

CRAIG MOTTRAM. HE'S BACK, HE'S FLYING AND HE'S ATHENS BOUND.

January 2004

Craig 'Buster' Mottram is the most talented male middle-distance runner seen in Australia for decades. However, Craig would rather forget the first half of 2003, when an injured knee failed to respond to intensive treatment and time was running out for the Geelong star to put in the training and racing necessary in the lead-up to the Athens Olympics. But fortunately, 'Buster' is back, better than ever and ready to show the African distance athletes, dominant for so long, that 'tall white men can run!'

N.M. Craig, this time last year you were hoping for a big 2003, to build upon your successes of 2002. However, 2003 turned out to be a bit of a roller-coaster ride of highs and lows.

C.M. That's very true. The first half of the year was all down-hill but we were able to bounce back by heading overseas in June and making the most of limited opportunities to run an Olympic A Qualifier. Actually, we had initially decided that the Olympic A Qualifier was going to be my main goal for 2003 so that worked out well. So despite last year having a few negatives, there was also the positive that I was able to focus on a smaller target, achieve that, then move onto Athens.

N.M. You hurt your iliotibial band. How did this happen?

C.M. I think it's pretty common knowledge that I was playing a game of basketball with some friends, just after I got back from Europe in 2002. I didn't notice any pain during the game but pulled up sore the following day. The knee then got progressively worse for three or four days before we decided to take a few days off. But the more time I took off, the worse it got. Eventually it got to the stage of exploring cortisone injections, cutting the band under local anaesthetic and even travelling half way around the world for treatment. But the body is a strange thing and eventually, after taking its time, it came right.

N.M. You weren't trying to emulate your brother, Neil who is a star with the Melbourne Tigers in the National Basketball League?

C.M. No, despite what some people think, I was not playing Neil. I was actually playing against a guy named Ian Prendergast, who plays A.F.L. football for Carlton. We used to race when we were younger in Little Athletics so perhaps he was getting back at me from those earlier competitions. However, I don't think that the basketball initially hurt my knee, it probably put my hips out a bit, then running with this imbalance caused the I.T. band to flair up.

N.M. How bad was the knee?

C.M. It was pretty bad. For about three months I couldn't run properly and was just jogging around for a few minutes here and there. But one morning I decided to try to push through the pain barrier to see what would happen. However, after seven minutes of slow jogging, I just fell over. A lady walking her dog nearby came over to ask if I was OK. I just limped back to the car and thought that was it.

N.M. For treatment you even got to the stage of heading overseas to see renowned masseur, Gerard Hartmann?

C.M. Yes, I travelled to Limerick in Ireland to see Gerard. We had tried everything back here and had seen everyone under the sun to get it right. They were all great and very optimistic but it just wasn't getting any better so we decided to travel to the other side of the world to see Gerard Hartmann, who is Paula Radcliffe's masseur. Gerard has a really good record for getting people back from injury. I went over there in March and had some intense treatment. At first we had planned to stay for two weeks but after eight days he sent me home saying that he couldn't fix it. In fact, the knee really swelled-up and had a negative reaction so I flew home expecting to need an operation that would mean little running and lots of rehab for six months.

N.M. The story about the operation is an interesting one. How close did you come to going under the knife?

C.M. Yes, twice I was booked in. I was booked in for just after New Year but I sat down with Nic and we decided to give it another few weeks and try Gerard's treatment. Then I rang the specialist, David Young, from Ireland after Gerard's treatment was not working, and arranged to have the operation as soon as possible after I arrived home. But I got off the plane on Friday and thought, "stuff it, the operation is on Monday afternoon, I may as well go out for one last run!" Anyway, I ran for 30 minutes and there was no pain! Then on Saturday, I ran for 40 minutes and there was no pain - Sunday, an hour with no pain. When I woke up on Monday the knee still felt fine so I told David Young that I wanted to postpone the surgery. Anyway, he said that whenever I decide to have the surgery, just give him a call and he'd fit me in the next day. Luckily for me, he's still waiting for the phone call. Young had a theory that the plane trip had acted like

a hyperbaric chamber and had helped to clear away the scar tissue that had been stirred up by Hartmann's intensive massaging.

