

# HALEY MCGREGOR. SHE'S BACK, BIGGER AND BETTER AND LOOKING TOWARDS ATHENS.

January 2004

This time last year Haley McGregor was in a hole. She was struggling with her running and was close to giving it away. However, showing the grit and determination she is known for, Haley has bounced back with some remarkable performances over the last twelve months, culminating with her fabulous run at the Zatopek. I was fortunate to catch up with one of Australia's brightest hopes for the Athens Olympics for a chat about her exceptional 2003 as well as her hopes for the future.

**N.M. Haley, welcome back to Falls Creek. How many years have you been coming up to the Victorian High Country over summer?**

H.M. I was talking about this on the way here. I think this is my fifth year at Falls Creek.

**N.M. You would have learnt a lot in that time?**

H.M. Yes, most certainly. When I first came up here I sat back a little and watched in awe at what all the top runners were doing. Also, I tended to go hard in every run back then because I was excited and 'pumped' for every session. I guess I was trying to impress. But there was so much to learn. Now I understand the true benefits of Falls Creek so I can utilise the altitude, the group training and the rest and recovery that is needed up here.

**N.M. When you first came up here did you follow the standard "Wardlaw / Moneghetti Program" with the 'Mona Fartlek' on the Tuesday and the 'Quarters' on a Thursday?**

H.M. Yes I did. I've pretty much followed that program every year although last year I changed it around a little.

**N.M. This time last year you did your first Pretty Valley long run for 2003 and really struggled. At the time you were out of form and had not been running all that well. How have you turned it around since then?**

H.M. Aaahh ..... I have had a change in training. Nic Bideau has been coaching me and I've probably started to realise that I'm better at the longer distances. I've also completed a lot of good, consistent training over winter and I've learnt a lot by being around people like Nic and Sonia (O'Sullivan) and Buster (Craig Mottram). I've tried to adapt a lot of what I've seen into my training. I'm also benefiting from the longer sessions, not pushing myself every run but being consistent.

**N.M. Can you remember the Pretty Valley run I was referring to?**

H.M. Absolutely! I finished in 99 minutes and the run usually takes me 90 minutes. I was hurting so much that all I wanted to do was lie down for the rest of the day. Up until then I had overtrained, basically killed myself and I had dug a massive hole. Eventually I had to take two weeks off and that was one of my first runs back. However, even though I was only here for ten days, because we had to evacuate because of the bushfires, I could feel myself improving with each run. So last year's stint at Falls Creek gave the rest of the year a kick start.

**N.M. Congratulations of your great run at the Zatopek where you ran 31.43.14 which is an A Qualifier for the Athens Olympics. That must have been a huge thrill?**

H.M. It was awesome but it's hard to describe the feeling. It was one of those races that I don't remember too much about because I was so focused. But the jog lap I completed after I finished was something pretty special.

**N.M. Going into the race did you think you could run that fast?**

H.M. I never really thought about a time. I knew I was in good shape and that everything had gone right in training leading up to the Zatopek. I had completed some sessions that indicated that I could go close. However, I knew it was going to be tough and because I was so focused, I didn't really know what pace I was on until three laps to go when I had a glance at the clock. Then, I tried to work out what I had to do but basically, I just tried to run as fast as I could on the night.

**N.M. What were some of those key sessions you completed that indicated you were in good shape?**

H.M. There was a track session that Nic got me to do on a Saturday morning. It ended up being 10000 metres on the track made up of 400 metres pretty hard followed by 400 metres 'float' repeated until I'd completed 10 kilometres.

**N.M. So it was 13 x 400 metres with a 400 'float' between?**

H.M. Yes, that's right. I ran 32.50 for that feeling as though I'd done nothing. I actually went home and felt as though I hadn't trained, I was feeling so fresh.

**N.M. Did you do the session by yourself?**

H.M. No, P.J. Bosch, one of our training group, helped me out. The only problem was that we took off way too fast as we were feeling so good. But eventually we got the pace right and ended up chatting some of the way as we were feeling so comfortable. I also did another key session of a hard lap of the Tan in 12.07 then 10 x 500 metres with one minute recovery. I did all the 500 metre reps in under 90 seconds so that told me I was in pretty good shape too.

**N.M. Just before the Zatopek Nic said you should run 32 minutes and 31.45 if everything went well. So, he's a pretty good judge.**

H.M. Yes, he's a very good judge and when he says that he instills so much confidence and belief so that you know you're in good shape. Normally a few doubts creep in when you're struggling but to go into the race so confident was a big factor in my run.

