

Brisbane Run Squad 2015 The Year of Inspiration



February Guest Blogger – Michael Keetman

Running and Me.

So picture me sitting in the chair getting interviewed by a Red Cross Nurse. I'm about to donate my regular donation of red blood cells to the greater cause. The nurse has just taken my weight and is about to let me know what my blood pressure is.

"Hmmph, how old are you?"

"24" I reply

"You really shouldn't have blood pressure like this for a 25 year old, with that and your weight you are pretty high risk for diabetes"

Needless to say I was pretty shocked, but that one short sentence changed my life. I was determined to get active and drop some of those kilos which I had been in denial about for years.

I started by swimming and lifting some weights which was a good start, and did a great job of easing into it. It wasn't until a work colleague, Chris, invited me out for a lunchtime run that really got me discovering what it was like to really enjoy life. I look back on that first run and am incredibly thankful for the time Chris spent getting me out there. Chris was a very accomplished runner, and plodding the 6k Story Bridge / Goodwill circuit at a pretty poor 7min pace must have been torturous. I really enjoyed it, which was a surprise given I had "thought" I always hated running. That first run turned into 2-3 per week and eventually I

started doing my own runs. Chris convinced me I should give a half marathon a go and pointed me towards the Gold Coast Half and their supplied programs. I had expected to finish around the 130 minute mark, but ended up smashing that prediction by finishing in under 2 hours. I was hooked. I kept running and later that year signed up for the Bridge to Brisbane and went along to the advertised free training sessions.

The group based training sessions were fantastic. Not only was I getting much better, I was meeting plenty of likeminded folk. At the end of the free training I went onto run the B2B and took about 20mins off my previous best, but more importantly I signed up to what would become the BRISBANE RUN SQUAD

Joining the BRISBANE RUN SQUAD has had a huge impact on my life. I have continued running, inspired by the fantastic coaches to be a much better runner. I have also been and continue to be, inspired by watching my friends improve with me and do some amazing things. They have won countless races, conquered the Great Wall, collectively destroyed Tough Mudder, run Marathons in exotic and far-away places, completed Ironmans, and countless other achievements that inspire.

I'll continue to run for as long as my body will allow. Its influence on me has changed from something that I had to do to stave off a lifestyle disease to something that lets me get out of my mind, catch up with friends and permits me to enjoy the great outdoors in a way only a good long run can.



Running for me is summed up pretty nicely with this quote from Sir Roger Bannister

"We run, not because we think it is doing us good, but because we enjoy it and cannot help ourselves.

The more restricted our society and work become, the more necessary it will be to find some outlet for this craving for freedom. No one can say, 'You must not run faster than this, or jump higher than that.' The human spirit is indomitable."

March Guest Blogger – Michelle Wood

Running

How does it change your life ??

I would imagine that if you asked a bunch of people that exact question you would hear things such as .. fitter, healthier, lost weight !
For me it's been those things but even more!

So How has it changed my life ??

Hmmm Well a little history maybe needed ...

The last 15 years of my life have been quite a series of ups and downs.

It has included wonderful things such as the joy of getting married, falling pregnant and having and raising two beautiful children ... but also the sadness of losing a baby and suffering postnatal depression after each pregnancy.

Growing up as an only child, as you may imagine I was close to my parents .. but unfortunately I have experienced nursing my father through cancer and coping with his subsequent death.

And then unfortunately the last couple of years I've been nursing and caring for my mother through a variety of health issues the worst and most debilitating being Alzheimer's ... All unaided !

Having a husband who travels sometimes quite extensively and then finding out that my own son has some health concerns of his own over the last couple of years, has certainly kept me on my toes.

But let's talk about running and what it has done for me ...

Well back in 2009 .. (It was a significant birthday year for me) I decided it was time to regain control of my life in some small way after going through PND a couple of times and feeling like I was living in a hazy world !

Before the birth of my children I had always been very fit and healthy, and around that time I realised that I was missing that in my life.