N.M. Did you ever think that the injured knee might mean the end of your career?

C.M. Yes, I did, many times. I spoke to a lot of people who'd had I.T. band injuries as well as people who have had the surgery and there is a high success rate. David Young said that he was 99% sure that it would be right but everybody is different and what if I was the 1% who didn't recover? Also, not everyone who has the operation is looking to run 160 - 170 kilometres a week. Everyone's body is built a certain way for a good reason and if you start stuffing around with it having operations, not so good things can happen.

N.M. Eloise Poppett said that the six months she was forced to take off from running through injury made her a better person and in the long run was highly beneficial. In hindsight, was your seven month injury break beneficial?

C.M. I don't know if it's made me a better person but it's certainly made me a better athlete. I've endured a lot through those seven months - I had a split with my coach (Bruce Scriven) which was quite awkward, then to become injured straight after leaving Scrivo was extremely frustrating. When you make a tough decision like that you want to get out there straight away and prove to everyone that you have made the right decision, but because of the injury, I didn't get that opportunity. At the time, I knew it was the right decision and I think people are starting to see that now. However, you learn a lot of lessons when you become injured - you learn to listen to your body and you do all the little one percenters that can really make a difference at the top level. Also, I did stay motivated, I did stay disciplined, I ate good food, I went to the pool everyday, I did circuits most days, I rode most days - basically, I did everything possible that would not irritate my I.T. band. It just took a lot longer to heal than anyone thought it would.

N.M. I saw you the day before you headed off to Europe and you looked incredibly lean for an athlete who had basically not run for seven months. All of that cross-training and discipline obviously paid off.

C.M. Yes, it does. No exercise can replace running if you're a runner but a lot of the hardships in running: the routine, the discipline, the running twice a day, if you can mimic that with other exercises like swimming and riding and circuits, then you're keeping fit and strong while the injury heals.

N.M. So, you headed to Europe to catch up with Nic's group. Tell us about your first harder session.

C.M. Yes, I left for London on the 10th June, then we headed to St. Moritz on the 13th June. St. Moritz is at 1900 metres so we were pretty high and I was easily the least fit runner on the mountain. Then, about a week later, Nic thought he'd introduce a little quality into my running. So we went out and ran easily for 18 minutes, then Nic said to run roughly 2 kilometres around one side of the lake, working pretty hard without getting my heart-rate too high. So, I went out like a 'bull at a gate' despite not having run fast for a long time. I probably did the first kilometre in about 2.50 but the second kilometre was closer to 6 minutes. Nic actually jogged past me towards the end. Then we jogged about 10 minutes back to the track and Nic said that he wanted me to do five laps on the track, aiming for 70 - 72 seconds a lap. Anyway, I thought, hell Nic, seven months ago I could run 59 - 60 seconds a lap for five laps so this shouldn't be too hard. My first lap was 70, then it went 74, slowing, slowing, then 91 seconds for the last lap. So I wasn't very fit but one week later, I was able to do it, so it didn't take me long to turn it around.

N.M. You actually did the same session one week later?

C.M. Yes, although I did a 15 minute hard effort prior to going to the track, then I averaged 69 seconds a lap for the 2000 metres on the track.

N.M. A lot can happen in a week.

C.M. Yes, it can.

N.M. You had quite a few races while you were overseas. Initially, you had the Annual Wedding Day Race (7.2 km.) around Bushy Park where you smashed the course record, running 21.00.

C.M. Yes, I was married to Sonia O'Sullivan that day as it's a team's race and she was my partner.

N.M. A good way for you to get started as it was a low pressure race.

C.M. Yes, but I put a lot of pressure on myself as I want to perform well. I was certainly nervous as I remember having to go to the toilet a million times before the race. But it was a fun race and I raced against Marty Dent, another Australian who has been based overseas for a while.

N.M. Then, a little while later you raced over 5000 metres at Heusden Zolder in Belgium where you ran 13:32.42. Despite the 15th place, the time must have been encouraging?

