



Alicia Heron qualifies as Australian Centurion C87 in Adelaide in October 2024

When Alicia Heron qualified as Australian Centurion number 87 in October 2024, no one should have been surprised. Over the previous 6 years, she had been making her mark as an ultra distance runner, with a number of significant wins, an Australian 48 Hour run record, three Australian representative vests and a major gong as the 2022 Australian Female Ultra Runner of the Year.

All of this in a career that only started in 2018. Prior to that, she had served 15 years in the Australian Navy, with a number of deployments. As she reached the end of her time in the Navy, she had to consider what next and running was an obvious choice.

"I'm not very good at sitting still and have been like this pretty much my whole life. I was always a sporty kid growing up. I used to be a sprinter but I am lucky enough to have been able to change my muscle twitch fibres to allow me to run longer distances."

For Alicia, born July 1983, her first ultra test was in April 2018 when she completed the Canberra 50km Ultramarathon in a time of 4:56:41. It was her longest ever run and she handled it well. She was back a year later, improving her Canberra Ultramarathon time to 4:43:35. She then upped the ante 5 months later with a finish in the Sri Chinmoy Canberra Centenary Trail Run (100km) with a time of 14:12:04. It was obvious even at this early stage that she was not making the mistake of many new ultra runners but was keeping her events few and far between.

This trend continued in 2020 as she negotiated her way through the Covid lockdowns with 3 carefully chosen races - the Snowies Trail Run 50km in March, the Sri Chinmoy Canberra Trail 100km in September (an improved 13:20:08) and the Narrabeen Allnighter 12 Hours Trail in December (84.390 km).

2021 saw 5 races, with the most significant being third place in the Sri Chinmoy 48 Hour Track Festival in Canberra in March (**266.139 km**) and a win in the Narrabeen Allnighter 12 Hours Trail in December (**102km**).

It was now time for Alicia to set her sights higher, with places on offer in the Australian team which would contest the IAU 24 Hour Asia and Oceania Championship in India in July. The Sri Chinmoy 48 Hour Track Festival in March was the official Australian Championship and a perfect opportunity to put a significant time on the board. And did she produce the goods, leading the female runners through the first 24 Hours with **204.909km** (which qualified her for India) and continuing on to win her first official Australian Championship with 48 Hour distance of **329.392 km** (a new W35 age group record). This ticked all the right boxes and she was selected in the Australian team for India.

"Ever since I was a little girl, I have dreamt of wearing the Green and Gold of my country. I never thought it would be for ultra running! I was always a sprinter, but here we are! I remember the day I decided I was going to be a

distance runner, it was whilst my family and I were travelling Australia, and I looked at my Dad and said, I'm going to run around this block as many times as I can. He looked at me thinking I was insane, but, said 'off you go'. That day, I caught the endurance bug. I just truly love the challenge, and what comes with it. Running is such a big part of my life, and I have not been able to wipe the smile off my face since the night I received the call from AURA saying I was selected for the team headed for India in July! I am about to tick off a goal that I have only dreamt of, now it's a reality and I cannot be more proud to share this dream with the other selected team members, coach, manager and crew."



Alicia celebrates passing the 200 mile mark on her way to her Australian 48H Championship win in March 2023 (photo AURA)



Alicia makes the front cover of the AURA 2022 Annual Report after her outstanding year (photo AURA)

Her race in Bengaluru, India, in July went off perfectly as she overcame the torrid conditions to finish as the third female (and second Australian) with a PB distance of **210.640 km**. In fact, she was 8th overall among the 31 finishers.

She topped off what had been a great year with a PB in the Sri Chinmoy Canberra Trail 100km in September (**12:02:34**) and second place in her inaugural Coast to Kosci Ultramarathon 240km in December (**32:33:33**). On the back of such performances, it was not surprising when she was awarded the 2022 Australian Female Ultra Runner of the Year.