**N.M. And Eloise Poppett did a fantastic job pacing you for the first half?**

H.M. Yes, she was absolutely sensational. While Eloise was leading I was so switched off - I was laughing at Fieldy (Haley's boyfriend, Simon Field) on the way around and chatting to Eloise. She was so relaxed that it made it feel easy.

**N.M. Did you feel as though you were holding back during the first 5000 metres?**

H.M. Absolutely. Nic said that he thought I could have run quicker as I was pushing up on Eloise down the home straight each lap. However, it was probably good that I didn't run faster in the first part of the race otherwise I may have died.

**N.M. Eloise did a great job running 75 / 76 seconds for each lap.**

H.M. Yes, she was spot on and so even. I tend to run best when I'm in a consistent rhythm, then I can wind it up near the finish.

**N.M. With three laps to go, we in the stands thought you were going to miss out on the 31.45 A Qualifier by a few seconds. However, you ran 74, 74, 70 seconds to fly home. Did you know how close you were?**

H.M. With three laps to go a few negative thoughts crept into my head. I was really hurting but I was able to work out roughly what I had to do. But I was thinking, "I can't do it, I'm really gone and I'm really, really hurting!" One silly thought that went through my head with three laps to go was, "If I do make the qualifier, I'll have to go through all this pain again at the Olympic Trials!" However, I put my head down and said, "Come on Haley, you've come this far, give it everything!"

**N.M. When Eloise dropped out it looked as though you lost your rhythm for a few laps. Did you notice that and how did you re-focus?**

H.M. Absolutely. I was so relaxed when Eloise was leading that I think I lost concentration for a while when she dropped out. For a few laps I forgot that I was racing and it took me a few laps to get going again.

**N.M. How is the change in the selection criteria going to affect you?**

H.M. Hopefully it won't. It was disappointing to hear of the change on the day but I didn't take that into the race. I still think, that because the A Qualifier is so tough, if I finish in the top two at the trials, I should be right. Obviously it would be nice to have the old criteria but you've got to accept the change and do what you can do. If I'm in good shape I'll try to do it again at the trials. If not, I'll just have to hope that they pick me anyway.

**N.M. So, for our readers, what is the new criteria?**

H.M. We have to run the qualifying time at the trials and finish in the top two to be an automatic selection. But if you've already got a qualifier and you finish in the top two, they can still pick you.

**N.M. And with Benita Johnson running the 10000 metres, at least there will be someone to share the pace with?**

H.M. Yes, having Benita there will be great.

(Ed. At the Australian Athletic Championships / Olympic Selection Trials, Haley and Benita Johnson ran the 10 000 metres as a training run, alternating laps at 5000 metre race pace with laps at marathon race pace. Benita won in 31:49.97 with Haley second in 32:20.49. Both were selected in the Australian Olympic Team for Athens.)

**N.M. You have been in great form over the last twelve months with a very successful winter season probably the highlight. You have been to the World Cross - Country Championships, the World University Games and you have won the National Cross - Country Championship and the City to Surf.**

H.M. I'm never really content with what I do but to look back, it has been a very good year. Obviously, I'd like to perform better next year internationally. But yes, the year has totally exceeded my expectations, particularly as I was struggling so much this time last year and was ready to chuck it all in.

**N.M. You were feeling that frustrated with your running?**

H.M. Yes, just before Christmas I was.

**N.M. And you weren't enjoying your running?**

H.M. I think I was a bit disheartened because I believed that more was better - that was my principle but you do have to run smart as well as dedicated and know when to back off so you can recover.

**N.M. What was the highlight of your winter season?**

H.M. I'd have to say winning the National Cross - Country Championship. I'd under-estimated what it would be like to win a National Championship. Also, I'd won the City to Surf six days before and came down with a cold. I wasn't feeling good so I e-mailed Nic, who was overseas at the time, and said, "I don't think I should run the National Cross as I'm not feeling so good - what do you think?" Anyway, he got straight on the phone and told me why I should run. It was a tough race and I gutsed it out and gave it everything and they're always the best races to win.

**N.M. And it was a very tough field with both Georgie Clarke and Eloise Poppett in good shape?**

H.M. Yes, Georgie was in really good shape even though eight kilometres is probably not her best distance but she's always such a tough competitor.