C.M. Yes, that was a huge step forward. I hadn't put spikes on previously and had probably only had three track sessions in the lead-up so, I was really pleased to run 13.32. A few days before the race, I asked Nic, "what do you think I can run?" because this was my last opportunity to get something out before the Paris World Athletic Championships. Anyway, Nic said, "if you run 14 minutes, that's a good run, if you run 13.50, that's a great run and if you run under 13.45, you're a freak!" My training showed I was probably in 13.45 - 13.50 shape. Anyway, I had a perfect run and ended up having an excellent race. I didn't run for about three days afterwards as my feet were blistered and torn apart from putting on spikes for the first time in ages. Then Keith Connor (Australian Track and Field Head Coach) gave me a call and said, "you've met

the requirements, you can run in Paris.” But, one of the reasons for me doing that race was to have the option of saying that I didn’t want to run at the World Championships rather than being told that I couldn’t do it.

N.M. Your next race was a 3000 metres in Helsinki where you ran 7:51.14.

C.M. Yes, that was not a bad race. I went over there with good friend and training partner, Adrian Blincoe (Ed. Adrian is one of New Zealand’s top middle-distance athletes and will feature in an up-coming newsletter). Adrian was really nervous before the race because he was in great shape at the time and had been smacking me up in training so he didn’t want me to beat him. However, I kept telling him that 3000 metres was my speciality but he did beat me that day. But 7.51 was alright - I was there until about 600 metres to go. When they kicked it down, I lacked the change of speed but I knew it wouldn’t take long to get that back.

N.M. Two weeks later in Liege you ran 5000 metres in 13:21.52, which was an agonisingly close, just 0.20 outside an Athens’ Olympic A Qualifier.

C.M. That’s right, that was post World Championships where I had been doing some of the SBS commentary with Nic. That was an interesting race because I knew it was going to be close so we planned to give it a great shot, hopefully get the time, then head home. But to just miss it was quite funny, actually. Maurie Plant has never worked so hard in all his life - he was in with the photo finish judges asking them to take a closer look at my finish time but they wouldn’t budge. But, that run gave me a huge amount of confidence as I knew I could get the time in the right race.

N.M. And with the Rieti Mile Race in between, you travelled to Rovereto, Italy where you ran 13:17.81 for third place but more importantly, you had an Olympic A Qualifier.

C.M. I had a disappointing mile in Rieti. El Guerrouj was having a World Record attempt and Buster was having the slowest mile attempt (Craig ran 4:05.80). I thought I might be able to run 3.57 or thereabouts, but that wasn’t to be. But then, two days later I came out and ran 13.17 which just goes to show that you don’t have to be super fast to run a good 5000 metres. A lot of people think you’ve got to be able to run 52 seconds a lap to be able to run 13.15 but that isn’t so. As long as you’re strong and have done the hard work, you can still run a solid 5 km.

N.M. In the Rieti Mile you went through 800 metres in 1.57 but were 20 metres last. How does it feel to be tailed-off in a big race?

C.M. Humiliating, but we knew what was going to happen. If I could run 1.57 and 1.57, I would have been up there with a 3.54 but my 1.57 at 800 metres was as fast as I’d run for ages and I really suffered during the last two laps. Also, Rieti is at about 700 metres altitude so that made it tougher.

N.M. You don’t run many of them but what’s your P.B. for 800 metres?

C.M. 1.52 point something - I ran it in the second half of the Edmonton 1500 metres. I don’t like 800 metres - I just seem to have a bit of a phobia about them but it’s certainly one area where I hope to improve.

N.M. If you trained specifically for the 800 metres, you’d have to be able to run 1.47 - 1.48?

C.M. Maybe not at the moment, but if I was in my best shape, I’d like to think I could run that.

N.M. An interesting point about the Rieti Mile was that Kenyan Alex Kipchirchir ran a World Junior Mile Record of 3:50.25 in finishing second to the great Hicham El Guerrouj (3:50.20)

C.M. Well, I certainly didn’t help either of those guys with any pacing.

N.M. Nic was saying that a lot of your training leading up to Rovereto was at 5 km. race rhythm so that’s probably why you struggled with the faster mile racing.

C.M. Yes, we were doing lots of training in Bushy Park at 64 - 65 second per 400 pace but saying that, you still got to do some running at a faster pace so that 64 second pace feels comfortable.

That’s one of the reasons Nic sent me to Rieti for the mile. Running 4 minutes for four laps would make 64 second pace over 5000 metres feel quite relaxed.

