

## JOFFRID MACKETT C82: 22:48:59

In February 2022, I was contacted by ACT based ultra runner Joffrid Mackett. He was intending to try to walk 100 miles within the first 24 hours of the Canberra 48 Hour Carnival, which was to be held on the weekend of 25-27 March. As we had 3 centurions in action in the same event, I felt confident that we would be able to scrutinise his action and ensure that, if he did succeed, all would be above boards. So I contacted Justin Scholz (C61), David Billett (C50) and Anyce Melham (C65), and they all volunteered their services to keep an eye on Joffrid and to support him along the way.

Joff had been running the occasional ultra dating back to 2012, when he completed the Hume & Hovell 50km. In recent years, he had challenged himself with longer ultras, doing the Canberra 48 Hour run three times, with a PB of 276km in 2019. This was to be his first walk ultra and I did not rate his chances very highly, given that he had never run 100 miles within 24 hours and now he was hoping to walk 100 miles within that same timeframe.

Did he prove me wrong!

Joff started off conservatively, circling the track at just over 3 minutes per 400m lap. He passed the 6 Hour mark with 45.2km, passed the 50 mile mark in 11:23:55 and had covered 84.6km by the 12 Hour mark. He did not have much of a buffer for the second half and would need to ensure that his pace did not slow significantly. This he was able to do, keeping at around 3 min 30 secs per lap right up until he reached the 100 mile mark, with a time of 23:32:07. It was an impressive performance that earned him Australian Centurion badge 82.

Here is what he had to say after the event

*I am stoked. I can honestly say I am significantly sorer after that 24 hrs than any 100mile trail run I have done, or the 48hr runs I've done. My legs are toast, and I blisters in places on my feet I've never had before. But I will know for next time. I naively thought I would have a rest for an hour or so, then go back out and see if I could better my Run PB (276 km). Again based on lack of understanding of the toll this would have on me. At this stage I am helping a mate who is doing the 48hr. I may pop out for a few laps later on, I am doubtful. Most rewarding thing I have done - thank you for letting me have a crack!*

For the record, Joffrid did get back on the track for a few more laps, completing 205.915km before the 48 Hour final gun fired.



*Left: Joff with fellow competitor and good friend Ingo Ernst at the Canberra 48 Hour Carnival  
Right: Joff reaches his 100 mile walk milestone in Canberra*



I caught up with Joff via email in the following week and was able to get a bit more information from him, to enable me to build this picture for our readers.

Here are our Q&As

### **Tell me about how you got into ultras**

I feel that I have been active for most of my life. Early on it was swimming (from age 4), then rugby union and classical ballet (an odd combination considering I was playing in the front row), a few triathlons, waterpolo and then back to rugby union (tight head prop) and rugby league (front and second row). During all of these, I was not the most skilful person and definitely only middle of the pack pace wise, but I was one of the fittest and was pretty consistent in terms of intensity from the start of the game through to the end. I used to do a bit of extra running, but back then 10km seemed to be a long distance.

In 2010 while posted to Dubai, I decided to have a crack at a road marathon – it seemed a good place to try as it was very flat. With a bit of training and a goal of under 4 hours I went out pretty steady, ignoring everyone around me (like the books said to do), and was on track at the half way turn around to come in a bit under 4 hours. I felt surprisingly good, randomly tucked in with a bloke next to me (who turned out to be a South African training for the Comrades) and we ran the next 18 or so km together as if we had been training together for years, and I came in with a surprising 3.32.22 finish, a decent negative split.

After that I wondered what was next. I then heard about ultras and, after running the Canberra marathon in 2012, signed up for the inaugural Hume and Hovell 50km with my good friend Ingo Ernst. This has been my favourite event since that time, run by the awesome Peter and Val FitzPatrick. I ran the 50km again in 2013 and 2014, and then the 100km in 2018 and 2019 (we were overseas in 2015 and 2016 and the bush fires and Covid impacted on 2020 and 2021). When I turned up in 2018 I was welcomed back with a big hug by Val - its very much a family affair.

**Interestingly, your 100 mile walk was faster than any of your 100 mile runs. That is an unusual stat. Is it just that you got yourself to a new level of fitness this year?**

I think it was having an end goal and needing to keep a constant pace to get it rather than my usual vague 'try for 300km, then if I an't get that try for 250, then if I can't get that try for 200...'. That and I definitely did more training in Jan and Feb than I have ever done. We had 2 weeks down the coast in early March, so my final training block was not quite what I would have liked, but I chose to interpret that as a 'long taper'.

### **Tell me about you and Lily**

When we were back in the UAE in 2016, my daughter Lily, who was 16 at the time, was hit by a car while crossing a road. The outcome was a significant spinal cord injury as well as a traumatic brain injury. In a second our lives were changed forever. To some extent my running, particularly my longs runs, have been what has kept me able to continue functioning. It is easy to lose yourself in the open spaces and the fatigue, and to let the mind drift away from the day to day realities of our 'new life' to essentially a state of 'nothingness'. It also helps that so far I don't think I have met a negative minded person in the ultra community.

