

# STEVE MONEGHETTI. STILL RUNNING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

January 2003

For close to twenty years, Steve Moneghetti has been the face of Australian distance running. Olympic Games, World Athletic Championships, Commonwealth Games, World Cross - Countries, 'big city' races, the Zatopeks, Australian Championships, fun runs ..... the list of achievements goes on and on. So, now that Ballarat's "Marathon Man" has 'retired', just what has he been up to? Well, I caught up with "Mona" for a bit of a chat (hold the coffee!) about his wonderful career and his plans for the future.

**N.M. Steve, you have retired. Why are you up at Falls Creek with Tanya and the kids?**

S.M. It's more of a social thing now and just a chance to catch up with a lot of friends we would not normally see at one time so it gives us a chance to chat to people like Chris and Carmel Wardlaw, who have become really good family friends, in a relaxed setting where we're not talking business, not talking running, just basically chewing the fat. However, I am still doing a little running on the side so I can fit that in as well.

**N.M. You have been up here quite a few times. I understand that the first time you came to Falls Creek you didn't really like the place?**

S.M. No, I hated it. I love the group training effect and most of my running has been done in a slow, non-competitive environment. I also like to run in a variety of places, especially forests where you can't see more than a hundred metres ahead at any one time so that you have a hill or a bend to break up the tracks. However, up here it's completely different. The first time I came to Falls Creek was 1987 and I was going pretty well. I had finished fourth in the marathon at the World Championships in Rome and I was on the rise and was probably looked upon as the new 'Deek'. The things I remember about my first stay at Falls Creek were the open plains, the wind, the cold and the competitive nature of the running - everyone would try to flog each other all the time. All of this went against my running beliefs. So basically, it scared me off for a time and I didn't come back for a few years. But it does eventually grow on you and when I did come back I was the top of the tree so it was less competitive for me and I was able to complete my own sessions from the front at my pace and people were happy to keep up, if they could. After a time you also get to know the tracks, which are all time-tested, and you come to realize the benefits of training up here. Some of my best ever performances were off Falls Creek training and if you said to me that I had a month to run the best race of my life, I would come up here for three weeks. The very first thing I would do is drive up here. As far as I'm concerned, it's tried and tested for improving your running knowledge and physical performance.

**N.M. You certainly had a few great performances in Japan off a stint at Falls Creek.**

S.M. Yes, I broke the World Record for the Half Marathon in 1992 (Steve ran 60.27) and won the Tokyo Marathon (2:08.55) after training at Falls Creek. People may not realize it but I was under a bit of pressure to qualify for the 2000 Olympics. I had a bad achilles for the '98' Commonwealth Games, then in Seville was still trying to get back from injury and was not able to run a marathon qualifying time there - I actually ran OK there considering the circumstances but still only ran 2:18 something. Anyway, I had to run a time under 2:14 to qualify for the Sydney Olympics so I came up here for three or four weeks to prepare, then went to Tokyo. I was up with the leaders with five or six kilometres to go, then died and ran 2:10.00. So it was an unbelievable run considering the problems I had in the lead-up - one of my best ever performances. I could not believe that I could run 2:10 off the preparation I had. So when I needed a boost, I came to Falls Creek and it worked superbly.

**N.M. Was Deek still the King when you first came to Falls Creek?**

S.M. Yeah, Deek was still the 'King of the Roads'. I remember a few runs I had with Deek where he flogged me over Marm's Point. One other run I remember fondly involved Deek and Damien Cook. Chris Wardlaw claims that Damien is his greatest coaching achievement because he took him from being a 'hack' four hour marathoner to running two hours twenty. Anyway, Damien was running Marm's Point with us as part of the Sunday long run just before the 1992 Olympics. We were by ourselves because most people stop at Langford's Gap (21 km.) or run straight onto Falls Creek (28 km.) The marathoners usually add the Marm's Point detour to extend the run to 35 kilometres. On this particular day Damien was running really well and was hanging with us up over Marm's Point. Then Deek took off and I was in the middle and Cookey was at the back. After a while I was able to reel Deek in a bit just before we stopped for a drink at the Spion Kopje turn off. Then we regrouped for the run along the unsealed road back to the Falls Creek Village. And we were absolutely hooting along the road - it was like the Olympic Marathon Trial. It took Deek and myself a long time to drop Cookey but he claimed he should have been given the unfilled third marathon spot for the Olympics on that performance alone!

I think Deek and myself are known as the two great Australian marathoners of this generation and these early Falls Creek battles were a case of the young up and coming kid versus the grand old man. This environment was also really good because he was so strong and powerful and I was so tough and rhythmic

that it was like the 'Clash of the Titans'. We're great friends but we had some fierce battles and Falls Creek was a great breeding ground for me to learn from the master.

**N.M. Do you have a favourite Falls Creek session or course?**

S.M. Ummmm ..... I don't really like any of them .....

**N.M. What about Spion Kopje?**

S.M. No! I hate Spion! Seriously, that would be my worst course.

