

“BUSTER” UNPLUGGED.

June 2001

Craig “Buster” Mottram is one of the most promising athletes seen in Australia for years. On the eve of his departure for Europe I was fortunate to catch up with Craig for a bit of a chat and a low fat blueberry muffin.

N.M. Craig, you leave for Europe tomorrow. How long are you away and what races are scheduled in the lead-up to the World Athletic Championships in August?

C.M. I will be away for about three months. First, I fly straight to London and spend a few days there before my first meet, a 3000 metre race in Helsinki on June 14. There’s also a proposed meet in Lille on the 17th of June but I’m not sure if I’m in that yet - that will be a 2000 metre race. Then we move to Rome on the 29 of June for the big Golden League Meeting where I’ll run the 5000 metres. That will be a new experience for me and I’m sure it will be a very fast race and a good opportunity for me to run a good time. After that will depend on how I am running and what races are available.

N.M. Is it quick times or scalps your aiming for?

C.M. Quick times. If you run quick times, you’ll get the scalps.

N.M. What sort of quick times are realistic?

C.M. It would be nice to run under 13:15. I’m not going to say how far under - if I mention 13:10 Troopy might be annoyed!

N.M. You mentioned a 2k. race. Is there a chance of breaking the Australian Record?

C.M. Definitely, I think that stands at about 5:02 or thereabouts. I’ve run 3:54 for four laps which means that I’ve just got to run a 66 second last lap to get a National Record.

N.M. Where will you be based and who is going with you?

C.M. I will be based in Teddington, London where I have been the last couple of years so that’s familiar territory. In fact, it’s a fantastic spot with Bushy Park close by for training. While there I will be living with Michael Power, Grant Cremer, Benita Willis and Georgie when she comes over a little later on. Also, Scervo and Bart might stay with us too, depending on where their job commitments take them.

N.M. Most of us think that the life of an international athlete is pretty glamorous. What is a normal day for you when you’re overseas and how do you fill in your time?

C.M. After a while it’s not very glamorous at all. You soon get sick of living out of a suitcase. Training is very similar to what we do here, training twice a day at about nine in the morning and four-thirty in the afternoon. I’m doing University part-time so I’ll take that with me to do during the day. Unfortunately, in London, we’ve seen all the sights so we don’t go out that much. Just basically have a coffee, kick back and relax, rest for the next session. When we go to meets it’s, fly in one day, then fly out the next. We get lots of “frequent flier points” but we don’t get to see too much.

N.M. Do you watch lots of videos?

C.M. Oh yeah, I’m a real video ‘buff’ when I’m overseas.

N.M. While overseas do you train with any of the international runners?

C.M. No, not that much. We often see the Kenyans steaming past in Bushy Park. I’ve trained with Alan Storey’s group a few times, though. However, those sessions were pretty strange and very tough! The British guys don’t talk much, they just turn up, do the session, then go home. Not like the Aussies who talk the whole time. Anyway, at my first session with Storey’s group we started at about 6 o’clock and it was pitch black. We did 6 x 1.2 k. loops of a block around the streets at varied pace. It was a 25 minute run out to where we trained, then the session was followed by a 25 minute cool-down. During the whole session no one said a word to me except to point me in the right direction to run. That was a tough session - I was buried for about three days after that. The second session was 14 x 700 metres with a one minute 100 metre jog between. Nick Bideau took me to the track and I said to him, “there’s no way known I’m running 14 x 700 metres!” “OK!” said Nick, “just do ten!”

In the end I got to eight and by that stage I’d had enough! Once again it was varied pace training with the reps run at 63 second and 68 second 400 pace so it wasn’t super quick, it was more the volume and the short recovery. It was just a shock to see how hard some people train and what is necessary to be a great athlete. I think we are now starting to progress a bit to that sort of training but as you know you can’t go from running 80 kms a week to 160 kms a week too quickly. That takes time and Scervo and Nick both understand that and we are slowly upping the mileage and continuing to progress forward. Hopefully, if we’re sensible, there won’t be any steps back.

N.M. Congratulations on your performances overseas earlier this year. What memories do you have of the World Indoors?

