

AUSTRALIAN CENTURION NUMBER 54 – CATHY COX

On 20th April 2008 at the Harold Stephens Athletics Track in Coburg, Cathy Cox entered the record books as Australian Centurion Number 54 with a provisional time of 23:57:57.

When I asked her about her sporting background after the event, she replied:

Maybe there's something genetic about endurance events. My Dad rode his bike across the Nullarbor when he was 63, and my three brothers have done a lot of cycling. But I've always been a sporting and athletics duncie so walking has been my way of keeping fit without letting any team members down. Gradually I ramped up to longer and longer walks at faster speeds. I can't remember how I first found out about the Coburg event. I think I'd done the Adelaide 100km Trailblazer and I was looking for another challenge.

It was obviously in 2006 because my records show that Cathy emailed me in November of that year to ask about the Centurion walk and to find out in general about long distance events. She was also in contact with Geoff Peters and was getting a bit of tuition from him and the South Australian Masters.

In April 2007, she jumped in the deep end, choosing the Australian Centurions 24 Hour Walk as her first true ultra competition. On that occasion, she passed the 50 mile mark in around 11:50 but was just not able to hold it together in the second half, winning the women's section with a great first up 149.021 km, close to but short of the required 160.934 km.



Cathy walking at Coburg in 2007 (left) and 2008 (right)

She now realised that the 100 mile goal was achievable so she started to plan for 2008.

For training this year I walked to and from work - about 7.5 km each way - 4 or 5 days a week. Then I would walk for 6 hours or longer starting at 5am on Sundays to avoid the Adelaide heat. Friends would join in or meet me part way for a coffee - as everyone knows it's important to have an incentive. I also competed in as many Adelaide events as I could such as the August marathon organised by SA Road Runners & Walkers. I also got advice and help from the SA Masters group. For repairs and maintenance I consult Adrienne at Chiropractic Solutions. That's an advert but she deserves it as she have saved me a lot of pain.

Her 2008 performance was a nail biter. She passed the 50 mile mark somewhere around 11:45, similar to 2007, so had little in reserve for the second half. With 6 hours to go, she had dropped slightly and had to literally walk without stopping for the duration of the event to reach the hundred. She dug deep in these final hours, eventually reaching the 100 mile mark in 23:57:57. Her walk was reminiscent of the 2004 walk of Graham Watt who reached the target in 23:59:23 on this same track. Graham was on hand to acknowledge her gutsy performance and welcome Cathy to the Centurion Club as Australian Centurion Number 54.

Cathy, currently in the W50 age group, becomes only the 5th Australian (the others are Carmela Carassi, Carol Baird, Lyn Lewis and Karyn Bollen) and the first South Australian woman to obtain membership of our exclusive club. Welcome to the Australian Centurions, Cathy. Many try but few actually achieve what you have done this year.

The last word belongs to Cathy

I owe a lot to my fabulous pit-stop team Andy Pearce and Centurion Geoff Peters, and all the encouraging fellow competitors for good advice and friendliness - Louis, Pat, Val, Robyn, Deryck, Clarrie, Karen and Terry and many others. Plus the smooth organisation of the Coburg crew.