**N.M. You mentioned that Nic Bideau is now your coach. What specific changes has he made to your training and running in general?**

H.M. It's more about holding me back at times because I used to go pretty hard in every session. Every rep, in every session tended to be as hard as I could go. Now Nic has shown me how to hold back at times. One of our integral winter sessions was 8 x 1000 metres on a Tuesday and to get through this session you could not go too hard on the first one. So, I had to learn to hold back on the first one with Nic sometimes wanting us to pick it up on numbers 3, 5 and 7. So I've learned to vary the pace within a session. I've also increased my kilometres quite a bit this year and I'm feeling fitter for it.

**N.M. How many kilometres would you run in a big week now?**

H.M. I've run a couple of 160 kilometre weeks but I hovered around 145 - 150 kilometres for most of the winter, even with the races.

**N.M. And you were coping well with that?**

H.M. Yes, I felt great. Because I was holding back a little with each session, I felt pretty fresh for each run.

**N.M. Those 8 x 1000 metres - did you run those on the Tan?**

H.M. Yes, we did them on the bottom of the Tan from the traffic lights up to the bottom of Anderson Street. We usually did them with a minute recovery.

**N.M. Who were your previous coaches?**

H.M. Originally I was with Richard Huggins. He got me into the sport and coached me for about three years. Then I was with Pam Turney for about three years and I've been with Nic since about November / December of 2002.

**N.M. You come from rather a strange back ground for a runner in that you were a State level kayaker?**

H.M. Yes, I was a kayaker and finished three Murray River Marathons. Then got into the V.I.S. and did endurance kayaking for a few years.

**N.M. How tough is the Murray River Marathon?**

H.M. Oh, it is very, very tough! They send out a wake - up call every morning at 5:00 am and by the fifth and last day when you hear "Morning Has Broken" over the loud speakers, it takes every ounce of energy just to get up, let alone get to the start line.

**N.M. Did you compete as a single or as a pair?**

H.M. No, we did it as a TK2 relay team so each team member paddled about two 20 kilometre legs, making up 40 kilometres a day.

**N.M. How old were you when you competed in kayaking?**

H.M. I did the Murray River Marathon when I was in Years 10, 11 and 12 at school so I would have been 15 - 17 years old. I swapped over to running when I was 17 or 18.

**N.M. Why the change?**

H.M. I think I have a pretty short attention span and I thought I'd 'been there, done that' with kayaking. Also, I was not enjoying it as much. There is also something about running where you're using your whole body - I'm not sure if it's the impact of hitting the ground but you can finish a run absolutely exhausted, like I was at the Zatopek. With kayaking, because you're seated and there's no impact, you can recover pretty quickly and I've always loved pushing my body to the limit and I feel as though I can do that with running. That's why I fell in love with the sport.

**N.M. Did you think you could reach higher levels with the kayaking?**

H.M. I had just teamed up with an American coach and he was pretty confident that I could make the next team for the World Championships but it didn't interest me that much and I'd lost some of the enjoyment. Kayaking is quite political, which you get in all sports, I guess, but I think I was ready for a change and I fell in love with running at the right time.

**N.M. What other sporting interests did you have when you were younger?**

H.M. When I was a kid I had my hand in every sport going around. I was in the local softball and basketball teams and I played netball for years and years. I also played in the school football and cricket

teams. But I only did Little Athletics for one year as an under 10 and didn't like it because they made me do high jump, which I didn't like. I used to just run in and push the bar off.

**N.M. You're not the tallest person. As a girl were you also petite?**

H.M. I was always little, always at the end of the photo line.

**N.M. So the high jump mat may have been as tall as you were?**

H.M. Yes, I had no hope of getting over the bar.

**N.M. So all the sport you played as a junior has built up a great skills and fitness base for now.**

H.M. I think so. I grew up about an hour out of the city and we never watched TV as kids, we were always down at the park playing. We also walked to school and I always did what my three older brothers were doing.

**N.M. You are training with two of the best distance runners in the world in Sonia O'Sullivan and Benita Johnson. What have you learnt training with them?**

H.M. Oh geeh ..... where do I start? I went away and lived with them for four weeks at Laguna Mountain, and although I was injured for a week of that, it was just the best experience. I came back from that trip and the first thing I said to Fieldy was that I'd learnt what it takes to make it. Both Sonia and Benita are 100 % disciplined in everything they do in terms of recovery, stretching, diet and that's apart from the actual training.

