



Today I am going to run up a Mountain...

Yep that's what I said to myself on that chilly morning in Hobart in August 2008. I mean why not??? I run up Mountains' all the time, right?? Only difference was this one was over 1200 meters above sea level and towers over the capital of Tasmania, Hobart. The distance to the top was approx 22 km. How hard could that be...? I run all the time.....

The day was perfect, weather-wise, bright sunshine, clear blue sky and the temperature in Hobart was 11 deg. I had arranged for my sister to drop me in Hobart and then give me two and a half hours. I asked her to meet me at the summit then.

I had my heart rate monitor on, my MP3 was 'fully charged' and 'rewound' to the start. I was dressed in running pants, a long sleeve top, my training gloves (to keep my hands warm), a cap and beanie over the top (to keep my head and ears warm) and my mobile phone zipped into the pocket of a jacket I had rolled up and tied around my waist (in case of an emergency). Or as my sister said, in case you need to call if you can't make it..... yeah, thanks but I don't think that'll happen!

We pulled up at a set of lights in Davey Street and out I jumped, pumped and with a real spring in my step, I couldn't wait to get stuck into this. Flicked on my music, flicked on my HRM, waved to my sister and off I went. I felt great!!! Nice steady jog with very little effort required. Noticed my reflection and I instantly thought of "Rocky". Had my black beanie on, my black gloves and a cockiness on my face that clearly said this'll be easy!!! Um....yeah...keep reading.....

After about half a kilometre the incline began to steadily grow but I was still feeling ok. Then without warning, it became steeper more quickly. But I put my head down and jogged on (still had the 'Rocky' images in my head). As the road started to rise up and into the foothill suburbs of Hobart, it kind of flattened out slightly and I was able to recover..... a bit. But not for long..... again the incline became noticeable but this time there was no levelling out.





I remember looking at my HRM and seeing the 27 min mark. It was at this stage both my achilles started to burn. The base of the mountain was still nowhere in site. I had a brief moment of panic thinking, shit, what if my achilles doesn't hold up??? Hadn't even thought about that before. I adjusted my gait slightly and kept on going. At this point I ran past some roadworks and although I couldn't hear them, I knew that I was 'the smoko' entertainment. I just comforted myself with thoughts of knowing that I was fitter than all of them put together and that they probably couldn't run over a speed bump without needing the crash cart!!

I then also thought that whilst there was plenty of homes around me now, it wouldn't be long before I would be on a lonely and very narrow stretch of road with no one and nothing in site..... hmmm had'n't thought of that before, either. Oh well I had my mobile so I was still safe.

A cyclist sailed past me and in that instant he gave me that 'nod' of knowing and appreciating what I was doing and that spurred me on.

Onwards I went. The pain had now shifted into my knees, probably because of my adjusted gait. I knew the right hand turn to head up the Mountain had to be close but I was being 'tormented' at every bend when I didn't see it. At this point I was at the 50 min mark and the first of many arguments I would have in my headspace began.

Finally I saw the sign that the intersection was 100 meters ahead. Yay!! At last I would be on the Mountain and heading for the summit. Then I noticed the writing on the sign... Mt Wellington 12 km to Summit. I was already hurting in both knees and both Achilles and I still had 12 bloody kilometres – all uphill – to go!!! This is when I started to have a minor panic attack thinking that maybe this was not one of my smartest ideas (where was 'Rocky' when I needed him then!!). So I started to set my self little goals to get me through. I told myself that if I kept jogging, I could have two minutes of walking at the 1 hour mark. Finally something to look forward to. But boy those minutes just kept dragging...





Then I heard it – my voice – yelling at all of my chargers in my many group fitness sessions I had conducted over the years....”come on, I know its hurting, but stick with it....find your happy place”. Hearing that in my head made me wonder how I had not been attacked with a handweight by now... So that’s what I did, I tried to find my happy place and for a while I did, in fact I felt a new rhythm kick in and when I next looked at my watch, I was at the 1 hour 11 min mark – Wow!! But at that point I had somehow lost my ‘happy place’ and it had been replaced with more pain – now in my hips and hamstrings too. Shit!!!! I walked for two minutes...

I remembered there were toilets about half way up the mountain so that was my next goal to keep running until I reached them. After a short time I thought, maybe I’d already passed them but just hadn’t noticed them?? Surely I must be there by now??? Some little cramps had begun in my hamstrings so I had to walk for a minute about every ten minutes now. And then I saw them, I knew I was about half way to the top. Mixed feelings of yay and oh shit went through my head. Yay cos I only had about 6 km to go and oh shit because I still had 6 km to go. And yes, it was getting steeper.

So onwards I went now walking and jogging and walking and jogging. The temp was dropping as my sweaty clothes were becoming cold on my skin and the stream of ‘smoke’ coming out of my mouth was getting thicker and longer. There were also patches of snow appearing on the sides of the road. I didn’t care, but I did. I wanted to reach back to my phone and call for someone but I didn’t, tears stung my eyes as I thought why the hell am I doing this??? Who the hell cares if I make it or not. It’s only my sister that even knows I’m doing this.... Its not a race or an event, there was no big cheer at the beginning to see me and hundreds of others off, there was no team of runners with me, there was no crowd, family or friends there to cheer me across the finish line. Just me.... So I ask again... who the hell cares if you finish this or not??? Everyone is going to say ‘good job Jen’ anyway, right? So why are you putting yourself through this pain and misery???