I had always looked at people out running and had a sense of envy, as they appeared to be experiencing something enjoyable .. Something that gave them time to themselves and this may sound silly .. but they looked at peace with the world for a little while despite what might have been happening in the daily lives !!!

I desperately wanted to try that !!!

I had never been able to do something like that, coming from a background of sports such as track athletics and netball which requires a whole different set of skills and abilities.

So I decided to join a training group to accomplish my very first running goal of participating in the Bridge to Brisbane.

And that was how I became a BRS'er !!!

I appreciate that when I'm running with BRISBANE RUN SQUAD, there is no judgement on my ability, but there is always plenty of encouragement and support within the squad to challenge myself.

Now I'll be honest it doesn't come naturally to me, sometimes it hurts a lot but I always come away with a great sense of achievement and satisfaction and with regular training sessions you see improvement and appreciate what it can do for you more !

With things that I have been through (over the last five years in particular) I would not have been able to get through and come out the other end still a sane person without the outlet of running and the support of the fantastic friends and the people, I now call my BRS family.

Now I know this sounds a bit dramatic, but there were many times that I needed the physical pain of running and training hard to help wipe away or counteract the emotional pain that some days would bring .

Running allows me to not only have time to myself (something I had never done before) but time to not think about all the other things that can weigh me down ...

Time to be just ..'Michelle' ..



Not 'mum',
not 'daughter',
not 'teacher',
not 'wife' etc ..

Just Michelle !!!!

To be honest there was a while there where I had forgotten who that person was ...

But despite all the juggling (with a family) that it takes to just get to a training session sometimes .. It is ALL worth it !
Trust me, I've come to a stage in my life where I don't waste time on things that aren't important or aren't helpful in my

life .. So this must be worth it !!

Now everyone has their story and mine is no more important than anyone else's .. But what I believe and hope others see from this blog .. is that everyone should have a 'me' time and

their own reasons for doing it .. And running allows you to have that !

The good thing about running is you can do in your own time frame ... When it suits and for as little or long as you like.

You don't need too much equipment either really .. A decent pair of shoes (and for us girls a good sports bra) will probably be appreciated !!

Now there are many inspirational people out there in the world .. even just within our friendly little club .. Ironman and women, Marathoners, triathletes .. And Weekend warriors ... I haven't accomplished much in my little running 'career' (haha I say that with jest !) .. A couple of half marathon and a few 10km events .. but then I like to think my accomplishment is mainly getting out there and having a go !!! ..

So I would encourage anyone thinking of trying running to give it go .. You may be surprised by what it may do for you !!

April Guest Blogger – Matt Cooper

With out a doubt, one of our most inspiring members and coaches has kindly offered to share his running experiences and inspire us all to get out there and have a go. He is dedicated, he oozes enthusiasm for running and runners, and his passion for running is infectious! Over to you Matt Cooper



'Do you guys mind waiting a sec? I've gotta go to the toilet'

If you've ever been running with me, you've heard me ask this question on numerous times! Most runners are familiar with 'runners tummy', where the action of your daily run, especially in the morning, brings on the call of mother nature sooner, and often more hastily, than your average day.

Unfortunately, it is an all too common part of my

running story due to a condition known as crohns disease. Need to know where a public toilet is in Southbank, West End, Newfarm, Kangaroo Point, Mount Gravatt, Beenleigh?.... ask me!!! But I digress! My story is not so much one of 'discovering running', more 'rediscovering'. One of those 'never miss the water till you're dry' type. To make sense it's best to start at the beginning.