Not one to rest on her laurels, Allicia started her 2023 campaign with a start in the Taipei 48 Hour Ultra Marathon in Taiwan in mid February. There she made her intentions clear with her first 24 Hour split of 204.165km before holding off a late surge from a Taiwanese runner to finish the 2 Day event with a new Australian 48 Hour record of **361.160 km**. This performance would subsequently win her the 2023 Helen Stanger Award for the best single Australian ultra running achievement by a female under age 60.



*Alicia shows the effort after her new Australian 48 Hour record run in Taiwan in February 2023
(photo Allicia Heron instagram)*

She was back in action in early July in the Australian 24 Hour Track Invitational in Canberra in July, winning the Australian Championship with a new PB distance of **225.428 km** and thus qualifying for the Australian team which would contest the IAU World 24 Hour Championships in Taipei in December. She was awarded the additional honour of being named as the Captain of the women's team for Taipei.

Alas, the diet of hard races and big PBs over the last 2 years had taken its toll and she pulled up with a torn hip a couple of months out from the World Champs. She subsequently struggled in the IAU race in Taiwan, finishing well back with what was for her a very modest 184.336 km.

It would be 8 months until her next race, the IAU 24 Hour Asia and Oceania Championship in Canberra in April 2024. There she finished sixth in the female division with a distance of 203.531 km. She had bounced back somewhat since Taiwan but was still short of her best. But it was her third Australian vest and she had done enough to maintain her standing within the Australian ultra running ranks.

Her mind was now set on a new goal, the Centurion 100 Mile walk. She needed a break after her intensive running campaigns of recent years and what better way than by walking.

The Australian 6 Day Championship in Adelaide in late September was one of the designated 2024 events in which walkers could qualify as an Australian Centurion and this was the event that Allicia targeted. As usual, the event was held at Thorndon Park in suburban Adelaide, with a 1.426km lap around the ornamental lake in the park. This is by no means an easy course, undulating and on a path that is 100% concrete, but those are the only negatives. In every other way, it is a truly magnificent event.

The weather was generally good and the record sized fields (41 in the 6 Day, 4 in the 3 Day, 3 in the 2 Day and 13 in the 24H) produced records galore. And to put the icing on the cake, there were 8 serious walkers amongst the 61 entrants. Allicia amongst them.

Allicia had a double goal – first to qualify as a Centurion and then to continue on and see how far she could walk in 48 Hours. She started confidently, her style impeccable, covering a little over 45km in the first 6 hours. She continued on through the night to eventually reach the 100 mile mark in **23:15:33** and qualify as **Australian Centurion number 87**. After a few hours break, she was back on the track and into her second day. Now it's hard ask to walk so hard in the first 24 hours and then back up for the same again, but she was up to the challenge. She passed the 200km mark in a time of **32:27:40**, taking over 3 hours off Sabina Hamaty's Australian Open Record and achieved a final 48 Hour distance of **270.086 km**, again a new Australian Open Record, over 19 km further than Sabina's mark.

Allicia can now boast that she holds the Australian 48 Hour Run record and the Australian 48 Hour Walk record, an interesting statistic that is going to be hard to match.



Allicia early on, then at the 100 mile mark in Adelaide where she is congratulated by C86 Sabina Hamaty and finally at the 200km mark – always a significant milestone!

And I should point out that Allicia does all this while juggling the dual roles of full time work and managing a family that includes two daughters.

Final words from Allicia

“What motivates me is the way I feel after a race - that sense of accomplishment when I have done what I set out to do. It's not simply about a trophy. Running is a release for me, especially the long distances.”

And final words from me. Two great links to explore about Allicia

- <https://www.warriorress.com.au/blogs/news/allicia-heron-warriorress-of-the-24hour-track-run>
- <https://statistik.d-u-v.org/getresultperson.php?runner=1082070>

I know I'll have many more occasions to write about Allicia's ongoing career, both as a runner and now as a walker!

We welcome Allicia as **Australian Centurion C87**.

Tim Erickson
26th November 2024