**N.M. Especially when it was like yesterday with the first half into a howling head wind?**

S.M. Yeah, that was tough. I don't want to drop names but I ran it one year with Peter O'Donoghue (Ed. a top class New Zealand 1500 metre runner who won a bronze medal for New Zealand at the 1990 Auckland Commonwealth Games. Peter eventually became an Australian citizen and competed for Australia over 5000 metres at the 1994 Victoria Commonwealth Games) and the wind on the way out was so strong we were basically standing still as we tried to run out to the turn-around. It took us about an hour to make it out to the trig point (in good conditions top class distance runners usually take about 47 - 50 minutes!) Anyway, we absolutely flew back - it was like having a sail on our backs. So yeah, we have had some tough days up here. I also remember another really tough run with Pat Scammell. No one else was on the mountain because they'd all gone home and it was snowing so badly that Pat said, "we just can't go out in this!" However, I was committed to my training so I said, "come on mate, let's just go out to Langford's and run along the aqueduct", which is pretty well protected from the harsh weather. But in my mind we were always going to run Fitzy's Hut even though it was right out in the worst of the weather. Anyway, we made it to the end of the aqueduct and I said to Pat, "come on mate - it's not that bad. Let's do Fitzy's!" And oh!!! It was so cold! We eventually made it across the snow plains to where the Fitzy's Hut track runs into the Spion Kopje track and we had to have a toilet stop. I remember Pat saying, "I can't feel 'it' mate! And I can't feel my fingers either!" So we tried running with our fingers under our arm pits or between our legs to try to create some warmth. At one stage the snow and wind was blizzard like and was hitting our eyes so hard we couldn't see so we were virtually running blind with our hands up protecting our faces. Eventually we made it back to the cars and we looked like drowned rats. It was a pretty slow run but at least we got it done. I think the run that comes to mind when I say Falls Creek is the run up 'The Staircase' to the top of Mount Bogong. It's the only run I have done that is harder than a marathon. There is nothing that I have ever done that is harder than running up that Staircase. The run also fits my work ethic in that it's tough and it's not for the talented and it's not for pretenders, it's just for the hard working, mentally tough athlete. It really tests what you're made of mentally as well as physically. Your legs are screaming after five minutes and you've got to keep going for an hour! I'm not really sure how we manage to do it so I just find it a remarkable run and I guess it's my signature run when I think of Falls Creek.

**N.M. How many times have you run 'The Staircase'?**

S.M. Geeh .... A few times. I remember that I did it twice in two weeks a few years back. One other time I had a speaking engagement in Barham along the Murray River and I thought I'd run Bogong on the way home. So we ran straight up 'The Staircase' then down the Eskdale Spur. Anyway, I got half way down the Eskdale Spur and twisted my ankle really badly. I sort of hobbled to the finish and put my foot in the creek and thought I'd be OK. Then I jumped in the car and picked up some ice on the way but my ankle was really starting to blow up and throb by now. Eventually, we arrived at the speaking engagement and I couldn't get out of the car. One of the ladies organizing the night had to go to the local hospital to grab some crutches for me so I remember doing the speaking engagement on crutches!

**N.M. I hear that you have another 'epic' run planned while you're at Falls Creek.**

S.M. Yes. Troopy thought it up. We're planning to run from the Mount Beauty Post Office up to Falls Creek, then onto the top of Mount McKay. At first we were 'only' going to run from Mount Beauty to Falls Creek (31 km. of mostly up hill running!) but then Garry Henry said, "why don't you run from mountain to mountain so that's how the extra distance was added. Which ever way we go it will be tough but great preparation for Troopy's Lake Biwa marathon in early March. I have done another similar stupid run up here - I don't know why 'Rab' (Chris Wardlaw) let me do it actually but I ran Spion Kopje from the Village and instead of turning around at the trig point, I ran over the top and down the track to near Lake Guy, then up the sealed road back to Falls Creek. The section up the road was only about seven or eight kilometres but it was absolutely murderous so I'm not under-estimating how the full run up the mountain from Mount Beauty will be. But we'll give it a go - you're not really sure what it will be like until we've done it.

**N.M. According to Chris Wardlaw, Ron Clarke ran from Mount Beauty to Falls Creek in 1965, along the then unsealed road. Also, there has always been the story that Gerard Barrett ran from Mount Beauty to Falls Creek when he was in marathon mode - however, a few of the Falls Creek experts are not so sure of that.**

S.M. Yes - that was one of the reasons we decided to add on the extra distance to Mount McKay. When we heard that Clarke had completed Mount Beauty to Falls Creek, we had to add something extra that someone else had not done.

(Ed. In the early hours of Sunday 5th January 2003, Steve Moneghetti and Lee Troop set out from the Mount Beauty Post Office on their 'epic' run to the summit of Mount McKay. With drink bottles scattered along the road side for sustenance, Australia's champion "Marathon Men" powered up the road, eventually reaching the Falls Creek Village in 2 hours 14 minutes (Troopy) with Mona and minute behind and beginning to struggle. However, a quick refuel on flat Coke / Staminade at the Falls Creek Village and a rejuvenated Mona was able to keep Troopy in sight over the rough, blue metal rise to the top of Mount McKay. Two hours and forty three minutes after leaving Mount Beauty, Lee Troop crested Mount McKay to complete his 'epic' run. One minute later, Mona joined his great mate. A new run had been added to the list of Falls Creek 'specials'. Amazingly, despite running up-hill for most of the journey, Troopy and Mona were able to average 4.17 kilometre pace for the 38 kilometres! **Warning: Do not try this at home as these men are highly trained professionals** (and slightly mad!)