CHAPTER 1

I don't remember running at primary school. No memory of cross country or athletics carnivals. I was never in little athletics. I played cricket and a bit of basketball, but certainly didn't excel. I recall my first cross country in Year 7, and finishing mid pack. In Year 8 I think I finished 6th, and made the school team. Nothing flash. My PE teacher at the time was a fairly well accomplished ironman and coached a squad of adult triathletes in town. He noticed me mixing with some 'undesirable' types and suggested to my mum at a parent teacher interview that I needed a hobby. He said I was a good runner and he would coach me for free for a year in triathlon. I swam like a brick, and my bike skills included laps of the street on my BMX and jumping off the curb. But with the support of my mum, and the local church I got a bike, started swim training and my life was never the same again. I LOVED triathlon. It was a grassroots sport in Tassie at that time so I walked onto the state team and was lucky enough to compete in 3 National All-School Triathlon Champs.

CHAPTER 2

The lifeguard at the pool I trained at was one of the best junior runners in Tassie. We became close friends and I began going along to his squad once a week for extra running training. It didn't take too long for me to realise that out of the three sports, running was my strength. So I jumped ship. Track season replaced triathlon season and winter was spent doing cross country and road running. But on reflection, I was in the sport for all the wrong reasons. Immaturity and delusions of grandeur, meant that I was focused on times, placings and dreams of national representation. I trained with VERY talented runners. Most possessed 30min 10k PBS and sub 2:20 marathons. So I know what it is liked to be lapped at training and to finish a race and your training partners have already swapped their racing flats for trainers and are heading out on their recovery. So at 21 years of age I was over it. I moved out of home to be closer to University, discovered girls and alcohol, and my running flame was extinguished.

CHAPTER 3

I moved to Queensland in 2004 and not long after I got sick. I had been diagnosed with crohns disease when I was 18, but it hadn't really affected my life much. But within 2 years of being in QLD I had been in hospital dozens of times for tests, procedures and surgeries. The final step being a reversible colostomy bag. I weighed in at 61kg (you think I'm skinny now!) and walking, sitting and driving were a nightmare. My partner at the time was a nurse, and if it wasn't for her knowledge, skills and understanding I don't know how I would have got through it. All of a sudden all I wanted to do was to be able to run, swim or ride a bike.

Eventually I came out the other end. I am writing this now hooked up to an IV drip at the Mater Hospital receiving vital medication that 'stops' the insidious disease attacking the health muscles and cells in my body. I do this every 8 weeks.

CHAPTER 4

My road back was a slow one. I remember running my first GoldCoast 10k years ago, and being overjoyed to nudge under 40min. Running was something I did on my own. No squad, or training partners. I must admit this was good therapy for me and I enjoyed getting out there and just being active. Then one day I saw an add in the Courier Mail for free training sessions for Bridge to Brisbane. Liss worked at the same school as me and I asked if she wanted to go along with me. So we attended the final dozen or so free sessions and I rediscovered the love of training in a group environment. It was far removed from my squad days running around the track. The different ability levels, and the conversations about people achieving goals and being proud of their accomplishments was very refreshing. When the survey went around about creating a running squad, Liss and I were very excited. Anyone reading this now has a pretty good understanding how important Brisbane Run Squad; the coaches and athletes, are to us. Matt and Renae were the MCs at our wedding. I am also very honoured to have been given the opportunity to help coach the squad and give advice to anyone who asks for it. I've achieved some results since joining the squad that I am very proud of. And while I'd be lying if I said that I don't go into every race wanting to do well, results are not my driving motivation anymore. "Running isn't about winning races, it's about pushing the limits of the human heart." (Steve Prefontaine).

CHAPTER 5

Being sick, and getting healthy again, has given me a new appreciation for running. It is now what I would consider a lifestyle rather than a sport. It goes a long way to define who I am. Father, Husband, Runner . In a modern world where everything is framed around being fast, convenient and comfortable, running provides an opportunity to live outside our comfort zones. To set goals, persist and challenge ourselves daily. To hurt! We share habits that most consider bizarre. Getting out bed on the weekend in the dark, hours before you get up on work days. Sitting over coffee and breaking down a long run. And that smell when you open a box of new shoes!! I could go on (and this is too long as it is). I have one quote that says it better than I can. It's from the co-founder of Nike, and the track coach at the University of Oregon for 24 seasons (where he coached Steve Prefontaine). If you've never seen Without Limits, let me know and I'll lend it to you!