The answer..... I decided..... is because I would care. This was every bit that event I just described, and all of the crowds, and start and finish excitement, it was all there....only in my mind and in my heart. And who was I competing with??? Myself, the inner voices, my mind, my body – yes it was very much an event with all the trimmings but only I could see and feel them.

So I kept jogging and walking and jogging and walking until I saw the final stretch to the top. My sister had passed me at this stage and I almost cried watching her car travel up the final kilometre until it disappeared at the top.

The pain was all through my lower body now and I was making little moans as I breathed. But I was almost there..... On and on it seemed to take forever, another cyclist passed me but now I didn't care. I rounded the turn and up ahead I could see my sister's car that held her and my daughter. I passed her car and gave a couple of little claps. I'd made it to the pinnacle of Mt Wellington.

It was 3 deg and I just wanted to cry. This crazy idea that I thought would be 'fun' to do had turned into one of the biggest physical and mental challenges I'd ever come through.

And at the end of the day it doesn't matter who is watching, who is cheering or who is saying well done, it only matters that you know you have done your absolute best – spectacular effort = spectacular rewards. Your mind is stronger than your body; you just need to believe that it is.

**'LIFE IS ABOUT RUNNING YOUR BEST RACE....EVEN WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING....'**



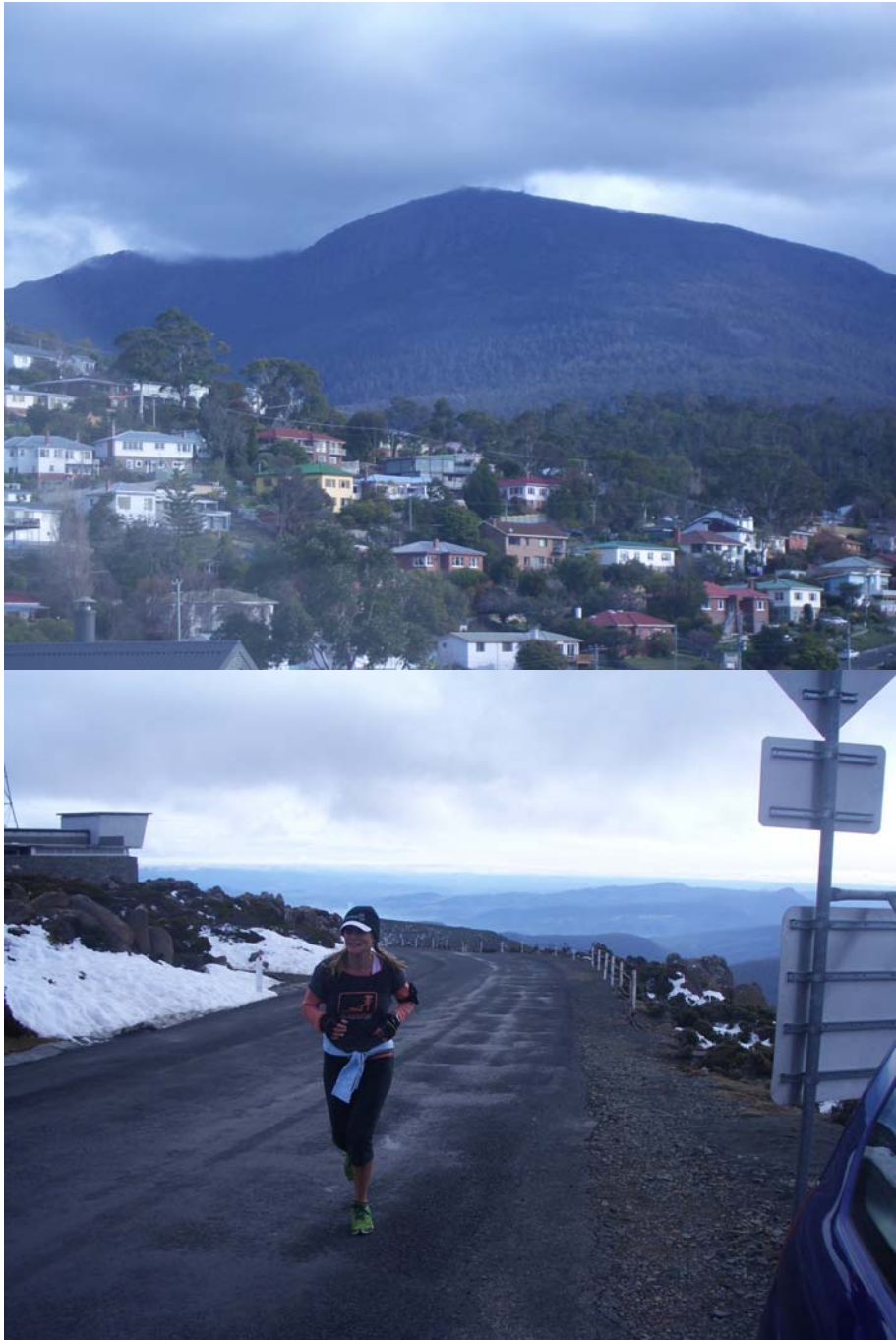


Oh and just for the record..... My HRM readings were as follows:

**Date:** 6/8/08  
**Time:** 2:22:51  
**In the zone:** 45:02 mins (zone is set at 116-151 bpm – I was outside it more than I was in it, as shown by my average below)  
**Avg per hour:** 156 bpm  
**Max for session:** 173 bpm  
**Calories burned:** 1272

Pictures below probably tell a better story.....







# Goal Power





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