C.M. Meeting Les Murray of SBS. Apart from the other Australian athletes, he was the first familiar face I had seen over there so it was great to talk to him. Definitely, running on the 200 metre track that was banked like a velodrome was a different experience. We only got to train on it once before we raced so we weren’t sure how we’d go. It was also very exciting to run indoors with people so close. I’ve run in front of 100 000

people at the Sydney Olympics and to run in front of 15 000 people and get a similar atmosphere was quite exciting. Obviously qualifying fastest for the final and getting to race El Guerrouj was a great thrill. However, I was taught a lesson by him in the final.

N.M. Did you get to meet El Guerrouj?

C.M. Yes, I had a drug test after the race and was chatting to him and his coach or manager. They were giving me some credit for my run in the heat and saying that the final was a great experience for me that should teach me things for years to come. To hear that from probably the best guy in the world at the moment was very encouraging.

N.M. Did you expect the final to be run the way it was?

C.M. Yeah, I did actually. Nick Bideau spoke to me the night before the final and said that El Guerrouj was looking to run the last half a bit quick, which he did. But he got an extra runner in the race. There were only supposed to be twelve qualifiers for the final and somehow, on race day, there were thirteen there. Obviously El Guerrouj wanted someone in there to set up the race for him. It was a bit disappointing that a World Championship Race was modified to benefit someone. However, I did expect the 'kick down' and was probably stupid to be at the back when it happened but that's something I'll learn from in the future.

N.M. What about the World Cross-Country? How did you find that race?

C.M. Very wet and muddy! That was a bit of an unexpected result in some ways. I knew I was in good shape as I'd run 7.48 indoors and 7.41 outdoors for 3k. And to be only racing 4k. off our track season put me in better shape than almost everyone there because I had some speed in my legs. But you never know racing a World Championship event, you've got so many guys there who can run. I just went out with the attitude that nobody knew who I was and that I had nothing to lose. Also, it was only two laps and if I was still there after one lap I only had to hang on for one more and I'd be right. I was speaking to Scivo and Nick and they said top fifteen would be great and that top ten would be fantastic, so to come 8th was a huge bonus.

N.M. Was your size an advantage or a disadvantage in the conditions?

C.M. I thought it was an advantage because I was strong enough to run through it. The mud itself wasn't that sticky so it didn't clog up on your shoes. It was just really wet so I sunk through to firmer ground where a lot of the other guys were slipping and sliding across the top of it.

N.M. Jo Wall said that she taped her shoes on for the event. Did you do that and did you wear longer spikes?

C.M. I wore 15mm. spikes but I didn't tape my shoes because I hate having extra stuff around my feet. I just try to keep it as simple as I can - if I have things flapping around my feet it just annoys me.

N.M. You were right up there in the lead pack for a lot of the race. At any stage did you think, "I can win this?"

C.M. No, I never thought I could win it but I knew I was in the top ten. I could see people dropping off. There were probably fifteen in the lead pack at half way, then one by one they'd drop off and I'd still be there and I'd think, "well, there's another one gone!" Then half-way through the second lap I knew I was still in the top ten. I was at the back of the pack really working hard just to hang on so there were no thoughts of winning, just finishing as high up as I could.

N.M. It must have been fantastic to have all the Geelong guys; Georgie, Troopy, Ritchie and Jo in the World Cross-Country Team with you?

C.M. Yeah, that was fantastic! I've travelled overseas with Georgie and Troopy before so it adds that extra element of comfort, I suppose. I just makes it very much like home to be surrounded by people you know and trust. That always helps.

N.M. After your high placings at the World Indoors and the World Cross-Country, do you feel as though 'the big boys' are starting to show you a little more respect?

C.M. No.....No..... I'm still not well known and an 8th at World Indoors and World Short-Course Cross-Country is great but it's still not a World Outdoor Track and Field Championship or an Olympics. I'll probably be a little more looked at when I step onto the track but I've still got a lot to prove and hopefully I'll do that this year when I head over to Europe.

N.M. Have you decided to concentrate on the 1500 metres or the 5000 metres? What do you think is your best distance?

C.M. 3k!!!!!! That's my best distance at the moment but it's not an Olympic event so at the moment I'll continue to train for both the 1500 and the 5k. I'll be racing both in Europe but racing just the 5k. at the World Championships. I think that the training I'm doing is beneficial to both events and to concentrate on only one would be detrimental to my overall progress. If I can continue the way I'm going, improving in both events, that would be great. As soon as I stop improving in both, I'll pick one to specifically train for.