N.M. Nic’s obviously a big believer in specificity - you can’t do in a race what you haven’t done in training.

C.M. Yes - we do a lot of things in training that mimics race situations. However, you can never beat the race environment and you can never train to the standard that you can race at. That’s one of the problems some athletes encounter - they train too hard and leave their best form on the training track rather than stepping up another gear in races. Better to train smart and just get many of the sessions done so the fitness levels accumulate slowly over time.

N.M. Finally, you gained a ‘Wild Card’ to the IAAF Final in Monte Carlo where you raced the great Ethiopian, Kenenisa Bekele over 3000 metres. Did you have anything to do with Bekele?

C.M. No, not until he went past me in the final. He’s a fantastic athlete but while I would have loved to have won the race, it was more an opportunity for me to be seen again. The year before, I left Europe after winning the World Cup 3000 metres and a lot of people were wondering where I had been. I was very grateful that the organisers gave me the opportunity to race there and I ran OK.

(Ed. Craig finished 8th in 7:48.76 behind first place-getter Bekele who ran 7:36.98) Every race seemed to be an improvement so I was very happy with how I ran in Europe after starting the year injured.

N.M. Did you have any niggles in the I.T. band while in Europe?

C.M. Yes, I did. When I first came back to London after spending three weeks at St. Moritz my knee swelled up quite a bit. Unfortunately, I had gone eight days without treatment because Cameron Johnson (Cameron Johnson is a physio as well as being Benita's husband) had left for London. But once I got to London, Cameron was able to treat it intensively and it settled down quite quickly. I also have a Baker's Cyst behind my left knee which flaired up a little after doing some faster training in Bushy Park so I had to back-off the fast training for about two weeks. When you're coming back from injury, there's always going to be a few ups and downs and you have to be patient and let your body get over the the inevitable little niggles. A lot of people might think I was able to get back to running 150 plus kilometres a week pretty quickly but I probably didn't put together a 150 kilometre week until I was back in Australia.

N.M. How often do you have a massage or physio to keep your body in good working order?

C.M. I see Andrew Lambart on Monday and Friday and I see Garry Miritis on Wednesday so that's three treatments a week. But when I was over in London I was seeing Cam every second day.

N.M. And what about up here at Falls Creek?

C.M. Up here I ice my knee three to four times a day as well as regular treatment. We also stand in the freezing aqueduct water after each run. So far I've been seeing Anne Lord and Cam arrives tomorrow, so I'll be seeing him about three times a week, not because it's sore but rather preventive maintenance. I certainly believe in the old saying, "prevention is better than cure" as I definitely don't want it coming back.

N.M. After the joy of posting the Olympic A Qualifier you had a few races to do for your sponsors and for some money. One race was a road mile in Newcastle where you were a little ill.

C.M. Yes, when I was flying from Monaco I ate something on the plane that knocked me around and for about six days, causing a bad case of gastro. But I went up there to Newcastle anyway as the organiser is a good friend. I tried to run the best I could but was struck down with a bad case of 'the runs' during the race, which was a little unfortunate. But I was able to turn it around with a 28.36 in the "Great Ireland 10 km. Road Race" in Dublin a week or two later. We decided to race the road 10 km. as we wanted to see how strong I had become after only three or four months of training after the seven months off with injury. To run 28.36 off only a few months training was very encouraging.

N.M. Then a quick flight back to Australia for the Burnie 10 km. Road Race where you ran 28.25.

C.M. Burnie was very satisfying, especially considering the long flight and only a few days recovery from the Dublin race. Usually, races like Burnie are great fun and are a chance to relax and 'kick back'. But this year there were a lot of guys who thought I might be vulnerable but I knew I was in great shape. I felt that my only problem was backing up after a long flight and the short race recovery. But I did all the right things and arrived in Burnie feeling pretty good.

N.M. What sort of things do you do on long flights to make sure you arrive in good shape?

