my long time friend and masseur, "Oily Al" was waiting for me and worked his magic. The two days before the race I caught up with some friends – I had called the Gold Coast "home" for 12 years up until 2002. It was nice and relaxing staying with my friend Jenny – almost too relaxing as after a month of almost non-stop travel (NZ and then work), I was really tired all day Saturday. Luckily I knew the course well as most of it was my daily run during the time I lived on the Coast, so no reconnaissance was required!

I knew the biggest challenge was going to be pacing and nutrition. I was heading into uncharted territory with this race. My longest previously was Bush Capital 60k in 2007. I received some great advice from Martin Fryer, Kerrie Bremner and also my friend Christine McDougall who was helping out with organising the race. Still, I knew I had to experience it all for myself to really know what it would be like. My aim was at least sub 5:00/km (=8:20hr), but my 'best case' aim was sub 8:00hr. Really though I just wanted to see what it was like and learn from the experience.

The gun went off at 6am Sunday and for me it almost felt like: "ready, set, ...run slowly!". I really tired to hold back early, but was torn between going with the 6 guys who took off in front of me and finding a pace that was 'comfortable' – I was worried too slow might be worse than too fast, making me feel sluggish, but too fast might be suicide. Soon enough I decided to run with some others and just talk and relax the first lap or so (the course was 4 x 25k out and back). So one by one I caught and ran/chatted with the guys in front of me. The first lap went by pretty easily, although the drink stations took a bit of getting used to as they were not as 'serious' as the aid stations I was used to in marathons – part of this was also the fact that I was not as 'serious' in what I had put out and the instructions as to what I wanted (because I wasn't sure!). Nonetheless I had put a bag of drinks and food options together for the two drink stations that would be each 5k mark (plus one for the start/finish area = 25,50,75k), but my 10k bag had ended up at the far turn around (12.5k) so that threw my nutrition plan out from the start. Even once I worked it all out, I had to find my bag and fossick through it each time I wanted something from it, which cost time every time.

8:00hr pace meant 1:00hr for each 12.5k and 2:00hr for the full out and back lap. **Lap 1 went by in 1:55.45 (58:27min down, 57:18 back)** and really trying to hold back – but talking all the way. By 10k into lap 2 (i.e. 35k), I was on my own in 3rd place and in a comfortable rhythm. At 44k the heavens opened and we had a 10min storm with wind and heavy rain. Even though we all got saturated, the rain was welcome as it both cooled things down and cleared the paths of morning walkers! The rain did however, have a negative effect of knocking the rhythm a little and also making me get a bit cold and tight – but it was soon back to 22 degrees and sunny and all was fine.

The **50k turn** around came in about **3:50.33hr** (3:14.05 through the first marathon by my Garmin), so **Lap 2 was completed in 1:54.49 (57:13 down, 57:33 back)** into the rain and wind). I was on my own now and feeling good. I wanted to let loose a bit. I was getting a bit impatient and chomping at the bit! I got down to the **62.5km turn with a 56:32 split**, my fastest of the race. At the turn I found out that one of the two guys in front of me had pulled out, so now only one (Terrance) and he was about 8-10min in front of me. On the way back was the first time I didn't feel great. I had my 3rd toilet stop of the day at 69km (just number ones!) – hydration was obviously ok! But I tried to eat a couple of pikelets and they didn't go down so well. I later worked out I really didn't eat enough this third lap and I was starting to pay for it – got a bit too confident I think.

I got to the end of the 3rd lap and the 75k **mark in approx 5:45.20 (58.19 return split and 1:54.47 for the lap)**. My first three 25k laps had all been within 60seconds – including a toilet stop every lap and some drink station faffing. If I could hold the same pace, then I realised I was going to go damn close to the Aust women's record of 7:40hr... If only it were that easy! We were in the business end of the day now and I was feeling rather daunted by another 25k. Christine headed out with me as my lead bike (she'd been lead bike for me on lap 2, with race director Peter Hall chaperoning me on lap 3). My brother and his wife had also arrived to support, after Matt had run the Brisbane Half marathon that morning (in a PB of 1:40hr – woo hoo!). And I had several other friends out on the course throughout the day – but especially on that last lap.

I first 'faltered' at 80km – the Nobby's Beach stairs. With my friend Lizel cheering for me from the top, I really struggled up the stairs and went quite lightheaded and nauseous. But I pushed on. Where in previous laps I had been smiling and talking to other runners, friends and just people on the course, this lap I was very much internalised and saving my energy all for myself. Christine was great – rode in front of me and forewarned people I was coming but knew not to ride beside me and talk to me at all. I got to the final turn around **(87.5k) with a 59:17 split** – better than I had expected (second marathon had been 3:15.29). But at the turn I nearly lost it – felt very sick and light headed. The leader Terrance wasn't looking flash either and I had made time on him, but I didn't care anymore. I just wanted to make it back to the finish! I told Christine I needed to walk for a bit. Her ultra experience came in very handy here and she made me try to get another GU down, despite me feeling like I just couldn't. After losing almost 3min (trying not to be sick!), I got going again and back into about 4:40-45/km pace. Feeling a little better, determination kicked in and I was on a mission to finish this thing. Apart from a walk over Nobby's Hill again (it was bloody steep at this stage!) and a stop for another GU at the last drink station (5k to go) (= losing almost 2min combined), I managed to hold onto 4:45/km and finish it off. My **last 12.5k** was the only one over 60min at **64:14, for a 2:03.30 lap**. My friends Kelly and Pete followed me on their bikes for most of that last 12.5k although I barely acknowledged them (sorry!).

The finish was a welcome sight but I did for a moment in the last km relish the fact that I had done over 99k! I crossed the line well under my goal times and lay straight down in the shade! Then I couldn't get up because my hips would cramp every time I tried to sit up!!! Friends at the finish all stood around talking to each other almost oblivious to me on the ground – I guess it is kind of expected that you'd lie on the ground for a while after 100k!

Anyway I was pleased with the run in the end – well under the time I had hoped for – final time of 7:48.51hr. I think there is quite a bit of room for improvement though. For a start I think I can do more preparation/training. Secondly this race has given me confidence that 4:30/km is my 'efficient' aerobic

pace, as this is the pace I ran at for most of the way. Even when I started to struggle at the end I never ran slower than 4:45/km. Thirdly and a big one, I did not get in quite enough calories. I thought I was doing well the first half, but in hindsight it still wasn't enough. Kerrie had given me her routine, which I kind of used, but I wasn't 'routine' enough about it. Having my drinks and food (mostly Gus) at the wrong drink station didn't help, because right there the routine went out the window, but I still didn't know exactly what I wanted and probably wasn't planned enough about it. I will plan it better next time. But I was happy to be pretty casual about this one as my first – faffing at drink stations and even waiting for others in the early stages. In the middle stages I was nailing the drink stations better. Next time I will get that sorted more. Oh and also I could do without the 3 toilet stops, but not sure how I change that one!

So in the end it got the experience and learnings I wanted and also got a pretty good result. Really I didn't find it too hard – certainly not off-puttingly hard. I'm keen to go again and do a better job of it. Recovery and then some good training to do first...

Jackie

P.S. A couple of hours later I did manage to run the last km with my friend Pam from Canberra. I'm not too sore today and hopefully will recover reasonably well.