N.M. What do you have to do to get down to 3.30 for 1500 metres and 13 minutes for the 5k?

C.M. More of what I'm doing, I think. As you know, in athletics there are no short cuts to success - it's a long process. Just a lot of hard work and a good support team around me, which I've got. Hopefully, it's just a matter of time before those times start to come.

N.M. Let's go back a few years. What sporting interests did you have as a kid?

C.M. I played soccer. Probably from about five years old I played soccer because that's what my Dad played when he was younger and that's what he brought us up playing. I loved playing soccer but I don't have the time any more. I had knee surgery in 1993 and that's how I got into triathlon - I did that for a few years and managed to win the Australian Junior Title. Then, in 1995 I had a year off and went to Timbertop with school and had a normal year up there. When I was aged ten to thirteen I did athletics and was quite good at National Schoolboys level but had to give that away when I had knee surgery.

N.M. I hear that your Dad was quite good at soccer?

C.M. Yeah! He played at Wimbledon when he was younger although I don't think they were quite the same standard they are now. My Dad's very passionate about his soccer.

N.M. In triathlon, how good could you have been if you'd stuck at it?

C.M. Ummmm..... That's a tough question. You'd like to pump yourself up but..... If you're the best in Australia you're probably the best in the world I suppose because we dominate, or we used to when I was doing triathlon. A lot of the guys I used to compete against and beat are now competing at World Championship level and are some of Australia's top triathletes so I'd hope that if I had continued I would have gone on to represent Australia and be one of the best triathletes in the world. But, of course, we'll never know for sure. However, I think if you're the best runner in the world you're a much better athlete than if you're the best triathlete in the world because the standard of running is so much higher.

N.M. At your best, what could you swim for 1k and ride for 40 km?

C.M. Ummmm..... say 68 seconds per 100..... what does that work out to be? 11.20 or thereabouts.

For the bike..... just under the hour.

N.M. What were you thinking while watching the Olympic Triathlon - "it could have been me"?

C.M. No, it couldn't have been me because the selection process started where competitors had to gain points in the two or three years leading up to Sydney. I was also thinking that they had stuffed it up completely for the Australians because of all that selection "crap". We had the best triathletes in the world and we didn't even get a medal in the men's race, which was disappointing. Maybe, they just cracked under the pressure.

N.M. I asked Scervo about his thoughts while watching the Olympic 1500 metre trial. Take us through the race, how did you feel?

C.M. It was a very pressured situation. It was probably a situation I shouldn't have been in with an A qualifier in the 5k. and a B qualifier in the 1500. It was almost a certainty that I'd qualify in the 5k. if that's what I'd concentrated on. However, the team around me thought, and I thought at the time too, that it would be better to concentrate on the 1500. I went into the weekend confident that I'd win. I'd run against and beaten all the other guys in the weeks leading up to the trial. I suppose you could probably say I cracked a bit under the pressure but I'd had a good run in my heat. Then I came out and lined up in the final and it was a different sort of race - it wasn't really quick, I think I was going to run the last lap of the final in about 57 seconds. In the heat I ran 55 seconds comfortably. Maybe I was a bit tight and tense and not used to backing up in races. However, the race went according to plan. I sort of sat in and didn't do much work until the last 300 where I came out and was followed by Nick Howarth. Then at 150 out I got a clip on the heel, 100 out had a bit of a push and shove, then 20 metres out fell. Whether or not he pushed me or not, I can't honestly say 100% because I can't remember. But going off video evidence you can see a hand on my hip but whether or not that made me fall or whether I was working so hard that I was leaning over myself, I don't know. Anyway, it was very disappointing.

N.M. And after the race? You had the 5k. in less than an hour.

C.M. Yes. Fifty-five minutes later. I was very emotional after the 1500 but I had Kathy Lee from the V.I.S. filing a protest for me, I had Shannon Whitfield on the phone to Nick, who was in London, telling me what was best to do, I had Scervo trying to calm me down, I had Bart doing physio and trying to loosen me up and get me relaxed. Mentally, I didn't want to go out and do it but Nick told me that I had to do it and Scervo told me I had to do it. Anyway, I went out there not 100% focused on the job at hand because of what had happened but that was probably one of the best decisions Nick and Scervo have ever made for me because if I didn't do that race I would not have been eligible to qualify for the 5k. at Sydney. So even though I didn't run very well and wasn't one of the first three A Qualifiers over the line, it still gave the selectors the option of choosing me and in the end they did.