**N.M. Apart from Sonia and Benita, who do you look up to in World Athletics?**

H.M. Definitely Paula Radcliffe. You can't go past the things she's achieved in the last few years through hard work and self - belief. Simon was lucky enough to meet her in November and he came back with raving reports, just saying that she was down to earth and was really easy to chat to. To have all that ability but to be a nice person as well speaks volumes. I also admire Steve Moneghetti for the same reasons I admire Paula Radcliffe. Steve is so approachable and knowledgeable and has achieved so much over a long period.

**N.M. What supplementary training do you complete to ensure that you're in the best possible shape?**

H.M. That's another thing I've changed this year in that I get massage and physio at least two, if not three times a week. I do stretching and I've just started a strength and conditioning program so I do gym and circuits three times a week. I also do running drills and strides on a Sunday afternoon.

**N.M. Are the circuits mainly core stability and body weight exercises?**

H.M. Yes, no weights, just things like dips, push-ups, chin-ups and ab work.

**N.M. In 2002 you rose to prominence in the National 5000 metre Championship at Olympic Park when you sat on Benita's heels for lap after lap. Everyone in the crowd was thinking that sooner or later Benita would drop you. But you hung on and with 200 metres to go you sprinted past her to win the National Championship. That must have been a huge thrill?**

H.M. That win was completely out of the blue. I had done a session on the Tuesday night before the Thursday race and I said to Pam Turney, my coach at the time, "Pam, I can't possibly race on Thursday - I feel horrible and those 200's felt shocking!" Pam said, "Haley, do you know what time you were doing them in?" Well, I didn't because I wasn't timing myself but I was doing them in about 28 - 29 seconds which was the quickest I'd done them all year. So I was in better shape than I thought. Also, being in my home town of Melbourne, having all my friends and family there, even a few flat mates who knew nothing about athletics, made a huge difference. I was as surprised as anyone when I was still there with a lap to go. I think it was half-way down the back straight on the last lap as Benita was starting to pull away when something clicked in my head and I thought, "hang on a minute, I'm feeling good, I'm not going to just let her go!" It was only then that I thought that I could win so I gave chase.

**N.M. Did you have to pinch yourself as you crossed the line as Australian Champion?**

H.M. Yes, absolutely. That took a long time to sink in and even now when I think about it, the win feels more a fluke than anything because I didn't expect it.

**N.M. A win is a win!**

H.M. Yes, exactly. You've got to take them when you can.

**N.M. How many 200's did you complete on the Tuesday before the race?**

H.M. Just eight with a jog across recovery. Generally that was, and probably still is, one of Pam's pre-race sessions.

**N.M. Now Haley, I'm always trying to break the big stories and there's a rumour sweeping through Falls Creek that you and Simon Field have announced your engagement. Is it true?**

H.M. (Laughing) No, No, No!!!

**N.M. I think Troopy started the rumour.**

H.M. I'm not sure if it was Troopy or Nic but no, the ring is definitely on my right hand finger not the left.

**N.M. But seriously, Simon being a talented runner himself, would be very good for you.**

H.M. Absolutely. It just helps to have someone else who understands what I'm trying to do. A lot of people might not realise the commitment and dedication needed to reach the top. Going to Laguna Mountain

this year I saw Sonia and Benita going to bed early each night, not going out, not drinking, being strict with their diet. We can also get moody if we have a bad session or a bad race and it does take a special person to understand all of that. Simon understands all of that and I hope I can reciprocate when he has the same feelings.

**N.M. I would guess that it's important to know when to say something and when to say nothing at all.**

H.M. Yes, exactly. There are very few people I can be around on race day and Simon is definitely a person I want around me when I'm a little tense.

**N.M. What interests do you have outside of running?**

H.M. Ummmm ..... I'm studying Occupational Therapy and I love it. I love going out to the movies and dinner. I like to read a lot. My brothers are not into athletics so I often go out with them to take my mind off running and have a mental break. I live with one of my brothers and he's great. I might have had a bad session and he'll say, "who cares - it's only running! Let's go out to a movie." So he's great for bringing me back down to earth.

**N.M. In the lead-up to Athens, what are your plans?**

H.M. If everything goes according to plan, I'd take off in March for the World - Cross Country and then have a stint at Laguna Mountain in May followed by 5 km. road race in Carlsbad.

**N.M. Apparently Carlsbad is a pretty quick road course?**

H.M. Yes, although I raced there last year and didn't run so well. I think I ran 16.15 but I'm hoping to run much quicker this year. After that, it would be off to London for a few races and some training before heading off to St. Moritz for another stint at altitude. Then hopefully off to Athens with a holiday in the Greek Islands to rest and recuperate after the Olympics.

