

Emma Murray - Competitive Edge Interview Number 14

Competitive Edge Biographical Information

Your full name?

Emma Jane Murray

Date of Birth?

23/2/78

Place of Birth?

Hornsby, NSW

Sponsors?

None... my Mum?

Currently Living?

Canberra

Marital Status (name of your partner if you have one)?

I am not married but have a partner - Daniel Clark

Occupation (if you are unlucky enough to have one)?

Environmental Scientist working for Geoscience Australia

Height?

167cm

Weight?

52kg

Shoe Size?

8

Hair colour?

Blonde

Favourite shoe colour?

Red

Most loved pair of runners you have ever had (brand and style)?

Asics Gel DS Trainers. I use them for everything - training, racing, rogaining, and orienteering.

Favourite Race?

Not including competing at athletics carnivals and in cross- country races when I was a wee schoolgirl (10 years ago now), I have only been racing since moving to Canberra in 2000 and have not been in that many races - but since doing the 6 foot marathon for the first time a few weeks ago... the 6 foot marathon has got to be my favourite race so far. If you include rogaining as a "race", winning the 2003 NSW 24-

hour Champs with Adrian Sheppard was pretty fun. The course was set around Depot Beach on the beautiful south coast.

Your top 3 running experiences/performances?

1st female - 2005 6 foot marathon, first overall - 2003 24-hour NSW rogaining champs (with Adrian Sheppard), first womens team/5th overall 2004 Australian 24-hour rogaining champs (with Julie Quinn)... Can I have 4 top experiences and add doing the Blue Mountains 3 Peaks, solo in under 24-hours.

Personal Bests for your favourite distances?

This is hard as I don't run on the track. I enjoy trail running/mountain running/cross country – whatever you want to call it - and times for various distances depends on the terrain. I like the variety and the chance to run through scenic countryside but I am happy to try most things so might give some track/road races a go in the future. I guess running 1 hour and 59 min for the 26 km north Canberra Two Peaks (Mt Ainslie/Mt Majura) is a good yard stick? I was pretty pleased with that time and my 6-foot marathon time too (3 hours 44 min for 45 km and 1200m of climb), which was a complete surprise.

Introduction - Before we begin the barrage of questions for Emma, I would like to explain an achievement that Emma recently completed. It relates to "The Three Peaks" challenge in the Blue Mountains. It is a 90km trek over three of the highest peaks in the Blue Mountains that has over 5,500m of vertical climb. It starts in Katoomba and is approximately 30km to the start of the first massive peak, 30km over the three major peaks and then 30km back to Katoomba.

Emma recently joined three of our current male Australian 24 hour rogaining champions (David Baldwin, Adrian Sheppard and Trevor Jacobs) in attempt at completing this challenge in under 24 hours. Initially Emma thought she would be a few hours slower than 'the guys' and thus decided to start the challenge two hours before them, running from Katoomba into the darkness SOLO at 10pm Friday evening.

As it turned out, 'the guys' never did catch up to Emma and Emma was eventually the only one to complete this epic journey in under 24 hours, 'the guys' being over 100 minutes slower. Emma now joins a very small number of people who have completed this challenge in under 24 hours. Onward to the questions.....





Photos: Emma finishing the six foot track in a new record time of 3:44 (below) and Emma with fellow ACTrunners Trevor Jacobs (above on left) and Daniel Green (above on right).

Competitive Edge Interview

CE - The Competitive Edge would like to start with a few questions regarding your recent performances. In your first attempt at the six foot track marathon (45km trail race with over 1200m of vertical climb) you finished 8th outright and broke the women's record by over 25 minutes. Talk us through your race, how did you feel at the 16km, 26km, 38km and the finish? How did it feel to finish so high up in a race with over 650km? How did it feel to be so far under the old record?

EM - I felt pretty good and comfy the whole race. I especially enjoyed the run on the single track down to the Coxs River. The track is like a rollercoaster and its fun dodging around boulders and leaping down the short drops. I took the uphill steady and tried to keep a good fast speed on the downhills. The encouragement from spectators and the aid stations was awesome and kept my spirits high the whole race. I think they had a lot to do with how I well I was feeling. I was totally blown away with my time. I had no idea how I would go. I thought it may be possible for me to get under 4 hours but I had never run any of the course before and had never run in a race so big with so many competitors. I could have been 1st female or 50th female. I had no idea how I would do so I was pretty surprised at the end.

