

JUSTIN SCHOLZ – AUSTRALIAN CENTURION 61

Justin Scholz, born 8 Oct 1974, is married to Australia's top woman ultra distance runner Sharon Scholz and, usually accompanied by their daughter Jasmine, they are regulars on the elite ultra scene.

But it has not always been so. Up until their early thirties, they did not engage in any form of physical activity apart from club / social golf and their health and fitness declined. It was in late 2006 that they determined to change their lifestyle, reduce stress and improve fitness, health and well-being. In January 2007 they each took their first steps as 'runners'. Running was the chosen pursuit only because it appeared to be the easiest, cheapest and simplest way to burn calories quickly.

Such was the motivation to improve fitness that by the end of 2007 the Scholz's had lost a combined 30kg of weight and had completed their first marathon. Whilst their time of 3:38 was not world beating, it was, by today's standards, a reasonable achievement and quite remarkable considering it was just 10 months earlier that they first began to run.

In April of 2008 Sharon entered her first track ultra - the 24 hour event at Coburg (which she won with an inaugural distance of 184.17km) - and Justin was soon to follow her, completing the Tan Ultra 100km (Melbourne) later that year in 8th place with a time of 10:37:00.

Since then, they have both gone onto bigger things but let's concentrate on Justin for the purposes of this article.

2009 saw Justin compete at both our Coburg events, taking 4th in the 6H Run with 69.666km and 9th in the 24H run with 161.600km (100 miles at his first attempt). But the fact is that he was in third place for the first 16 hours and on target for 200km+ before he hit the wall and slowed. Later in the year, he improved his 24 Hour run distance to 182km when coming fifth in the Adelaide based Sri Chinmoy 24H event.

2010 should have been an even bigger year but the major results were disappointing - 6th in the Coburg 6H with 62.213km and 9th in the Coburg 24H with 119.200km. But he did bounce back in August when he finished 3rd in the Tan Ultra 100km with a big PB of 8:58:42.



Justin Scholz in running mode at Coburg - left (2009), right (2010)

He continued this good form into 2011, taking second in the Mansfield to Buller 50km mountain run with 4:43:15 and then doing another Coburg double - 7th in the 6H with 64.073km and 4th in the 24H with a huge PB of 203.378km. This was the big one - finally a 200km+ finish. For good measure, he improved his Tan Ultra 100km time to 8:37:37 in August of that year.

2012 saw him start the year with his usual Mansfield to Buller 50km run - 2nd with a PB 4:28:26 - and then a massive PB and 2nd once again in the Coburg 6H with 76.207km. Alas, you can't produce big ones every time and his Coburg 24H run was a bad one, being forced to retire with only 101.660km covered. Two months later, he bounced back in June with 3rd in the Sri Chimnoy Australian 24H Championship in Sydney, his distance of 190.660km his second best ever.

It was then that he approached me to discuss a possible Centurion walk. He had discussed this with me a few times previously but 2012 was to be the year and the Adelaide 24H in late July was to be the race. The rest is history - Justin powered through the required distance in 22:09:03 and then continued on for one further full lap to make sure, reaching a final distance of 163.900 km.



Justin powers to his centurion finish in Adelaide in July

His recovery was quick and in mid August, he was back in action at the annual Tan 100km run in Melbourne where he recorded a PB of 8:35:55 to take 2nd place.

The next thing on his plate is to accompany Sharon to Poland next month when she will participate in the IAU World 24 Hour Run Championships as part of the Australian team. So it is fair to say that he has probably not had time yet to really sit down and savour his walking achievement - but once he has his centurion badge number 61, I am sure that will be rectified!

Tim Erickson
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