C.M. We wear those special high socks that stop the blood from pooling in your ankles. We also try to stay mobile as much as possible. However, with travelling to Europe two or three times a year, the best thing to do is to take a sleeping tablet and sleep. Also, I always ask for an exit row so I can stretch my legs. Most importantly, you have to get into the time-zone and routine of where you are headed. When we are heading for London we usually leave Australia at 6:00 pm. so we stay awake to Singapore which would be about 3:00 am. Melbourne time. Then, when we get back on the plane for the flight to London, we sleep so when we arrive in London it's 5:00 am. and you're ready to go.

N.M. And you drink plenty of fluids?

C.M. I definitely drink lots of fluids, which can be little hard if you're sleeping a lot.

N.M. After the Burnie Race you also had a crack at the record time for a lap of Melbourne's famed Tan Track. Tell us about that run?

(Ed. the Tan is 3.84 km. in length and Steve Moneghetti's Australian best time was 10.41 while Kenyan, William Chirchir held the all-time best of 10.19)

C.M. I train on the Tan regularly and I knew that a Kenyan held the record so I thought, "we can't have that!" I also knew that 1 kilometre was about a third of the way up the Anderson Street Hill so I relaxed to there, then really pushed over the top of the hill. I was pretty happy to run 10.12.

(Ed. Lee Troop finished second in 10.42)

N.M. Running 10.12 is pretty amazing but do you think sub 10 minutes is possible?

C.M. Who knows. However, I'm pretty sure I can run faster than 10.12 as I was not in my best shape at the time.

N.M. The Zatopek was almost the end of your season and in the lead-up there was a lot of 'umming and aahing' as to whether you'd race and whether you'd have a shot at the Australian 10 000 metre record. Once you decided to run, were you serious about breaking the record?

(Ed. The Australian record is held by Shaun Creighton's at 27:31.92)

C.M. Yes, in many ways I was because I knew I was in great shape and if the race was faster during the first half, I could well have run the record. The talk about the record was more 'paper talk' than me talking it up but I wasn't going to say I couldn't do it, because I knew I could. However, I had to run along with the group early on. I knew that Troopy thought he was in 27.40 'ish' shape so if he took it through to half-way at

that pace, I was pretty confident of kicking it down over the second half and maybe getting the record. But it didn't turn out like that so I was very happy to win (Craig ran 27:50.55 with Lee Troop second in 28:13.96)

N.M. You are a very disciplined athlete and do lots of supplementary work to complement your running. Exactly what do you do?

C.M. I do circuits in the gym on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. This involves lots of body weight exercises like chin-ups, dips and push-ups, some light upper body weights and core stability work but obviously, the running is the most important training. A month ago I did a stint of lifting weights, things like squats and lunges but I found that the quality of my running sessions was affected so we decided to stop the weights. Now I just concentrate on core stability and body weight exercises and let the terrain at places like Falls Creek and Ferny Creek give me the strength in my legs.

N.M. Unfortunately you did not compete at the Paris World Championships but did some commentary for SBS. That must have been a thrill.

C.M. Yes, it was great. I had the opportunity to work alongside Nic Bideau, Jane Flemming, David Culbert and David Basheer. I mainly did the middle-distance events, so I knew a little about that even though the others knew more of the stats. But I knew what it felt like to be racing at that level and perhaps how the athletes would be thinking and feeling. I also knew a lot of the athletes personally, so that helped. Fortunately, we've had some good feedback on the coverage although I don't think I'm ready to go into commentary just yet although it could look good on the regime later in my career.

N.M. The distance races at the World Athletic Championships were fantastic. Is watching the best run still inspirational for you?

C.M. Yes, definitely. The men's 5000 metres with El Guerrouj backing up after winning the 1500 was a great race, but the men's 10 000 metres was a highlight for me. No one should be able to run 12.58 for the second 5 km. in a Championship race but Bekele and Gebrselassie did. (Ed. 12.58 is 62 second per 400 metre pace) I don't think most people realise the enormity of what they did. When we were commentating we tried to break the race down into little chunks so people could better understand what was happening. It was funny but old habits die hard. As each distance race started Nic and I still started our stop watches despite the SBS TV screen in front of us showing every available split and statistic. David Basheer, the other commentator, would sometimes be forced to give us a nudge because the live crosses to the commentary box would sometimes catch us looking down at our watch splits rather up at the TV cameras or the TV screens. But yes, the 10 000 metres was certainly inspirational - perhaps even a little intimidating because when I'm racing these guys I'm concentrating on what is happening around me and focusing on running as well as I can.