**N.M. Now that you have 'retired', what is your current training programme?**

S.M. It varies a bit. After the Olympics I had a real break and did very little but since early 2001 up to now I would have had only one week under a hundred kilometres. And that was during the Commonwealth Games in Manchester when I was so busy that I could hardly fit in a ten kilometre run a day and it was really annoying me - I just hated not being able to run! But if you asked me what I've averaged for the last 18 months I would probably say 135 kilometres / week. But there's no doubt that leading into the Zatopek, when I got a bit more serious about having a crack at the World 40 and over record, that I put in a couple of weeks of 160 kilometres just to toughen up my mind a little to get me physically and mentally prepared for the hard, tough racing that I have not been doing. Actually, I didn't intend to stay in this good a shape and initially I was only doing my fartleks at a pretty casual pace because that's all the Ballarat guys were doing at the time. Then Shane Nankervis got over an injury and went to another level, Paul Fenn moved to Ballarat and Jay Bourke really improved so having those guys around gave me a new lease on life so I jumped in and began flying again. We were running 18 minute fartleks for a lap of the lake again. About six months ago, Troopy came back to Ballarat one Tuesday to train with Paul and myself and I ran 17.37 - the fastest I have ever done is 17.19! I reckon I've only ever run under 17.30 about five times in my life! So people were saying, "you're running as well as you ever have!" Well, I'm not quite - occasionally I have a sniff of a session where I feel I'm almost back to my best but my overall training level has dropped a level. Today doing 'quarters' at Langfords was a perfect example. I no longer have what I call the 'bury gear' where I can run along with people, then pull away from them and hold that advantage, then go to another gear where I would 'smash 'em up!' However, now I'm not able to 'smash people up' anymore. I'm obviously still going pretty well but I'm nowhere near the shape I was in five or six years ago.

**N.M. Are you still doing all the quality sessions?**

S.M. Yeah, although I don't do the 'quarters' that often. On Thursday night I run down to the track with the guys and we sit around saying, "what are you doing?" and eventually we decide on a session. The most common Thursday session we do would be 8 x 200 metres with a 200 jog between. Sometimes we run the last one in about 28 seconds but they're normally about 30 seconds. There's usually about ten guys and gals doing the session so the 200 metre times vary from 27 seconds up to maybe 37 seconds. However, just before the Zatopek I began doing the 'quarters' again to prepare for a hard 10 000 metres on the track. I reckon that since the Olympics I've only done the 'quarters' about seven or eight times.

**N.M. Are you the same weight as when you were running seriously?**

S.M. Ahhh .... I was always about 59 - 60 kgs. Now I'm struggling to stay at 60 - I've really got to go out and do a hard two hour run to get my weight back to 60. I suppose I'm more 61 - 62 kgs. now. So there's not much change but enough to make a difference against the top runners.

**N.M. Are you making a conscious effort to watch what you eat?**

S.M. Yeah, for sure but not from a running point of view but rather from a health and life-style point of view. Many people will find this quite strange but when I was running seriously I had no respect for my diet at all - absolutely none at all! I would eat crap, drink coffee, eat chocolate, junk food - not a great amount of healthy food at all, in fact, for a long distance runner, I didn't eat a huge quantity of food, just whatever I felt like. Whereas now that I'm not running as much, I've gone the other way and become more conscious of my health because I would not be burning off the 'crappy' food that I used to eat. Anyway, I'm trying to improve on my eating.

(Then turning to wife, Tanya, who has just joined us.)

I think Tanya would be able to vouch for whether I've improved my diet since I've stopped running .....

Tanya: "No, seems no different to me!"

Steve: "Well, there you go - anyway, I'm certainly drinking less coffee."

**N.M. If you were to run a marathon in the next few months, what do you think you could run?**

S.M. Ahhhh ..... I reckon about 2.11 - 2.12. It's easy to say that because I don't have to do it. However, I did a 32 kilometre race at King Island last March and it's uphill for the first few kilometres and I was just running along at 3.15 - 3.20 pace. Then I got to an undulating road and I felt great so I took off. In the end I almost broke the Commonwealth 30 kilometre record along the way. I worked it out that I was on 2:08.20 marathon pace if I had kept going for another 10 kilometres, which is easier said than done.

However, I did feel really good at the finish. Also, you can get a guide from my Zatopek run. I know in 1986 I ran 28:25.6 to qualify for the Commonwealth Games and was able to run 2:11.18 so I think that's pretty comparable - if anything I should be much stronger now than in '86'.

(Ed. Geelong's Darren Riviere ran the King Island Race and finished an excellent third fastest behind Steve Moneghetti and Michael McIntyre.)

**N.M. Talking of the Zatopek - did you think you had a chance of breaking the World Record for 40 + athletes?**

S.M. I was pretty conscious of the record the whole way. I knew at about three kilometres to go that I was getting tired and that I was going to have a lot of trouble picking up the pace. I know myself too well and with 3000 metres to go I knew I had to run 69 second laps, then when it was four laps out it was down to 68 second laps and with two laps to go it was 66's, then finally I had to run a 64 second last lap. So in the last third of the race I was always just off the required pace. I reckon it was a bit ambitious and contemptuous to think that a retired athlete could go from basically just jogging 130 - 140 kilometres a week, then suddenly, with a month's worth of more serious training that I was going to break the World Record for a 40 plus athlete. In the end I almost got away with it but it's disrespectful to those 40 year old athletes who are still training hard because if I was full time, training hard and on the world circuit, there's no doubt in my mind that I could run under 28.30. In fact, I reckon I could run 28.10 if I was in full training. In the end I didn't deserve to get the record but I was bitterly disappointed because when I set myself a goal, I'm normally pretty good at achieving it.

