

## SHARON SCHOLZ – AUSTRALIAN CENTURION 63

Sharon Scholz, born 31 July 1976, is married to Australia ultra distance runner Justin Scholz and, usually accompanied by their daughter Jasmine, they are regulars on the elite ultra scene.

But it has not always been so. Up until their early thirties, they did not engage in any form of physical activity apart from club / social golf and their health and fitness declined. It was in late 2006 that they determined to change their lifestyle, reduce stress and improve fitness, health and well-being. In January 2007 they each took their first steps as 'runners'. Running was the chosen pursuit only because it appeared to be the easiest, cheapest and simplest way to burn calories quickly.

Such was the motivation to improve fitness that by the end of 2007 the Scholz's had lost a combined 30kg of weight and had completed their first marathon. Whilst their time of 3:38 was not world beating, it was, by today's standards, a reasonable achievement and quite remarkable considering it was just 10 months earlier that they first began to run.

In April of 2008 Sharon started her ultra career with two events. Firstly, she ran the Frankston to Portsea 55 km in early April (2<sup>nd</sup> woman, 5:27:32). Then two weeks later, she entered the 24 hour event at Coburg, winning the women's division with an inaugural distance of 184.17 km. Justin was soon to follow her, completing the Tan Ultra 100km (Melbourne) later that year in 8<sup>th</sup> place with a time of 10:37:00.



**Sharon in action at Coburg in 2008 - her first 24 Hour ultra run**

Since then, they have both gone onto bigger things but let's concentrate on Sharon for the purposes of this article. You can get a great snapshot of her career at <http://statistik.d-u-v.org/getresultperson.php?runner=36401>. Sharon also maintains her own website - see <http://www.sharonscholz.com>.

Her international career was quickly underway with an Australian vest for the 2009 Commonwealth 24 Hour Championships which were held in Keswick, UK. This was the first of her five representations thus far but it is by no means the last as Sharon continues to improve.

17-18/09/2009	Commonwealth 24 Hour Championships, Keswick, Cumbria (GBR)	8 <sup>th</sup>	195.252 km
13-14/05/2010	IAU 24 Hour World Championships, Brive (FRA)	6 <sup>th</sup>	224.885 km
23-24/09/2011	Commonwealth 24 Hour Championships, Llandudno, North Wales (GBR)	22 <sup>nd</sup>	197.186 km
08-09/09/2012	IAU 24 Hour World Championships, Katowice (POL)	94 <sup>th</sup>	57.160 km
11-12/05/2013	IAU 24 Hour World Championships, Steenbergen (NED)	35 <sup>th</sup>	206.286 km

2010 saw her extend her repertoire beyond the traditional 24 Hour distance as she won the Australian 48 Hour Championship in Caboolture in August with a new Australian record of 333.026 km and won the Coast to Kosciuszko (240km) in December with a new race record of 32:14:28.

In fact, 2010 was a watershed year for Sharon as evidenced by the following milestones

2010 International Female Ultra Runner of the Year (IAU)  
 2010 Australian Female Ultra Runner of the Year (AURA)  
 6<sup>th</sup> outright in the 2010 World Championships 24 hour (224.885 km)  
 2010 Winner Australian Championships 48 hour race and new record (333.026 km)  
 2010 Winner 240km Coast to Kosciuszko race and new record (32:14:28)

2011 saw more good runs with a win in the New Zealand 100km Championship in February (a PB 9:21:57), another Commonwealth 24 Hour Championship representation and another Coast to Kosci appearance (third this time in a slightly slower time of 33:26:35).

Her current run PBs are pretty extraordinary and all date from 2010/2011.