(Ed. Haley ran the Carlsbad 5 km. Road Race, finishing 6th in 15.38 behind Kenya's, Isabella Ochichi - 14.53 (World Best for a 5km. Road Race) and Benita Johnson - 15.07)

**N.M. How did you enjoy Laguna Mountain last year?**

H.M. I loved it. There's not much to do there but the people are so friendly. There's a little town called Julian not too far away and Georgie Clarke and I would drive there occasionally for a break. But I just loved the idea of training hard in the morning, recovering in the afternoon then doing a second run later in the day. It was really peaceful which enabled me to do some reading and complete a lot of university work between running sessions. I just thrived on it.

**N.M. So you're pretty comfortable with being almost a full - time athlete?**

H.M. Yes. But I need something else to do like getting right into a book. I've brought some Spanish books with me this year and I want to get right into learning Spanish.

**N.M. You mentioned that you're better at the longer races. Are there any plans to make your marathon debut?**

H.M. Yes, I'm pretty keen to run one next year (2005), possibly in London or Chicago.

**N.M. Haley, thank you very much for your time and all the very best in your build up to the Athens Olympics?**

H.M. Thanks heaps for that, Neil.

---

## RUNNER PROFILE

### Haley McGregor

**Occupation / School** Third Year student at Latrobe University studying Occupational Therapy

**Age** 24 **Date of Birth** 27 / 5 / 79

**Height** 161 cm. **Weight** 46 kg.

**Married / Single** Single

**Coach** Nic Bideau

#### Personal Bests

<b>400m.</b>	57.4
<b>800m.</b>	2:07
<b>1500m.</b>	4:16
<b>3000m.</b>	9.02
<b>5000m.</b>	15.32
<b>10000m.</b>	31.43

**Favourite Food** Muffins

**Food Eaten Before a Race** Toast and Jam

**Favourite Drink** Cappichino  
**Favourite Movie** "Lord of the Rings" (Brother's influence)  
**Favourite Book** "April Fools Day" by Bryce Courtenay  
**Favourite Music / Band** 'It changes daily.'  
**Favourite TV Show** "The Simpsons"  
**Favourite Night Spot** 'At the movies.'  
**Favourite Holiday Spot** Merrimbula.

#### A Normal Training Week.

<b>Mon.</b>	am.	60 mins. easy.
	pm.	35 mins. easy plus Gym / Circuits
<b>Tues.</b>	am.	Track Session. This varies but something like: 20 mins. warm-up 10 x 800 metres with 60 seconds recovery between (run every second rep harder) 20 mins. cool-down.
	pm.	35 mins. easy
<b>Wed.</b>	am.	60 mins. easy.
	pm.	35 mins. easy plus Gym / Circuits
<b>Thur.</b>	am.	Threshold Session: 20 mins. warm-up 10 km. @ Heart Rate of 180 b.p.m. 20 mins. cool-down
	pm.	35 mins. easy.
<b>Fri.</b>	am.	50 mins. easy.
	pm.	Gym / Circuits
<b>Sat.</b>	am.	Session on Grass. This varies but something like: 20 mins. warm-up 4 x 1600 metres (5.00 mins.) with 3 mins. recovery between. 20 mins. cool-down.
	pm.	35 mins. easy
<b>Sun.</b>	am.	1 hour 45 mins. run at Ferny Creek
	pm.	20 mins. jog / drills / strides

#### Other Training / Recovery Sessions.

Massage / Physiotherapy session twice a week.

Gym / Circuits session three times a week.

**Favourite Training Session** Sunday long run and "Progressive Tan Laps" (I have run 13.40 13.20 12.50) My Personal Best time for the Tan is 12.07 completed in a training session.

**Favourite Races** 10 kilometres on the road.

**Best Ever Performances** 2000 Olympic Trials 5000 metres (4th in 15.40) 2002 National 5000 metre Championship (1st in 15.32) 2003 National Cross - Country (1st) 2003 Zatopek 10000 metres (1st in 31:43.14)

**Favourite Place To Train** Ferny Creek

**Toughest Ever Training Session** A Track Session of: 5 x 800 metres (200 jog recovery) 8 x 400 metres (200 jog recovery) 10 x 200 metres (200 jog recovery) with a jog lap between sets.

**Most Admired Runners / People** My brother.

#### Advice to Other Runners

"Enjoy your running and listen to your body."

#### Goals for the Future

"To make the 2004 Olympic Team, then to run a marathon - hopefully the 2005 London Marathon."