Immediately following Lily's accident, I came across a support group in America called Ainsley's Angels (<https://www.ainsleysangels.org/>) whose mission is to build awareness about the importance of inclusion, through action, while transforming populations into all-inclusive communities. They do this by pairing runners with 'angels' - this appealed to me and, following a chat with Lily, a running friend in the UAE raised the money to purchase one of their purpose build running chairs (called a chariot) and he, another friend and I ran the Dubai marathon in 2017 with Lily. Since then, Lily and I have run 4 marathons together. She has great delight in reminding me that she has beaten me every time. It is somewhat of a dream to establish a group similar to Ainsley's Angels here in Australia - one day maybe.



*Joff and Lily complete the 2017 Dubai marathon*

**Talk us through how you ended up deciding to walk at Canberra this year**

Over the years I have run a few road marathons (8), a few trail ultras in Australia and the UAE (18), done a 10km lake swim and started venturing into the world of long ultra track running, participating in the Canberra 48 Hour in 2018 (204.67km run), 2019 (276.625km run), 2021 (219.895km run) and 2022 (205.915 walk).



*Joff competes in the 48 Hour Run at the 2021 Canberra 48 Hour Carnival*

It was during my first track run that I came across the extraordinary and awesome Christison sisters, Heather and Linda. I was quietly happy with my run of 204km, and then I heard that Linda and Heather (the year before, I think) had walked around 235 km. I was astounded. It got me thinking about time on the track, perseverance, determination and consistency. I then forgot all about this and went back to my 'mediocre' plodding for the next few events. Each year I was of course aware of this machine by the name of Justin Scholz who never seemed to slow down or leave the track, and David Billett who, when he was walking, seemed to only need about 10 strides to get around the track, his legs are so long, and they were something called a Centurion.

Over Christmas last year I started thinking about it again, and about whether I would have a go at it. I reached out to Justin on New Year's Day, and with a bit of advice and guidance I decided to give it a crack. This was on the back of a bit of ongoing commute running, as well as twice weekly 5km walks carrying a 45kg pack (more on that later).

Long story short, I ended up putting in a good block of consistent 'walk training', aiming for 8min/km pace, and got in a few longish walks ahead of the event (longest being 3.2hrs, 26km on the treadmill). During the event I was lucky enough to have Justin, David and Anyce on the track with me, each of whom helped at various times in different ways, for which I am very grateful. I have to say I think it was the toughest thing I have tried to do. In the end, after a long sit down after the first 24 hours, I ventured back out with the goal to get to 200km, then to beat, as nicely put by David, my personal worst running total, which I managed to do.

### **Do you train with anyone, are you coached at all, or are you a solo runner?**

I train mostly on my own, and often on the treadmill so I am close to help out with Lily as needs be. I do a few long runs with Ingo when we can co-ordinate it.

### **What is next for you?**

Now, similarly to 2011 after my first marathon, I am thinking what next.....

First up is the Canberra Marathon on 10<sup>th</sup> April with Lily, then a few trail ultras throughout the year. A longer term goal is trying to better the Guinness record for the fastest marathon carrying a 100 pound pack (45kg), currently set at around 6.30hrs. I was going to try this in 2020 but Covid put a stop to that <sup>1</sup> - the plan is now to try in 2023, to raise money for spinal cord injury research and support, or perhaps to purchase some chariots to start up an Australian chapter of Ainsley's Angels.

We are also turning our minds to the 2023 Lily's Legs Virtual March Marathon (<https://lilyslegs.com/>), an event Lily put on this year to raise money for Spinal Cord Injury research and support. <sup>2</sup>

And of course now that I have managed to get my first Centurion, I am keen to do more!

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And to show that nothing gets in the way for Lily and Joff, consider Joff's statement a few days after his centurion walk in Canberra: *"I have pulled up mostly ok except for my feet which have some sizable blisters on them in a few different places – I haven't been able to get any shoes on as yet."*

Yet two weeks later, while our Coburg 24 Hour Carnival was taking place in Melbourne, Lily and Joff were participating in the Canberra marathon and she was keeping him updated on how Linda and Heather Christison were doing at Coburg. *"We were so excited - it looked like Linda was going to finally complete her centurion walk. I think she went thru the 12hr well ahead of my attempt. Regardless, what an amazing couple of ladies!"*

While Joff is the engine in the back, Lily knits beanies to raise money. *"We have developed a new pace metric - the Canberra marathon was run at a 1.5 beanie pace."* <sup>3</sup>

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1 Read more at <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6650718/why-this-gordon-man-will-be-running-a-marathon-with-a-45kg-weight-on/>

2 If you want to be inspired, read <https://lilyslegs.com/lilys-story>

3 Read more at <https://lilyslegs.com/lils-lids-1>



*Joff and Lily pounding the pavement in the 2022 Canberra marathon*

I don't think I have written a more inspiring centurion profile than Joff's. We welcome him to our club and acknowledge the great work he and Lily are doing to raise awareness of spinal cord injuries.

Tim Erickson  
Wed 20<sup>th</sup> April 2022