"Men of Oregon, I invite you to become students of your events. Running, one might say, is basically an absurd past-time upon which to be exhausting ourselves. But if you can find meaning, in the kind of running you have to do to stay on this team, chances are you will be able to find meaning in another absurd past-time: life."

– Bill Bowerman

Matt is more than happy for people to direct message him with advice or questions about running with crohns disease.

May Guest Blogger – James Flaherty



One of our newer members James has a story all about that moment! One of those defining moments that change our lives for the better!

Be inspired by James' story of joining BRS as a complete beginner, now smashing 10km events and working up to a half marathon!

Over to you James.....

Sofa (of my lethargy)

Yep, a weird name for a post about running, but Sofa (of my lethargy) is a song by one of my favourite bands and the title sums up where I was before I ran.

Like most people, I was a very active kid; I was like a dog and would run all day in pursuit of a ball. I was fit and I could do things I only wish I could do now. Then I discovered beer, smoking, clubs, pubs, bars and all the fun things that your teens and twenties throw at you.

Work took over and it meant early starts, late nights, lots of travel, crap diet and a million other things you can get away with in your twenties and thirties. Family came along and there was another excuse for me to not have the time or inclination to exercise. Life was busy, hectic and fantastic, but also a convenient and pathetic excuse for neglecting my fitness.

The I had my road to Damascus moment. I have always been skinny, but one morning I looked down and there was this pasty white flabby mess where a stomach used to be. I was rapidly turning into my Dad, who is skinny everywhere except his gut, which makes him look like he is about to pop out twins.

I was speeding towards 40 and showing too many of the signs of good living. Other than cricket or footy with my kids, I'd not really exercised in 15 years. I'd been sat on the sofa of my lethargy.

So I had to do something; I entered the 2014 Bridge to Brisbane.

Within 8 weeks I had to get my used and abused carcass off the sofa (of my lethargy) and haul it over the Gateway Bridge to a finish line 10km away. It was going to be hell. I'll never forget my first km, when I ran like a 10 year old for about 250m nearly passed out, threw up and lumbered the rest of the way.

Slowly I got a bit quicker and stronger. Before I knew it I was outside, in the fresh air, pounding the pavement and loving it. I got from couch to 10km in a respectable 50 minutes.

When the event was over, I could hear the sofa (of my lethargy) calling me, so I looked around for a running group as I need a goal or target to motivate me. Membership to a group would force me to keep on running. I searched for a group out there for me, and there really wasn't one unless I wanted to join some alpha male dominated cult where there seemed to be very little fun in the run.

Fortunately for me I work with BRS member and all around hardcore ironman, the inspirational Darrel Giles, who pointed me in the right direction and in October I joined BRS.

It was the best \$30 I have spent in a long time, due to what makes BRS special and unique; the coaches and members. It isn't important who you are, how fast you are, what shape you are or how experienced you are, BRS just encourages you to better yourself and to go for your goals.

I was a complete beginner with 2 months training and a 10km under my belt, I could have easily gone back to the sofa but I've been inspired to train, to turn up and to push myself. I've been challenged to go harder, further and faster than I've ever been. I've been motivated to enter events, to attempt PBs and to push myself in an atmosphere that is all about support. When you think about it, it is really pretty special.

Running now gives me freedom. It clears my head and gives me a sense achievement whenever I complete a run or training session. I feel fitter and stronger than I've felt in years and know that I'm not going to be a heavily pregnant looking 40 year old when I rack up the milestone later this year. And best of all I've inspired my kids to add running to their sports schedule making Park Run a family outing.

My little nugget of running wisdom, for anyone who, like me, needs a little motivation is to picture a version of yourself sat on the sofa of your lethargy and to race them, because they are going nowhere and you are going wherever you want.

Thanks BRS, I still love the song, but its meaning is now very different.