

Marathon of emotions keeps Grad running

Forty two kilometres enveloped in sweat, tears, determination and an unrelenting desire to continue inspiring family and community.

They are the stitches sewn together to create 2011 IMP Graduate Nadine Hunt's blanket of motivation as she embarks on her fourth international marathon.

"The constant ability to impact and influence my family and friends through the simple act of running.

"I just love the simplicity of it, the difficulties during the build-up, the hard work, and the unbelievable feeling of finishing something I've started. There really isn't a feeling I can compare it to.

"And I guess that's the reason I keep going back for more," she explained.

Originally from Cairns, Nadine relocated to Canberra in 2012 after accepting the role as Education and Event Coordinator for IMP.

Nadine formed an extremely close bond with fellow 2011 IMP Graduate, Bianca Graham, and since they became the first Indigenous Australian women to finish the New York Marathon as part of IMP, the pair have been marathon-inseparable.

Together they have competed in New York (2011), Frankfurt (2013) and Tokyo (2015).

On Monday, they will once again line up together in the iconic Boston Marathon, with fellow 2013 IMP Graduate, Luke McKenzie, marking 30 years since Australia's Godfather of running and IMP Founder and Director, Rob de Castella ran himself into history with a record time of 2:07:51; an Australian record that still stands today.

Rob is a man full of wisdom and experience, and constantly reiterates that any marathon starts at the 30km mark; when you hit that wall and need to keep going, keep believing, and hold on to your purpose.

And when a champion offers advice, you respect it.

"Of course he's right," Nadine laughs.

"The last 10km is tough, painful, memorable and always so emotional!"

"For me it all depends on where I am in life and every marathon is so different. In 2011 it was a bit of the unknown.

"I was running with Bianca and we were just supporting each other through our stages of struggling. All I could think of was getting that monkey off my back and making sure I made my family proud.

"I also remember thinking how deadly it was to have Bianca right next to me in the last 10km, that made things a lot easier and I don't remember hitting the wall.

"Frankfurt marathon however was a bit different, I don't remember too much after 35kms between being blown away and being stuck in that 30km wall and not being able to get out.

"All I could think about was home, how important it was not to give up, and that it's less than an hour of pain I just have to endure. I somehow managed to get to the finish line incredibly pale and ready to pass out, to look up and see Bianca waiting," she said.

Then there was Tokyo.

The pain of a marathon and all of the months of training and sacrifice were pale in comparison to an infinitely harder struggle Nadine was dealt.

“I lost my grandfather to a list of chronic diseases that he suffered with for years but never complained about.

“It was right in the middle of a crucial part of my marathon training which somewhat was not important any more.

“I managed to string 8-10 weeks together and get to the start line of Tokyo, mentally I was worried and not sure I’d done enough to get through.

“After getting smashed in my last marathon I wasn’t sure I was ready to the last 10km. Luckily, the last 10km of the Tokyo Marathon was the best 10km of running that I’ve ever experienced.

“The last 10km I ran for my family, most importantly my Pop.

“To change the thinking and normalisation of chronic disease in my family, to show the next generation that we are healthy and strong people who can overcome anything.

“It almost felt as if my Pop carried me through that last 10km,” she reflected.

And now for Boston, which is significant for different reasons.

While her family takes pride of place in her mental strength to push through, she’ll also be thinking firmly of another great man who has become a pillar of encouragement and inspiration in her life over the past five years.

Acknowledging Rob’s achievements and his contribution to Australia run parallel with Nadine’s own personal marathon goals.

“I feel absolutely honoured and blessed to be able to step foot on a course full of so much pride and history.

“To be the year of when Rob created history, and an Australian record that still stands, is just incredible.

“Rob contributes so much to making a difference to Indigenous Australia, his passion, hard work and commitment to making a difference really motivates me.

“So I’ll be making sure I give everything on Monday, just a small way to say thank you to a great man that has done so much for me personally and for the nation.

“I know how much they respect him over in Boston, so it will be great to sit back and watch him be acknowledge and celebrated,” she said.

There is much more to marathon running than just lacing up the joggers and hitting the road.

It’s a constant mental struggle, it’s a time of reflection, it’s a time when runners need to dig deep and embrace the 42kms of emotions that are felt with every single step.

And when those 42kms are over, it’s time to celebrate, time for Nadine to wrap herself in that ever-growing marathon blanket of family, emotion and achievement.

She’s certainly earned it.