

Cradle Mountain Run 2019 'Race' Report by Damon Whish-Wilson

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The 82k Cradle Mountain Run is a race that embraces all three of these values. It is a totally self supported race traversing the length of the iconic Tasmanian Overland Track. It is just as hard to gain entry to as it is to run, with a limit of only 60 spots, selling out in mere seconds.

Fortunately, I was lucky enough to have secured one of those 60 spots, along with a handful of my running friends. My goal from day dot was to experience and finish the run. I had relatively limited first hand knowledge on the track and the course. Just before Christmas, a small group of us headed up and summited both Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff and headed out the Arm River Track. This gave me some run time and much needed expectations and knowledge of CMR, even though it was only 30k's of the actual course.

Before it seemed like I could count to ten, it was 4am on the 2nd of February and my alarm was going off. 6am came and a group of 60 of us all stood around the single track duckboard that beckoned the beginning of CMR 2019. It was a very cold start to the day. I ran in my thermal top, beanie and gloves quite comfortably for the first 3.5hrs.

I had asked for some tips from Hanny Allston before 'race' day. She warned me to run comfortably until basically Narcissus (62k mark), and that that was her half way mark. I talked through some of the run sections and how Amy Lamprecht was going to tackle the 82k length. And so I ran conservatively, or so I think, to the first checkpoint at Pelion Hut (32k). I felt good, so good and relaxed that I was happily talking away to Johnno (Claridge) for the first 20k, before he disappeared... behind me.

The second section, from Pelion Hut to Windy Ridge (18k gap), was, what felt like, a very, very, very long section. I kept reiterating to myself, "go easy. You're still not half way", for the entire length of this section. However, things started to begin to unravel around the 38k mark. I had just filled up my soft flask from one of a few running creeks on the Overland Track when Emma Flittner and her brother James, came up from behind. We became the Find Your Feet sock crew for 5kms-ish. In that time, I tried to remain relaxed. James and I had several small conversations, which was great, but Emma was focused, trying, I gathered, to best her winning time from last year. Then they slowly powered away, and I was by myself again...and starting to run low on energy. So I made myself eat a few pieces of nectarines and I tried to eat a piece of a Snickers Bar, I couldn't do it though.

I reiterated to myself at Windy Ridge (50k mark), "I'm still not half way. Focus on what you can do to feel better". And so I jogged and (mostly) power hiked onwards to Narcissus. 5kms later, Amy and Johnno came jogging up behind me. Johnno, likewise, not feeling great, and Amy just feeling like running and enjoying the course rather than racing it. So we were all aboard the 'ultrain', with Amy as the captain. 2.5k from Narcissus, I felt extremely sick. Like at any moment I has going to vomit. I saw Amy and John run onwards. Looking back now, I was somewhat dehydrated and lacking energy. At Narcissus, I took a 25 minute-ish break, where I sat and ate some watermelon and a little bit of coke. It wasn't a particularly nice spot to stay for that long, with thousands of blow flies everywhere! The volunteers and the bushwalkers at Narcissus, were incredibly supportive! And so, with 18km between me and the finish, I jogged off, feeling a little better.

10minutes later, I ate a Mars Bar, and then felt my energy increase ten-fold. I ran-hiked those final kilometres, with just the serenity of the bush to accompany me (and most likely, large tiger snakes, if other runners' accounts are to be believed).

10:40hrs later, I crossed the finish. I was happy and proud that I had just finished my first CMR, and my longest run to date. I went in to the race thinking that, although my goal was to just finish, I would like to run around 10hr. So to finish in 10:40, I'm pretty stoked, all things considering.

CMR left me with a feeling of totally appreciation and luckiness of what we have here in Tasmania. It also left me with a very battered and bloody big toe that I managed to stub a countless number of times (a clear sign of fatigue in the legs from having no more than 4-5days off work since New Year's).

I believe I'm more than capable of running a 9 or sub 9hr CMR. For now I'll keep increasing my base, my strength and keep working on my nutrition/hydration strategies. At the end of the day, in the words of a volunteer, I am 'just a spring-chicken'.

On a final note, I would like to make clear my appreciation of the CMR Committee and all the time they volunteer and the effort they put into producing such an incredible run in an iconic part of Tassie and Australia. And also the support of Tasmanian Parks, who without, this run wouldn't happen.

This run is a run that gives you a chance to Be Wilder, to Play Wilder, and to Perform Wilder.