**N.M. Perhaps a couple of quick laps in the middle came back to bite you on the bum? In fact, it's been mentioned that with the adrenaline pumping and the crowd roaring for you, that you cranked out a 63 second lap?**

S.M. I don't think it was quite that fast although I was feeling pretty good. Maybe there were a few 64's or 65's - I don't think I could run a 63 second lap! Actually, I think I ran a pretty sensible race because I reckon if I went with the front pack I might have got tired a bit earlier. Whereas, running where I was enabled me to work through some of the front runners. I was pretty conscious of Shane Nankervis who was starting to slow down to 69 / 70 second pace and I was feeling good so I thought well, now's the time to go. I just wish I was able to pick up Dean Cavuoto a bit earlier which would have allowed me to run on a bit more over the last few laps.

(Ed. Steve finished third in the Zatopek in 28:33.68, missing Finland's Martti Vainio's World Record for 40 + runners by just 3 seconds. Interestingly, Vainio was stripped of the silver medal for the 10 000 metres at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics after failing a drug test!)

**N.M. Why do you think you've have been relatively injury free over your career?**

S.M. That's a good question. Since the Olympics I haven't had any physio and only have a massage once a fortnight. So since Sydney I've had roughly 50 massages and no physio and the body feels pretty good. I guess you'd have to say that I'm pretty sound biomechanically, I alternate my training shoes - I never run in the same pair of training shoes twice in a row, I run on a mixture of surfaces, which I think is really important, I know my body extremely well so I can see a niggle coming on and then just jog around for a few days and back off in my sessions and just basically show a bit of common-sense. I also think that I've got such a huge background that my body has become pretty resilient over the years. And there's no doubt that I under-train - over the years I have trained at a lower level than I've raced.

**N.M. Perhaps when you come up here and train at a higher level for 3 - 4 weeks it puts the icing on the cake as far as performance is concerned?**

S.M. Actually, it wears me out. If you look back at my diary you'd see that this is where I tend to get injured the most. Up here the terrain is harder but the intensity goes up as well. Up here I feel as though I'm running hard everyday.

Geeh, there's Tuesday fartlek, Wednesday's Spion Kopje, Thursday is 'quarters', Saturday is Fitzy's Hut and Sunday is two and a half hours through Pretty Valley where you roll home along the road back to the Village. Then Monday always has someone who wants to pick it up on the way back from Langfords and Friday's Tower run can also be a little willing on the way back. And if you're the 'King of the Pack' you're going to get worn out trying to keep up every day. So in many ways you can tempt fate running up here.

**N.M. There's also a theory that you had a few more niggles after Troopy moved to Ballarat because he was at a comparable level and the training intensity increased.**

S.M. Yes. That's probably true. I have a philosophy now that I pass onto athletes that I coach or advise that says, 'train with someone who's slower so that you can control the training' whereas, if you train with someone better, you're going to be racing all the time and you can become worn down. As far as Troopy coming to Ballarat, you can look at it two ways. Firstly, I reckon I ran better initially because my training intensity lifted due to Troopy being there. That's the time that I ran a P.B. over 5 km. in 1996 and won a World Championship bronze medal in 1997 and the Tokyo run in 2000 was also pretty good. Overall, my running improved but perhaps my longevity was reduced because I was pushing the barriers a bit more by training closer to the edge.

**N.M. Your coaches. You had Tony Benson early in your career and Chris Wardlaw after that. Your thoughts on both?**

S.M. I've got the great story about Tony and Rab. I've been one of the best runners in the world and it's no coincidence that I have had only two coaches - well, one coach really because Tony Benson was great during my formative years, but then he went to the Philippines and I missed his personal contact so that's why I went to Chris. Also, both of them spent time as the Head Coach of the Australian Track and Field Team and both were Olympians (Tony ran the 5000 metres in 1972 and Chris the 10 000 metres in 1976 and the Marathon in 1980) so I can't think of anyone who has had such well credentialed coaches. However, that only happened by accident as Tony was my English teacher at St. Patrick's College, Ballarat and I teamed up with Rab through a friend of a friend who moved to Ballarat. So both of them have been fantastic coaches and I've been blessed to work with them. Rab also knows that I'm never going to be coached by anyone other than Chris Wardlaw and that's the way I want it to be just out of respect for him. We've had a fantastic relationship over many years.

**N.M. What are the secrets to being a great distance runner? What have you learnt over the last 20 years at the top?**

S.M. Ummmm ..... Well, I reckon you've got to listen to people but don't get too complicated. Also, after you've listened to others, make an informed decision and give the training a chance to work. In other words, be patient and don't chop and change when results don't happen straight away. Distance running is not that complicated. The marathon is 42 kilometres, which is a very long way, but you don't have to run that fast. I've run 60 minutes for a half marathon, under 28 for ten kilometres and 13.25 for five kilometres but in a marathon I'm only running 15 minute five kilometre pace, 30 minute ten kilometre pace and 64 minutes for the half so it's not that fast compared to what I've run but I have the capacity to keep running for a long time which is where the patience and longevity are the key because you've just got to get a lot of basic training under you belt. You also need a capacity to have a long range vision. I'm very good at setting long-term goals and sticking to them as Tanya will tell you - I'm a very stubborn person, which can at times be a negative, but for a marathon runner, it can be a very good attribute.

