



Gold Coast's Shining Stars

It was dark and cold. The sun was yet to rise. There was definitely a chill to the air.

Yet, amidst that dark cold morning shone 12 runners who'd barely slept a wink, but lit up the morning with nerves and excitement.

Today was their day.

The day when they faced one of their biggest battles – mentally and physically – and discovered a personal characteristic that had been lying dormant, waiting for an accelerant to fuel their inner fire.

Self-belief.

Three months ago, these runners – the 2014 Indigenous Marathon Project team - had barely run a few kilometres; and even that was a struggle.

Fast forward to Sunday 6 July and they would line up at the start line of the Gold Coast Half Marathon with thousands of other runners, some who were seasoned runners, competing for a new PB. Some who might have been using the run as a training session for a marathon, or a half ironman. Others just up for the challenge.

Then there are the Indigenous Marathon Project runners who were running for their families, communities, friends, colleagues and just as significantly, they were running for themselves.

To prove they could achieve something they, and probably a lot of other people, never thought possible. This wasn't about a time or a placing. It was about achievement. It was about pushing limits encouraging friends, and never giving up.

It was about overcoming struggle and sacrifice to achieve a goal that only a few months was insurmountable at best; in their eyes.

Making their way to the start line, the beat-box filled the air with familiar tunes to ease the nerves while others made a last mad-dash to expel their nerves.

In their starting zones, they all hugged each other with a mutual understanding of the enormity of the 21.1km journey they were about to start.

And they were off.

No turning back now. The only beat-box they had was the one beating inside. And they ran to that rhythm, some sticking with a fellow IMP runner for support and company, others heading off at a speedy pace.

That's what's incredible about these individuals – there is no sign of competition amongst the team.

They are fiercely supportive of each other giving you the impression they have been friends much longer than three months.

Really, they're not friends; they're family.

Remembering Rob's words the night before – don't huff and puff through the first 15km, ease into it and make sure you have some left in the tank – they listened. But they still pushed themselves.

Adrian had also remembered Rob suggesting to the boys that they wear band-aids over their nipples to prevent bleeding. Lucky for Adrian he remembered those wise words; about 5km too late.

Thankfully his running buddy, Harold, advised Adrian he had some spare ones.

Back in his bag.

Nathan was splashed with another runner's Endura drink, and remembering Rob explain that it would stick if you spill it on yourself, Nathan was quick to splash some water over himself. Then he got cold, so he figured he just needed to run faster.

And faster he did.

Nathan crossed the line, in his first ever fun run that happened to be a half marathon, in 89 minutes.

Nothing was as inspiring as Corrina's finish. Bed-ridden for five days and unable to train for a week or two, she nearly didn't make the race. Her first day out of bed was Friday of race weekend.

She started the race well; until she realised the runners around her were much older than she. Corrina had to stop and walk at times, but that made the oldies catch her. She'd have none of that so she began running again, then slowed, they'd catch her, she'd run. And so this racing pattern continued.

Her determination to finish that race is nothing short of remarkable and she got there. Her tired, aching and sick body was forced over the line by a much stronger mental ability.

That's the joy of running; you might not be the fastest, but you could well be the toughest. Training your mind takes something extremely special, something very different from training the body.

Something clicked inside that day for the IMP runners.

As they all crossed the finish line of the Gold Coast Half Marathon, one by one, they realised they hadn't finished at all.

As the day ended the way it started, dark and cold, they realised this was just the beginning.

To watch a video of memories from the first camp, [click here](#)