CE - Did your six foot track performance exceed your expectations and do you plan on running more of these types of events?

EM - Yes, I would certainly like to run more of these type of events and will train for several over the coming years. However, rogaining is still a passion of mine so intend to continue competing in rogaines and rogaining-type events as well. I was a bushwalker before a runner (and still do lots of bushwalking). Rogaining combines the two beautifully.

CE - We are aware that you took in very little sustenance during the six foot track race, not even one gel we are lead to believe, is this true? How long does an event have to be before you will start consuming sustenance on the way? And what is your food(s) of preference?

EM - I had a few hot cross buns filled with banana before the race. I usually eat banana on toast with honey but the buns tempted me when I went shopping... Before a rogaïne I like to eat a huge bowl of porridge but this is too filling to have before a trail running-type race. During the 6-foot marathon I drank mainly water but had some sports drink at a couple of the aid stations. I thought I would need more sugar so I grabbed some snakes at one aid station but I ended up only biting the head of one and carrying the snakes in my hand for the rest of the race. If the race had been any longer I would have eaten a power bar or something. On rogaines I try to eat at least a muesli bar or three every couple of hours as you need your brain to work properly so you can navigate accurately. During a 24-hour rogaïne I will usually go through 1/2 a fruit cake, 5-7 sandwiches (some of these should be savoury like vegemite or something), many many muesli bars, a litre of sports drink and handfuls of scroggin (mix of chocolate, nuts, dried fruit, crushed ANZAC biscuits etc), and lots and lots of water.

CE - Can you give us an estimate of how long you were standing still during the 24 hours of your 3 peaks epic? And how on earth did you manage to run the last 30km of this challenge as quickly as the first 30 km, given that the first is downhill and the last is uphill?

EM - I only stopped at the top of each peak to sign the log book, take a photo, write a message to the guys behind me, and eat and drink. I stopped quickly for swims in Kanangra Ck, Whalhanian Ck and the Coxes River and stopped in random places to leave notes for the guys.

I am not sure how I had the ability to run the last bit up from the Coxes River to Katoomba along the Wild Dog Mtns and Narrow Neck. I think the thought of finishing and being able to stop was a big encouragement. The faster I got to Katoomba the sooner I could sit down and rest. Also, I realised not long after the Coxes River that there was a chance I could do it in under 24 hours. That excited me enough to try pretty hard to keep going.

CE - We like to think that the Competitive Edge is not a complete bunch of pansies, but there is no way I would be running in the deep dark wilderness of the Blue Mountains on my own in the middle of the night. Where do you derive the courage to do things such as the 3 peaks challenge on your own?

EM - In short - my university bushwalking days. I did heaps of walking in the Blue Mtns when I was at Uni in Sydney. I know the Kanangra area pretty well and was confident in being able to navigate and negotiate my way safely. I am in awe of the wilderness out there and love being there.

This was in fact my 4th attempt at the 3 peaks. The first time I did it with my partner Dan (not long after we met) and we failed because we ran out of water and found better things to do anyway, and the second time I went with Scott Morrison and we were successful in doing it in under the traditional cut off of 48 hours, the third time I tried it solo but got freaked out in the wild dog mtns after hearing wild dogs near the track so decided to set up camp and sleep. I did hear dogs this time too but decided to ignore them.

CE - Is it true that you have only been running for a few years? When did you start training specifically for running events? Or do you still consider your running to be fitness training for rogaining?

EM - I started running regularly when I moved to Canberra 4 years ago, mainly because Canberra is such a good place for runners - probably the best in Australia. There are so many great hills and nature parks and also so many other friendly and amazing runners to run with. Trevor Jacobs, in addition to being a great friend, has been kinda like a coach to me this last year or so and has been a fantastic source of encouragement and much advice and knowledge, plus a great person to go for runs with. Also there are people like John Harding who are also very encouraging and organise events that are so varied and enjoyable.

I started rogaining seven years ago when I was at Uni and this has always been my main focus when it comes to competition. But recent successes in mountain running races and the like has encouraged me to train more specifically for these events and to do more of them.