**N.M. I mentioned to Chris Wardlaw last year that many world class marathon runners have Type B personalities in that they're very relaxed, low key and nothing seems to worry them. Do you agree?**

S.M. Yes, definitely. There's no doubt about that. To be a top marathoner you need to be balanced in your life and you need to be very efficient and relaxed because the marathon is a very patient, intellectual event. I wouldn't want to name people but there are certain characters who won't be good marathoners because they don't have the temperament for the event. One exception that I can think of was Lisa Ondieki who had a few peculiar habits that were not standard for marathon runners. In many ways she was very self-centered and egotistical, almost selfish. Now, I know that many people will say that to be a top marathon runner and to put in all the required training, you have to be a little selfish, but she was more self-centered than any top marathoner I've met.

**N.M. Your best performances? Which ones spring to mind?**

S.M. Definitely the World Championship in Athens where I won the bronze medal because it was on the world stage with all the best athletes competing. Also, to me personally, Athens is my best performance because the race started at Marathon, finished in the Pan Hellenic Stadium that was used for the first Modern Olympics in 1896 and it was just the environment with all its history and tradition that made the race special. It was also the first time that Australia had sent a four man team to the World Cup and I took the Australian Team out to the Marathon obelisk where I said to the guys, "OK, let's put our hands on the obelisk because we're the first team to represent Australia in such a special event and in fifty years time we'll all come back here and relive this moment." For all of us it was a pretty emotional moment and it was great for me when I was able to run so well on a very hot day a few days later. For the day of the marathon, Athens was stinking hot - 33 degrees with high humidity. Everyone said that I couldn't run in the heat and yet in the hottest conditions I have ever run in, I was able run extremely well and silence a few critics over me running in the heat and over my age because I was about to turn 36 and many people said I was past my best. So all in all, it was great to retrace Pheidippides' steps. We always say that sport and technology has come a long way over the years but on that particular day there wasn't much difference between me and Pheidippides - I was wearing shorts, a singlet and running shoes and he probably had shorts and leather sandals. And we were both trying to cover the same terrain as quickly as we could. That's what I love about the marathon - it's pretty straight forward in that you get out of it what you put in.

**N.M. Who were the other members of the Australian Team?**

S.M. Ah ..... Ray Boyd, Sean Quilty and Rod De Highden. It was a pretty special occasion so I hope they remember it although Rowdy (Rod De Highden) might not have such great memories of the race. We had decided that there was to be no Plan B for marathoners representing Australia - you finished no matter what or you took off the Australian singlet. That philosophy has almost become part of Australian distance running folk lore and if they write that on my epitaph, I'd be happy because when you're representing your country you do it to the best of your ability and even though you're tired and concerned about your own

personal result, you've got to put that secondary to finishing the race so that you can say you've served your country as best as you can. Anyway, Rowdy went into the marathon with a stress fracture in his foot that he thought would be OK. However, after only a few kilometres he was struggling but battled on to finish in about 3 hours 13 minutes. By the time he had crossed the line the Australian Team had left the building. But Rowdy did the Australian Team proud on that day and was able to come back at the Atlanta and Sydney Olympics and show that he was a good runner.

**N.M. I think Troopy was in a similar position to Rod at the Sydney Olympics. He has said that in years to come he couldn't bear to see D.N.F. next to his name in the Olympic results.**

S.M. Yeah ..... I would hope that's come from some of the influence I have had on his athletic development. Many people under-estimate how good a competitor Troopy is. He may have a few funny habits and be loud and brash on occasions but when the gun goes off, he's a tough, hard, fierce competitor. Sometimes the running community does not acknowledge that part of Troopy as much as it should.

**N.M. I reckon it's a myth that you have not been able to run in the heat. Apart from Barcelona, where your carbo-loading went a little hay-wire, and to a lesser extent the '91' Tokyo World Championships, you have run pretty well in the heat.**

S.M. Yes, I think you're right. '95' in Gothenburg, '96' in Atlanta, '97' in Athens, '98' in Kuala Lumpur were all hot races. In fact, the 10 km. at Kuala Lumpur would have to be one of my better races because it was extremely hot and humid and I was coming off a pretty bad injury and just to be up there at the finish was a huge shock. I felt really bad for Troopy that day - it was unfortunate that he happened to be in the same race as me when I got it right.

**N.M. Chris Wardlaw mentioned the 10 000 metres bronze medal at the Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games as one of your better performances.**

S.M. Yeah ..... I kept it pretty quiet in the lead-up to the race but I had a few injury problems leading into the Commonwealth Games. In fact, at one stage my achilles was so bad that I used three heel lifts in my running shoes to take the pressure off my sore achilles causing my heel to almost poke out of the shoe. I also had alterations made to my racing flats to add extra height to the heel. If you watch the video of me crossing the line you can see how excited I was to get that medal even though it was a bronze and arguably my worst return from four Commonwealth Games. (Ed. Steve won Gold, Silver and Bronze medals in the marathon at three previous Commonwealth Games) And yet, when I talk to school groups and take the medals with me, that bronze is probably the medal I'm most proud of. It's actually the heaviest and one of my better looking medals - it's got the tall towers in Kuala Lumpur on it. Leading up to that race I hadn't been able to beat Troopy for about 10 months but when it counted I was able to get over him.

**N.M. How's the achilles now?**

S.M. Pretty good although I still use a heel lift in my running shoes. Also, if I was to play basketball or any game that required jumping off the toes, I would pull up sore.