N.M. I liked your comment in the men's 5000 metres when El Guerrouj faltered slightly over the last few strides. You said, "At least he's human - maybe I'll get him next year!"

C.M. True, everyone thinks he's unbeatable but he's been beaten twice over 5000 metres in the last twelve months. At the moment he's certainly dominant over 1500 metres but he did lose at the Sydney Olympics so everyone is beatable. But he's definitely human, although he's probably a better model than most. So, we'll see next year.

N.M. You've had a few conversations with El Guerrouj and he has great self-belief.

C.M. True. He's a really nice guy to talk to and he's really encouraging. He's a little baffled too as to why people let him go to the front and just dominate races. But he honestly believes that he's better than anyone else. Perhaps his incredible self-belief intimidates his competitors into thinking, 'hey, El Guerrouj is in the race - I can't possibly win', so they're already running for second.

N.M. And he doesn't have a huge kick. He can just run at sustained speed for longer than anyone else.

C.M. Yes, in the 1500 metres he just winds it up and with the help of the pace-maker early on, he runs 1.47 - 1.48 for the last 800 metres, which is amazing running. In the 5000 metres at the World Championships he tried to do the same thing but ran out of legs. I'd like to see him race a few more times when the pace is not on from the gun - that would be interesting.

N.M. Now, your role on the SBS commentary team was just a prelude to a much more important public speaking engagement. Next week you're Master of Ceremonies for Erin Hewitt's wedding in Adelaide.

C.M. Yes, I'm M.C. for the wedding and I've been collecting some material between training sessions up here. I've never done anything like this before and I'm sure I'll be pretty nervous. However, I'm looking forward to the wedding and I've got a few amusing stories to tell.

N.M. And at least David Basheer won't be belting you on the arm if you make an error!

C.M. True, and I won't have Nic correcting me every time I state an incorrect statistic. The first rule TV people tell you is 'if you make an error, don't admit it because 99% of the public watching at home wouldn't know!' But I made plenty of mistakes in Paris, I can assure you. Then after the race Nic would have all these notes on my mistakes - things like, 'this person has not done this, that person has not raced there, this was not a P.B.'

N.M. Nic has an encyclopaedic knowledge of track and field so you certainly picked the wrong person to sit next to!

C.M. Yes, he's full of knowledge but I've certainly learnt a lot. Now, I'm reading the running magazines from all around the world and I've met and know many of the athletes so that will help next time I do any commentary.

N.M. You're easing back into training at Falls Creek after a short break. At first you had a slight soleus (calf) strain but that's OK now. What are your plans for the next few weeks?

C.M. I'm up here until the end of January. I'll be gradually building up on the kilometres and quality in preparation for the World Indoors and the World Cross - Country in March. Obviously the National Championships are now more important with Athletics Australia's fantastic, I'm being sarcastic there, ruling that if you want to be automatically selected you must win the trial and run the A Standard. So, I'll have to turn up to Sydney in pretty good shape so that I don't give the selectors a chance not to pick me. It will be a case of get the job done and hopefully run under 13.21. If I can do that it will set me up for a pretty good year.

N.M. Running 13.21 in Australia might be a bit of a time-trial.

C.M. To be honest, I'm more than happy to run from the front and run 13.20 and see if anyone else can come through with me. I know that when I ran 13.12 I had a lot of help from the Kenyans. I'm not sure what Troopy is doing (Ed. Lee Troop won the 10 000 metres in 28:32.43) but for people like Mark Tucker it's a great opportunity. If you haven't run that quick before, you don't know what it feels like but if there's someone else out there running an even-pace 13.18, they can get into that rhythm and hang on. (Ed. Craig won the trial comfortably in 13:31.74. Mark Tucker finished 11th in 14:03.70)

N.M. What plans do you have for altitude training this year?

C.M. To start, we'll do five weeks at Falls Creek, then after the World Cross - Country we'll go Laguna Mountain for a three week block. In between there's a 5 km. Road Race at Carlsbad that we might do. After the training camp at Laguna Mountain I'll either head back to Australia for 5 - 6 weeks or go straight to our London base and start preparing for Athens.