N.M. There was obviously lots going on in the background after the 1500 metre race and the re-run. Had you given up all hope of being a Sydney Olympian after the re-run in Adelaide?

C.M. Yeah.... I had. I ran a shocker in Adelaide, obviously. It hit me then. I actually went out to a mate's farm the Monday morning after the re-run and had a few beers. I then rode a motor bike around the farm and crashed into a fence and burnt my arm and corked both my legs so that I couldn't run. Later that afternoon I got a phone call from Simon Allatson saying that I was in the Olympic Team to run the 5k. The first thing I said to him was, "I can't run because I've stacked a motor bike and hurt myself!" and he replied, "well, you'd better get your arse into gear and get into shape and start training because you're up to Nudgee in four days for the pre Olympic Camp!"

N.M. How did Shaun Creighton come into the picture?

C.M. He actually gave me his 5k. spot so he played a huge role. He'd qualified for both the 5k. and the 10k. He'd been put in a similar situation to me pre Atlanta Olympics so he felt a bit sorry for me and thought that I'd have a chance to learn a lot about athletics if I could compete in the Sydney Olympics. I was very grateful for his generosity and hopefully I didn't let him down with my run.

N.M. Did you get a chance to speak to him personally?

C.M. Yeah..... I actually did a T.V. interview just before the Olympics in Nudgee and the same question came up and I said that Shaun gave me his 5k. spot out the generosity of his heart and that I'd buy him a slab after the Olympics. Anyway, he saw that on the T.V. and he came around and we had a bit of a chat and a laugh. He was really supportive and basically said, "look, you've been this opportunity, you deserve your spot, there's no pressure because you're not really known for this event so just go out and give it a go".

N.M. Have you bought him the slab yet?

C.M. No! I haven't bought him the slab yet! Actually, I saw him the other night at Mona's Testimonial. I'd just broken his Australian 3k. record and he came up to say well done and I did mention the slab. He said he'd take me up on it next time we're training somewhere together.

N.M. Your memories of Sydney. It must have been a fantastic experience?

C.M. Oh yeah! Definitely the greatest experience of my life to date! A few people thought it might be a little tacky, especially the Opening Ceremony but it was fantastic and made you so proud to be an Australian. To walk out in front of 100 000 people at the Opening Ceremony was something that, now looking back, made the Adelaide re-run seem so insignificant. I should have been able to get back on track to run well in Adelaide and qualify the right way, but at the time I couldn't turn it around. Since then I have spoken to lots of people about overcoming difficult times and I can really sympathize with those who find it difficult.

N.M. What memories do you have of walking into the stadium?

C.M. All the athletes went into the Superdome which was where the gymnastics were held so we all waited in there for a few hours. But even as we walked out of the Superdome I reckon there were probably 50 000 people lining the 200 metres to the main stadium. They were all yelling and throwing streamers and that was almost as good as walking into the stadium. As we walked in we went through the tunnel that the marathoners ran through - it's a bit like the Burnley Tunnel but without the leaks! Then, when Andrew Gaze walked out onto the track this huge echo hit us - we were down the back running a-muck having a great time. When we heard that roar we just couldn't wait to get into the stadium.

N.M. The 5000 metre heat, how did that pan out for you?

C.M. Pretty well. As I said before, I had nothing to lose. I went in there with a P.B. of 13.26 and thought I'd have to run faster to qualify for the final. As it turned out, 13.28 would have got me into the final. Before the Olympics I sat down with Scrivo and Nick and we discussed different training methods so that I'd get used to the change of pace that happens in Championship races. We did a lot of 800 metre reps with one 400 at 64, then one 400 at 60 seconds. It wasn't really hard, it was more about changing pace and staying relaxed where you let your face wobble and concentrate on your breathing. I think that really paid off in the my heat because at one stage we ran a 70 second lap then a 59. Because of that training I was able to deal with the changes better than say, Michael Power, who maybe forced it too much when a change occurred and paid for it later on. Also, I reckon having Nick there with his experience from past Olympics and his dealings with elite athletes really helped Scrivo and myself in the planning stage.

N.M. A lot of the training you're doing now incorporates that sort of varied pace running.