**N.M. What about your fourth placing at the 1989 World Cross-Country in Stavanger? How do you rate that performance?**

S.M. I wouldn't have put that in my top four or five performances although other people rate it pretty highly. I always know I'm a good cross-country runner and I feel like I cheated a little bit that day because it was so muddy that I was always going to finish right up there. Almost no one could run with me in that mud. It was almost as if they'd made the course to suit me. The thing that angered me so much about Stavanger at the time was that I just missed a medal and no Australian has ever won a medal at the World Cross-Country. There was a young Kenyan (Wilfred Kirochi) just ahead of me and I reckon that I only needed another 20 metres and I would have out-kicked him. As it turned out, in the next six months he ran 3.35 for 1500 metres and won a medal at World Championship level so really there was little chance of me out-kicking him. I actually reckon that my best cross-country run was my sixth placing in Boston in 1992. That year it was snowing but it wasn't muddy. I was third with about a kilometre to go but I was in a pack with guys who'd run 3.34 for 1500 metres and 13.10 for 5 kilometres (Mutwol, Bayissa, Shah and Chelimo) so it was always going to be hard to outkick that group.

**N.M. You also have a soft spot for Ballarat's own "Lap of the Lake"?**

S.M. Yeah. It's a pretty big event for athletes in Ballarat because everyone has a go at it. In 1992 I ran 16.10 and that's the only race I've ever run in my life where I can honestly say, "that's the best I can possibly do - file closed!" If Troopy or Buster runs it in the future and beats my record I won't be disappointed because I know that I can not possibly run faster than 16.10. On that day it was dry and still and some people on bikes were struggling to keep up with me - I was absolutely flying! The distance around the lake is 5911 metres and I worked out that it was the equivalent of running about 13.32 for 5 kilometres.

**N.M. Is that the year that you got your Dad to sweep the leaves off the course to save a few milliseconds?**

S.M. No, that was another year. That's where legend has overtaken fact. The year he swept the course was also an interesting story. That year I was trying to break Tony Benson's record of 16.59 - he was the only guy who had ever run under 17 minutes, and there were three watches recording the time. Anyway, two of the watches had me at 16.58 and one person, who shall remain anonymous, but he was as blind as a bat,

had me at 17.01 so they had to take the slower time and I just missed the record. Obviously, I was able to smash the record quite a few times in the years to come.

**N.M. How did 'Mona Fartlek' originate?**

S.M. It was a bit of an accident over the phone, actually. When Rab started coaching me in 1984 I rang him to ask what I should be doing on a Tuesday night. Rab said, "just do a bit of fartlek" and that was going to be the end of the conversation because Rab can be a little loose in his directions. However, I'm fairly meticulous in my planning so I kept pressing him as to what he meant. Eventually he said, "just do 20 minutes of fartlek". "Yes," I said, "but should they be long reps or short reps?" "Oh yeah," he replied, "do some minutes and ninety seconds and thirties, fifteens, whatever. Just as long as it's 20 minutes."

So I sat down and worked out how I could get 20 minutes worth of running using 90 seconds, minutes, 30 seconds and fifteen seconds. After a while I came up with 2 x 90 seconds, 4 x 60 seconds, 4 x 30 seconds and 4 x 15 seconds with equal time recovery between. Rab has a slightly different memory of how it came about - he reckons he told me exactly what to do! I don't think it's a particularly fantastic session but it does the job for me and I'm highly honoured that people know the session as "Mona Fartlek". I haven't been to Falls Creek for a couple of years and to run out to Langfords on Tuesday and to see 50 people changing their shoes ready to complete your session was great when you're at my stage in a career. It's as though I've left a small legacy. Just to show you how much your running can progress over the years, the first time I did Mona Fartlek I finished about 30 seconds short of a completed lap of the lake in the 20 minutes. On that night I said, "I reckon one day I'll be able to complete a whole lap in the 20 minutes of fartlek". Well, within a few years I was running under 18 minutes for a lap of fartlek.

**N.M. Douglas Wakihuri - he was one of your great rivals. Have you seen him recently?**

S.M. No, I haven't seen him for a while. Nick Bideau organized him to send an e-mail for my testimonial but no, we haven't seen each other lately. However, even though we haven't been in touch and we didn't spend a lot of time together, we're great mates. I think I probably admired him more than he admired me because he had a dominance over me in the early encounters. Then I started to progress on the world scene and he started to have a few injuries and setbacks and he probably started to envy my running. I remember that I went to Africa in 1991 for World Vision and we'd only been in the hotel for a couple of hours when Douglas walked in. Apparently he'd read that I was in the area so he made a special trip to catch up with me. It was fantastic to see him and it goes to show that you don't have to spend years and years together to develop a special bond.

**N.M. What were your initial thoughts when Troopy first moved to Ballarat?**

S.M. I always thought he was really talented. Even from the first fartlek session, I could also see that he was tough. However, I thought he was a bit impetuous and a young bloke who assumed he was going to be the next champion but would disappear after six months like some others had done. But he grew to be a great training partner and more importantly, he's my best mate. I still think he's misunderstood although I don't tell people that anymore - if they see him differently, so be it but to me he's a rock solid mate who I've been able to have some input into making him one of Australia's best distance runners. I think if he hadn't come to Ballarat, if he hadn't had some of my input, it would not have happened. I don't take all the credit because he's certainly got talent but there are many people with talent who don't make the grade. I've seen a fantastic transition in Troopy and it gives me great faith that if people have dreams and apply themselves, they can achieve great things. I would have laughed at a few of the things he said when he first arrived in Ballarat yet he's realized those aspirations and more.