N.M. Have you been to Athens?

C.M. No. Nic and a lot of the people who are helping me have been there and have given me some advice. I'll probably arrive at the last moment to avoid the heat and humidity that can be so draining. We think the best way will be to treat it as a normal meet in Europe and basically fly in two days before my race. If it goes as well as I'm hoping and predicting, maybe I'll hang around and enjoy the Greek Islands after the Games.

N.M. Even when injured you remained very disciplined, especially with your diet. Now that you're back running, you're much fitter but still believe you need to drop a few more kilograms to be at your absolute best. What do you emphasize in your diet?

C.M. I've learnt a lot over the last few years about diet through living with Nic and Sonia and Benita. They are very strict on what they eat. Different things work for different people but up here at Falls Creek I concentrate on foods with a high iron content, things like red meat and iron supplements, so that our blood gets the greatest benefit from training at altitude. Basically, most foods are suitable as long as they don't contain too much of the bad fats. So I don't cook with too much oil, I don't have butter or margarine on my toast, I only eat lean meat and I eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables - all the little things that can make a difference if you want to compete with the best in the world. And especially up here at altitude, I drink a lot. I also have a lot of sports drinks and recovery supplements straight after a session so my body can recuperate, refuel and rebuild quickly. If you run 160 kilometres a week, you're going to look lean even if you only eat Doritos and pies all day, but you certainly won't run to your potential.

N.M. I notice that you wear a heart rate monitor regularly up here. Is that to stop you working too hard?

C.M. Yes. Back at sea-level we do a lot of threshold running at varied heart-rate. As I was saying earlier, a lot of people train too hard and don't leave themselves any room for improvement when they race. Up here at altitude you can be feeling great for the first half of a session but can fall in a big hole and fatigue so quickly. Using the heart - rate monitor as a guide, you can sustain the work load for the whole session. We've done VO2 max and maximum heart - rate tests so we know exactly how hard we should be working in different sessions and at different times of the year.

N.M. Do you put your heart - rate monitor on for your easy runs so you don't go too hard?

C.M. No, I think the easy runs should be done on how you feel. If you're feeling good - get rolling, if not - go very easy. When I first started back from injury I used my heart - rate monitor a lot because I didn't want to work too hard and become injured again. Nic would for example say, 'do not go over 140 beats per minute!' And because I was unfit for running, it meant that I would occasionally have to walk.

N.M. You've been on the world athletics scene for a few years now. Has it become any easier or can it still be a struggle to make ends meet?

C.M. No, it can still be hard. There's no staying in fancy hotels or anything like that. Last year, at one stage, I was sleeping on the floor in London and sharing a tiny room with New Zealand athlete, Adrian

Blincoe. Unfortunately, Australia is a very small market compared to America and Europe and we don't sell too many running shoes so there's not the big sponsorship money available to Australian athletes, unless you're a Cathy Freeman. Also, as I'm a full-time athlete, if I'm not competing through injury, there's not much money coming in.

N.M. To illustrate your point about the size of the Australian market compared to overseas, Nic Bideau was saying that more than 200 000 pairs of Nike Zoom Bob Kennedy racing spikes were sold in America and Europe while less than 200 pairs were sold in Australia.

C.M. Yes, that's a big difference.

N.M. Craig, thank you very much for your time and all the very best for this Olympic Year. And please, no more games of basketball!

C.M. Thanks, Neil. I'll try to leave the basketball to my brother.

Note: At the World Indoor Championships in Budapest, Craig Mottram broke his own Australian 3000 metre record in the heats (7:48.09) before finishing 10th (8:03.82) in the final, where the pack jogged through the first kilometre. In the World Cross - Country Championships in Brussels, Craig finished 9th in the 4 km. Short Course Race and 13th in the 12 km. Long Course Race, both times behind Ethiopian winner, Kenenisa Bekele.