C.M. Definitely. We've got the "FOX" group training every Tuesday in Melbourne that trains that way. Every session ranges from about 4 - 6 kilometres on the track of varied pace running. We do say, 700 metre reps to 1000 metres. We don't often do reps shorter than 400 metres. That's the way the rest of the world is training and that's what we will have to do to match them.

N.M. In the 5000 metre heat, what were you thinking with 150 metres to go?

C.M. That there was still a chance. If you listen to the T.V. commentary by Bruce McAvaney I think he said that if I could get one more I'd make the final. I honestly didn't know that I was in 7th place but I was going as hard as I could. I'd had a real crack down the back straight to get around a few people and to get into a good position. But the field was starting to string out and I had the best guy in the world at the time in my heat, Ali Saidi-Sief. I reckon he was basically playing with us. I think I ran my last lap in about 55 - 56 seconds but with 150 to go I was flat out and I got passed by an Irish guy, Mark Carroll who's run about 13.08. I was a little disappointed to get so close to making the final but I wasn't disappointed with my run.

N.M. Were you just lacking a little strength down the straight?

C.M. Obviously, and lacking k's too. I ran to the best of my ability that night and that's the first thing Nick said to me, that the other guys have got more experience and running years behind them at the moment.

N.M. Talking of the "FOX" group that trains on a Tuesday, Michael Power is obviously a very talented runner and a rival in races. Do you have to be careful not to race the Tuesday sessions?

C.M. Definitely! That' can be a bit of a problem. We've got a lot of young guys like Mark Fountain and Richard Jeremiah and Michael Power and myself really, I'm still pretty young, all training together. When we

get out there egos can sometimes clash with everyone trying to be the number one person on the track. The young guys are trying to step up a notch and perhaps Michael and myself are not ready to let them be number one just yet. I say, just yet because there's a few of them with a lot of ability who are coming on fast. But that's one thing Scivo and Nick have emphasized - as soon as these sessions become a race, Scivo will split it up to make sure that the sessions are run correctly to the set times. Otherwise we don't get the benefit, will overtrain and go backwards.

N.M. What did you do last Tuesday?

C.M. This goes against what I said before but we did 300 metre reps. Three sets of six at varied pace. Numbers 1, 3 and 5 were in 46 seconds while numbers 2, 4 and 6 were 44 seconds. There was 30 seconds rest between reps and a jog lap between sets. There was not a huge change of pace but you do notice it over 300 metres.

N.M. This summer you spent three weeks training at Falls Creek. How important was this training in setting the Australian 3k. record and your great running overseas?

C.M. I'd say crucial. I've had a couple of stints up at Falls Creek before this year that haven't quite worked. One year I was sick then the year after I developed a stress fracture. This year I had three really good weeks of training up there and came off the mountain fully confident after my first full preparation leading into our domestic season. I also had a blood test done up on the mountain that showed that my natural EPO count was really high so that gave me a lot of confidence too. There was also the training up there with guys like Mona and Troopy and running really well against them too. Also, I felt as though I had a bit to prove after how I was selected for Sydney. I really wanted to run well to show everyone that I really deserved my spot in the team.

N.M. Perhaps your body responds very well to altitude training?

C.M. It could. It's just a matter of finding what works for you but I'll definitely be going back up to altitude this Christmas.

N.M. You seem to love the bush. Is there a track at the You Yangs that you have not run?

C.M. No! And I'm proud of it! I know that place like the back of my hand. It's just like my backyard - it's fantastic, I love it!

N.M. What about the tattoo? Have you added the You Yangs to the Olympic Rings yet?

C.M. No. Scivo and I made a bet six months out from the Olympics that we'd get the Olympic Rings tattooed somewhere on our bodies if we made the team. Georgie Clarke also made the same bet but she chickened out. Anyway, Scivo and I lived up to our agreement and I thought it would be great to get the You Yangs drawn around the outside of the Olympic Rings. I got the guy at the Tattoo Parlour to draw up a bit of a sketch but it didn't look how I wanted it to look so I decided to scrap the idea and just stick with the rings. The rings was what I really wanted and the You Yangs can be added at a later date - you can always add a tattoo but you can't always take one off.

N.M. Bruce Scriven and Nick Bideau have had a huge influence on your running. How did you begin working with Bruce and Nick and how does this arrangement work now?