50 km	4:17:59	2011
100 km	9:21:57	2011
6 Hours	71.927 km	2010
12 Hours	131.311 km	2010
24 Hours	224.885 km	2010
48 Hours	333.026 km	2010

She has also amassed an impressive set of Australian ultra running records (and now walking records - read on!) - the count stands at 45 - see further details on her website at <http://www.sharonscholz.com/records.html>. Her Australian Open Running Records read as follows

48 Hours Track	333.026 km
24 Hours Road	224.885 km
200 Km Road	21:05:53
100 Miles Road	16:33:03
100 Miles Track	15:57:35
150 Km Track	14:33:07
12 Hours Track	131.311 km
12 Hours Road	123.070 km

For some years, I had watched both Justin and Sharon walk the occasional lap in their Coburg 24 Hour appearances and I had been impressed by their walking form. The idea to qualify as a centurion walker eventually formed for them and it was Justin who took the plunge first, in July 2012 in Adelaide, becoming Australian Centurion number 61 with his time of 22:09:03 (see <http://www.centurions.org.au/centprofiles/61%20justin%20scholz.pdf>).

This year it was Sharon's turn but she had unfinished running business to attend to first. 2012 had been a bad year for her with some significant injuries. She was keen to compete for Australia once again in the 2013 IAU World 24 Hour Championships but first had to prove her fitness with a performance of 63 km or further in the Coburg 6 Hour run in March. Her winning distance of 65.786 km was enough to satisfy the selectors and she was in the team. Her subsequent performance in Holland in May (2<sup>nd</sup> Australian woman to finish with 206.286 km) was a good result under the circumstances.

Then it was a case of get ready for her centurion walk attempt. She and Justin embarked on an ambitious, albeit short, training regime, going out and walking up to 20km each day as they travelled around Europe post-event. With only 5 weeks in which to recover from the ravages of her World Championship run and prepare for her inaugural 24 Hour walk, it was a tough ask.

Come Blacktown in mid June 2013 and they were ready. I did not know what to expect but I did think that Justin would improve on his 2012 walk and I was confident that Sharon would reach the centurion milestone. Talk about underestimation!

They went to the front, matching it with the runners and powering through the first 12 hours with 102.841 km (Justin) and 100.832 km (Sharon) respectively. Their one hundred mile times were superb - Justin 19:43:21 and Sharon 20:06:00 - and their final 24 Hour walk distances were just as impressive - Justin 189.678 km and Sharon 187.653 km.

To give some idea of the quality of their walks, here are the Australian all-time top-10 rankings for 24 Hour walks done in Australia. Justin and Sharon have gone straight to the front of the bus!

1.	Jim Gleeson	40	196.490 km	24/10/1971	(122 miles 215 yds)
2.	Justin Scholz	39	189.678 km	16/06/2013	

3.	Sharon Scholz (F)	37	187.653 km	16/06/2013	
4.	Peter Bennett	56	185.293 km	28/07/2012	
5.	Michelle Thompson (F)	44	184.724 km	14/04/2013	
6.	Gordon Smith	37	183.090 km	16/10/1938	(113 miles 1390 yds)
7.	Carol Baird (F)	53	182.657km	14/04/2002	
8.	Gordon Smith	36	177.780 km	1937	(110 miles 871 yds)
9.	Michelle Thompson	43	174.896 km	15/04/2012	
10.	Terry O'Neill	51	169.741 km	22/04/2007	

Sharon now joins our ranks as Australian Centurion number 63. She also set new Australian records as follows

Sharon Scholz	W35	50 Miles	9:29:06	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	Open (Residential)	50 Miles	9:29:06	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	W35	100 Km	11:53:46	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	Open (Residential)	100 Km	11:53:46	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	W35	100 Miles	20:06:00	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	Open (Residential)	100 Miles	20:06:00	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	W35	12 Hours	100.832km	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	Open (Residential)	12 Hours	100.832km	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	W35	24 Hours	187.653km	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	Open (Residential/All-Comers)	24 Hours	187.653km	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	W35	6 Hours	51.658km	Sydney	15-16 June 2013
Sharon Scholz	W35	50 Km	5:48:26	Sydney	15-16 June 2013



**Left: Sharon during her centurion walk in Sydney**

**Right: Sharon was one of 4 walkers to achieve a centurion finish in Blacktown  
Anyce Melham (C 65), Sharon Scholz (C 63), Justin Scholz (C 61) and Steve Jordan (C 64)**

It was indeed an auspicious start. With yet another major achievement to add to her collection, it will probably be back into the running shoes for Sharon in the foreseeable future but you never know!

Tim Erickson  
Wednesday 26 June 2013