At 6:00 pm. the 6th of May 2004, Craig won a mile race at famous Iffley Road track to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Sir Roger Bannister's first breaking of the four-minute mile. With Bannister ringing the bell used in his 1954 race to signify the last lap, Craig streaked the field with a 57.7 third lap to win easily in 3:56.54. Second man to run under four minutes and Victorian Governor, John Landy was also watching on. Then two days later, Craig blitzed a quality field in the Balmoral 5 km. Road Race in Scotland. Putting in a 2 minute 41 second kilometre surge mid-race, Craig won decisively, smashing his own Australian 5000 metre Road Record in running 13.21. Behind Craig was Kenyan, John Kibowen (twice World Cross-Country Short Course Champion) and Sergiy Lebid (Ukraine - four-times European Cross-Country Champion). The field also included Daniel Komen (World Indoor and Outdoor 3000 metre record holder) so Craig certainly collected some handy scalps.

ANOTHER PEAK INSIDE CRAIG MOTTRAM'S TRAINING DIARY

In Issue 13 (April 2002), Craig Mottram let us peak inside his training diary in the lead-up to his Australian 5000 metre Record run in Melbourne. This year, Craig has again opened his diary for us, revealing some of the Falls Creek training that would lay the foundation for a successful European season and the Athens Olympics.

Craig spent five weeks training at Falls Creek (1600 metres altitude), arriving on Boxing Day, 2003. At Falls Creek, the main session of the day is completed in the morning, with a recovery run along the aqueduct to Ropers Hut and back each afternoon.

Mon. am. 60 mins. easy run. (Langfords Gap)
5 / 1 pm. 30 mins. easy run. (Ropers Hut)
Circuits in gym.

Tues. am. Fartlek. (Langfords Gap)
6 / 1 25 mins. warm-up.
8 x 3 mins. 'on' with 90 secs. 'off'.
Ran just over 1000 metres in each rep.
20 mins. cool-down.
pm. 30 mins. easy run. (Ropers Hut)

Wed. am. 70 mins. steady run (Fitzzy's Hut)
7 / 1 pm. 30 mins. easy run plus drills / strides.
(Ropers Hut)
Circuits in gym.

Thur. am. Quarters (Langfords West)
8 / 1 20 minutes warm-up
8 x 400 metres with 200 metre float. 15.01
"Ran in snow. It was #@&%ing cold!"
15 minutes cool-down.
pm. Off - travel to Adelaide for Erin Hewitt's wedding.

Fri. 9 / 1	am. pm.	60 mins. steady run. (Water Tower) 30 mins. easy run. (Ropers Hut) Circuits.
Sat. 10 / 1	am. pm.	Track session in Adelaide. 10 laps @ 71 - 72 seconds per lap. 1 lap easy jog. 10 mins. of 15 secs. 'on' / 15 secs. 'off' up and down the straight. 1 lap easy jog. 10 laps @ 70 seconds per lap. 30 mins. easy jog. Erin's Wedding (Craig was the M.C.)
Sun. 11 / 1	am. pm.	1 hour 35 min. run over flat terrain. Travel back to Falls Creek.
Mon. 12 / 1	am. pm.	68 mins. easy run. (Langfords Gap) 30 mins. easy run. (Ropers Hut) Circuits in gym.
Tues. 13 / 1	am. pm.	Fartlek. (Langfords Gap) 25 mins. warm-up. 8 x 1000 metres 'on' with 60 secs. 'off'. Ran 2:50 - 2:56 for each kilometre 20 mins. cool-down. 30 mins. easy run. (Ropers Hut)
Wed. 14 / 1	am. pm.	70 mins. steady run. (Fitzy's Hut) 30 mins. easy run plus drills / strides. (Ropers Hut / Baby Aqueduct) Circuits in gym.
Thur. 15 / 1	am. pm.	Quarters (Langfords West) 20 minutes warm-up. 8 x 400 metres with 200 metre float. 14.41 3 mins. recovery. 15 minute surge (Heart Rate 180 b.p.m.) 15 minutes cool-down. 30 mins. easy run.
Fri. 16 / 1	am. pm.	60 mins. easy run. (Water Tower) 30 mins. easy run. (Ropers Hut) Circuits in gym.
Sat. 17 / 1	am. pm.	20 minutes warm-up 12 x 1 min. Hill Reps. (jog down recovery) 20 minutes cool-down. 30 mins easy run. (Ropers Hut)
Sun. 18 / 1	am. pm.	1 hour 45 min. easy run. Rest