C.M. I started running in 1998 at school and my coaches at Geelong Grammar, Mr Ashton and Lennie Carlton knew of Bruce Scriven so they put me onto him. I then sat down with Scivo at the end of 98 and said we've got twelve months to see how far we can go. That's how it started with Scivo and we're still going.

And with Nick, he met me at the school sports in 98 as well. He thought that I had a bit of ability and sent a few Nike products in my direction and probably 'sucked me into athletics', I suppose. You could almost say he bought me with some shoes and clothes.

The way it works now is that Nick is my manager foremost and Scivo is my coach but Nick's been around quality athletes and knows a lot about top level international athletics, more than Bruce, I would say. But they both work together and chew a lot of things over and most of the time they get it right. Nick's a very intelligent guy and as long as I use him as my manager and not my coach things work out really well. Scivo knows my body like nobody else and knows me surprisingly well - he knows what works for me. So basically, Scivo is the boss when it comes to training and Nick's the guy who does many other things, both here and overseas and gets me into the right races.

N.M. It was only a couple of years ago that you were running 3000 metres for Geelong Grammar at the school sports. You must pinch yourself when you realise how quickly you've progressed?

C.M. Yeah, definitely. I ran A.P.S. in 98 and ran 8:22 and a half for 3k. This year I ran 7:41 so that's a huge step, that's 40 odd seconds. But I'm a person who always believes in my ability and I get really impatient if I'm not getting better and better. I start to think that something is wrong. Athletics is a sport that can take a lot of time to progress in but my impatience has probably helped me improve quickly.

N.M. We've got to talk about the track-suit pants. Are you the new 'White Kenyan'?

C.M. No, Troopy's still the king - he's the 'White Kenyan'. I have hardly run in shorts since I got back from the World Cross-Country in April. A lot of people think that I must get really hot in them but I don't run in a track-suit top, just the long pants and a long sleeve T shirt. I like the feeling of running in 'trackie' pants. I've also got one knee that sticks out a little bit and I hate looking at it so the pants hide the knee.

N.M. Let's talk about your diet. Is there anything in particular that you're doing to get yourself in the best possible shape?

C.M. Actually, I've concentrated on my diet a lot more since my last spell at Falls Creek. Up there I lived with Sonia O'Sullivan and Troopy. I went up to Falls Creek after my post Olympic break, where I ate and drank whatever I wanted to, and so I wasn't in 'super shape' when I arrived. The first night we ate steamed rice and beans and that was it. I got a bit of a rude shock - I was starving and looking around for what was next, I thought the rice and beans were just the entree. And that was pretty much the basis of my eating up at Falls Creek, just very healthy food. I was eating what Sonia was eating - I think I lost about 4 kilos but I started to run really well. I'm now at a weight that works really well for me, I'm about 72 kilos now but I don't want to drop any lower because I'll only lose strength. I don't really have a strict diet now but I try not to eat too much fat. However, I do feel that a bit of variation is important in your diet and if I feel like a piece of chocolate cake, I'll have a piece of chocolate cake. I think it's over a year since I've had McDonalds, no, I tell a lie - I had McDonalds about six months ago, just after the Olympics.

N.M. Does Mum cook Sonia's famous steamed rice and beans for you?

C.M. Yeah, she does occasionally, although I haven't had rice and beans for a long time. One of the advantages of living at home is that Mum knows what sort of food I should be eating and she cooks up good food that doesn't contain too much fat. I also spend three days a week up in Melbourne staying with Lauren (Hewitt) so we help each other with cooking. We cook healthy, low fat meals and keep an eye on each other so that we're both doing the right things.

N.M. Well, Craig - thanks very much for your time. All the very best for your up-coming races overseas. I'm sure I'll see you running around the You Yangs when you arrive back in Geelong.

C.M. My pleasure, Neil. But, actually I'll see you tomorrow because we're having one last run around the You Yangs before I fly off to Europe tomorrow afternoon.

Postscript: Craig did have that one last run at the You Yangs with fellow Geelong runners, Mark Boxer, Dean Goddard, Leigh Scukovic, Simon Cole and myself. And being a proud "Geelongite" and a very sensitive guy, he took a small handful of You Yangs' soil with him so that even on the other side of the world, he would have a little piece of home close at hand.