CE - You are known as one of Australia's best rogainers. Can you provide us with a little bit of background on your rogaining successes? What, when and where? Also exactly how many male rogaining partners have you dragged until they were completely and utterly exhausted?

EM - When I started rogaining it was mainly just another excuse to go bushwalking and I didn't take it all that seriously. After a few years of it I became more competitive and teamed up with more competitive partners. In my transition from bumming-around rogaining to stupid-destroy-yourself rogaining I dragged a few rogaining partners around who still thought I was in bumming-around mode. When I moved to Canberra I found more people who were equally as stupid as me and from then on I have had pretty good rogaining partners and I think they did pretty well, some, like Adrian Sheppard, drag me around.

I reckon that rogaining (and also adventure racing) is one sport where men and women could pretty much compete on an equal footing. If as many women rogained as men, then I think the womens and mixed categories would be as competitive as the mens category. In fact, mixed teams often win rogaines, beating all the mens teams. Alina McMaster and Julie Quinn are two very tough ladies with a lot of endurance

and also skill, and their performances in rogaines and adventure races is hard evidence that women can be just as good as men in these races. I often rogaïne with Julie and she has awesome toughness and navigational skill.

CE - In your mind, what has been your most memorial experience and what event/adventure has been the hardest?

EM - I love the feeling I get at the end of every race and every race is pretty memorable. In fact the satisfaction and sense of achievement I get after each training run is great too. I reckon if everyone ran, or did some exercise everyday then the world would be a happier place.

Doing a 20 day bushwalk in the remote Kimberley wilderness with my partner Dan was immensely enjoyable but also one of my toughest adventures. We were dropped out there by helicopter and had heavy packs and the terrain was very rough. It is so isolated and wild out there, we saw no one else the whole time. However, the Kimberley is probably the most beautiful place I have ever been and the scenery, rock art, deep gorges, wildlife, and plant life was stunning, almost untouched by us destructive Europeans and certainly memor able.

CE - The competitive has heard on the grape vine, that you are running in the Australian Mountain Running championships this year. Do you intend to compete at the World Mountain Running Trophy in New Zealand and have you considered going over to the World Long Course Mountain Championships?

EM - I think I will go to France for the Long Course. I am not sure about the mountain champs and New Zealand yet.

CE -Do you have any running aspirations, or are you happy doing the odd off-road and mountain race? Can we expect to see you in a marathon over the next 9 months?

EM - I enjoy running off road and mountain races so much that I will certainly be doing more in the future. I guess I don't have any definite running aspirations and are taking things as they come at the moment. Perhaps I need to have a think about what my running aspirations might actually be? I like the trails more than the track or road but I would certainly like to try a marathon soon and see how I go.

CE - How far do you run in training in a week? How many times do you normally go running each week? Do you do any formal sessions? Can you talk us through a normal training run? And does Ulitmate Frisbee count as a speed session?

EM - I usually run over 100 km a week. I run most days except on weekends when I might go bushwalking or canyoning. I am not doing any formal sessions at the moment but would like to do some. I need to make sure I find the time to do them. I try to include at least one large hill in every training run and I have a few regular runs I do close to my home in Tuggeranong where I try to run faster each time. For e.g., my p.b. for running from my house to the top of Rob Roy Mountain is about 47min. I will run it in 50min if I want a very hard training run, or 55 min if I am feeling slack.

Yes, I would like to think ultimate Frisbee counts as a speed session. It's the best fun, and I hate doing intervals so much that I prefer playing ultimate Frisbee several times a week instead. My partner Dan (who got me into ultimate Frisbee) reckons I never stop running during a game, but I run around at a constant speed, so perhaps I need to bite the bullet and do some speed sessions.

CE - Unlike Belinda (the commentator from six foot track) we know that you are currently in a long-term relationship. Given this fact, the competitive edge would like to know if you have any sisters?

EM - Yes, I have a sister, Kate. She is a year younger than me and is an air hostess with Virgin Blue. She certainly is a stunner, but she is not into running (or bushwalking for that matter). Although last Christmas I got her to run around the block with me a few times... she has kept it up too... the other week she rang to tell me she ran continuously for 3 km.

Thanks from The Competitive Edge (recent converts to Girl Power!)

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