**N.M. He has certainly shown a lot of guts to keep bouncing back over the last few years. He must have been pretty close to 'pulling the pin' a few times?**

S.M. Yeah ..... Actually, I didn't know that. Everybody assumed that I knew what was going on but I just thought he was in Geelong, just training away and basically battling with motivation. I didn't really know that he'd got so desperate and down. He did tell me a couple of times that he was thinking of chucking it in but I just thought he was kidding and dramatizing things a little. It was only after he came back to Ballarat a little more regularly to train that I started to see how bad he'd been but by then he was on the way back. As a mate I was disappointed that I wasn't able to help him through his down times a little better but I think he's the sort of personality that needed to deal with it in his own way.

**N.M. The Sydney Olympics - a great way to bow out?**

S.M. Yeah .... it was just fantastic and I couldn't have written the plot any better. I realized that I was starting to struggle physically to keep flogging my body in training and racing and the expectation of the Australian public was weighing pretty heavy - everyone just expected that I was going to keep finishing top ten in international marathons which is not that easy to do after fifteen years. So, Sydney gave me the chance to focus on one race and then it would be over. Obviously, finishing tenth was pretty special even though I didn't know I was tenth until I finished but nothing will take away the memory of running down the tunnel into the Olympic Stadium with 120 000 people screaming out. In fact, I was told that I got a louder cheer than the winner, which is pretty amazing. At my testimonial I said that as I crossed the finish line of the

Sydney Olympic Marathon, fifteen years of battle between myself and the Marathon Gods had ceased when we shook hands and called it a draw. For me that was a pretty good way to finish.

**N.M. "Steve Moneghetti, over and out." Did you plan that or was it off the top of your head?**

S.M. Seriously, I didn't plan it. I thought I was going to say something but "Ballarat, Victoria, Australia - Steve Moneghetti, over and out", was not planned. I had a few other things I was going to say but there was a bit of pressure in the interview to wind things up and go back to Bruce McAvaney in the studio so I thought I'd better say something short and sweet and to the point, so that's what came out. Actually, I shortened what could have been a five minute monologue (because as you can tell from the length of this interview - I don't mind a chat) into a few words. I'll never forget driving back down the coast from the Sydney Olympics with my family and everywhere we stopped the marathon and my brief interview were mentioned. In a strange sort of way my career, in an event that takes so long, was summed up in a few words.

**N.M. What do you think when you see Khalid Khannouchi running 2 hours 5 minutes and 38 seconds for the marathon?**

S.M. Ummmm ..... it seems like another event when they run that quick. I'm sure if you asked Rab or Deek or Derek Clayton they would probably say the same thing. When I was running 2.08 it was like running the 2.05 of today. In many ways times are irrelevant because it's the competition that counts. If you said to the public, we'll put a race on with Khalid Khannouchi, Derek Clayton, Steve Jones and Steve Moneghetti competing, who's going to win? The public would probably answer Steve Moneghetti and yet I would probably finish third or fourth because the others were more dominant in their era. It's a bit like comparing Kieren Perkins with Grant Hackett in swimming. Hackett has swum a lot faster over 1500 metres but I would argue that Kieren Perkins was the more dominant swimmer in his era. You can only be judged on the era in which you have competed. In many ways I feel a bit sorry for some of the present day marathoners because many don't run the championships where it's all about racing rather than just fast times. In our day we'd all turn up and compete and we'd get to the end of the race, shake hands and then prepare for our next meeting six months down the track in another part of the world whereas today Khannouchi is number one at Chicago or London but doesn't race the Championships where Abera is the dominant marathoner.

**N.M. Which athletes do you really look up to?**

S.M. That's a hard question .....Ummmm ..... No one in this era because I'm a bit too close to the action. Even when I was growing up I was in a cricketing, basketball family so I tended to look up to those sort of sports people. I see plenty of good role models and would like to think that the sport is in pretty good hands but there's no one that I would say, "I hope my son or daughters grows up like them."

**N.M. Work wise, what are you doing?**

S.M. I have a few things going with a couple of sponsors. Obviously, I've had a fantastic relationship with Nike since 1986. I'm probably in Melbourne a couple of days a week. I'm also busy as Chairman of the Board of the V.I.S. and I'm involved with another couple of Government contracts. I do my own management and have a couple of companies that I do all the book work for at home so I'm probably in the office a few days a week from ten in the morning to three in the afternoon. Then there's two days a week in Melbourne or at speaking engagements around the country, one day community service in Ballarat and the rest of the time I'm doing work for sponsors, completing bookwork, answering e-mails and that sort of thing so I don't have any trouble filling in my days.

**N.M. Is there any desire to go back teaching?**

S.M. I wouldn't mind but I find I'm locked into contracts up until 2005 / 2006 and the Melbourne Commonwealth Games. After that I'll probably look around for a 'proper job' but friends keep telling me, "don't do it - proper jobs are over-rated!" At the moment I do really love my freedom and the time I get to spend with my family. Imagine if Troopy rang up and said, "I'm coming to Ballarat, do you want to have lunch?" and I had to say, "Sorry mate, I've got a real job!" That would be really difficult so I'd find it pretty tough to work for someone else. Also, any job would have to be in Ballarat.

**N.M. What has Ballarat got to offer?**

S.M. I just like the environment. I can walk down the street in Ballarat and everyone knows who I am but they don't make a big deal of it so they respect me for who I am. Also, it's an hour from the hustle and bustle of Melbourne so that's great. I reckon that the quality of life in Ballarat is unbelievable compared to some other areas. It's got great schools, a university, great running and sporting facilities, clean air. If you were to write down all the things that people desire for a great place to live, crikey, Ballarat would have most of them covered. However, let's face it, the weather would not be one of them.

**N.M. What will Steve Moneghetti be doing in ten years time? Perhaps aiming for the World Record for the 50 + 10 000 metres?**

S.M. Hell no! It's been a bit tough on Troopy that I'm still running so well because I've got such a huge base behind me from years and years of running up to 200 kilometres a week. However, I'm gradually withdrawing some of that base so my abilities are slowly decreasing even though I reckon I can still run under 30 minutes for 10 kilometres for a few more years. I reckon in ten years time we'll still be in Ballarat,

one daughter will be at university, the other two kids will be at secondary school and I'll probably be riding the bike, maybe coaching a group of up and coming athletes and hopefully still involved in the sport to some degree.

**N.M. Will you still be running for Ballarat YCW?**

S.M. Yes, still running for Ballarat YCW. That's a little like what I said about Rab always being my coach - YCW will always be my club. I just like that consistency and loyalty. I said to Chris yesterday that you can change coaches once, you can change coaches twice but after that you're on a downward spiral. To me it's like people who have been married many times - after a while you've got to think that it's probably not the partner who's at fault - it could be you! Maybe I'm just a creature of habit?

If I wanted to I could live just about anywhere and do anything I wanted but in the end, whether you're in St Moritz or Ballarat, you've got to be happy. My family, my life-style, my quality of life is outstanding so why would I want to change a thing?

**N.M. Steve, thank you very much for your time. Enjoy your last few days at Falls Creek and all the very best for the up-coming year.**

S.M. Thanks, Neil. My pleasure.

**Note:** Steve Moneghetti lined up for the Lake Biwa Marathon in March where he acted as a pace-maker. Moneghetti, who will turn 41 later this year, piloted the lead pack (including great mate, Lee Troop) through 25 kilometres in 1:15.31 and 30 kilometres in 1:30.31, a 2:07 marathon split! The World's Best Masters performance in a 25 km. race is 1:16.49 by Mexico's, Martin Mondragon. His job completed at 30 kilometres, an understandably tired, Moneghetti cruised to the finish in 2:17.14 (30th place), maintaining his record of always finishing marathons. Lee Troop finished seventh in 2:09.49.

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## RUNNER PROFILE

### Steve Moneghetti

**Occupation** Sports Consultant

**Age** 40 **Date of Birth** 26 / 9 / 62

**Height** 176 cm. **Weight** 60 kg.

**Married / Single** Married to Tanya.

**Children:** Emma (8), Laura (6) and Matthew (2)

**Coach** Chris Wardlaw

#### Personal Bests

**400m.** 55.2 (in a session)

**800m.** 1.56 (in a session)

**1500m.** 3.52

**3000m.** 8.00

**5000m.** 13:25.6

**10 000m.** 27:47.6

**Half Marathon** 60.06

**Marathon** 2:08.16

**Favourite Food** Chocolate

**Food Eaten Before a Race** Tea & Toast (Vegemite)

**Favourite Drink** Chai Tea

**Favourite Movie** "Pulp Fiction"

**Favourite Book** "Is This It?" Sir Bob Geldof's Autobiography

**Favourite Music / Band** "Radiohead"

**Favourite TV Show** "The Bill"

**Favourite Night Spot** "my bed"

**Favourite Holiday Spot** Noosa.

#### A Normal Training Week (now!)

**Sun.** am. 2 hrs to 2 hrs 15 minutes. (27 - 30 km.) - usually 28 km.  
pm. 10 km. easy.

**Mon.** pm. 16 km. (70 mins.)

- Tues.** am. 8 km. easy.  
pm. 16 km. inc. 6 km. Fartlek.
- Wed.** pm. 20 km. (90 mins.)
- Thur.** am. 7 km. easy.  
pm. 13 km. made up of:  
4 km. warm - up,  
something on the track (ie. 8 x 200m. or 8 x 300m. or 8 x 400m.)  
4 km. warm - down
- Fri.** pm. 14 km. easy.
- Sat.** am. 16 km. made up of either kilometre reps or hills.  
pm. any amount to make up an even week.  
ie. 140 / 145 / 150 km. In this sample week,  
Steve would run 7 km. to make a week's total of  
155 km.

**Other Training / Recovery Sessions.**

Massage on Monday night every two weeks

**Favourite Training Session** Fartlek

**Favourite Races** Otway Classic in 1987 / 88

**Best Ever Performances** 3rd in World Championship Marathon in 1997. Commonwealth Games  
Marathon Bronze, Silver and Gold in 1986, 1990, 1994. World Record in Tokyo Half Marathon in 1992.  
Representing Australia at four Olympics (1988 - 2000)

**Favourite Place To Train** Forests of Ballarat or Noosa.

**Toughest Ever Training Session** 'The Staircase' up Mount Bogong.

**Most Admired Runner / Person** Sir Bob Geldof

**Advice to Other Runners**

"Always try to realise your full potential"

"Patience Pays"

"Steve Moneghetti is a Tortoise - The Hare Lost!"

"It is only training - Train To Race!"

"Enjoy your running or you will get sick or injured"

**Goals for the Future** "Life Balance"