

MEDIA RELEASE

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AUSTRALIA'S FASTEST RUNNERS TO CHALLENGE RECORDS ON THE SUNSHINE COAST

Australia's fastest male and female distance runners will not only vie for line honours at this year's **7 Sunshine Coast Marathon**, but a \$25,000 pay day if they break the country's long-standing half marathon record.

Two-time Olympian, **Collis Birmingham** and Australia's fastest current female marathoner **Cassie Fien** will be on the start line for the half marathon on **Sunday August 20**.

7 Sunshine Coast Marathon event director and **Atlas Multisports founder Jason Crowther** said the event had attracted national and international runners previously but it was a first to incentivise Australian runners to try and set a new record on home soil.

He said the event's out and back flat beachfront course from Alexandra Headland to Maroochydore had gained a reputation for being fast and was now on the radar of Australia's running elite.

"We've seen some extremely fast times across all distances since we started in 2012," Crowther said.

"This course has proven itself to be fast and with an increasing number of elite runner entries we felt it was time to give the half marathon record a shake.

"With a significant financial incentive and the best of Australia's distance runners on the start line we're expecting to see a red hot race."

Crowther said the one lap 21.1km course was designed to be enjoyed by all runners but also to appeal to competitive athletes who had specific goal times.

He said the Sunshine Coast's beachside location, carnival atmosphere and mild winter running conditions created an ideal environment for a record-breaking race.

"The half marathon is our most popular event as it's a challenging but achievable goal for many people," he said.

"We've seen an increase in the number of people embracing road running as they make health and fitness a priority and coming to the Sunshine Coast to run in winter means they can reward themselves with a holiday afterwards."

Former Australian marathoner and **Brisbane running coach Pat Carroll** holds the current “all comer” men’s half marathon record of 61mins11sec, which he set in 1994.

Carroll, a 7 Sunshine Coast Marathon commentator, believes Birmingham is the only current Australian runner with the ability to break his long-standing mark.

Birmingham, who is in the process of transitioning from track running to road racing, has recently begun his campaign for a spot on the Australian team for the 2018 Commonwealth Games marathon.

Birmingham, who trains with the high profile **Melbourne Track Club under prolific running coach Nic Bideau**, is excited at the prospect of attempting to break the long-standing half marathon record.

“I’d like to qualify for the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast so it will be good to race on the Sunshine Coast and get a feel for the conditions,” Birmingham said.

“Even though I will be using the race as preparation for a marathon later in the year I’ll be up there to run fast and win the race.”

He is confident of eventually breaking Carroll’s record having run a personal best of 60mins56sec to win the Kagawa Marugame Half Marathon in Japan in 2013.

“I’ve run under that time before and I’m confident I can run that time in Australia,” he says.

“But there’s a whole lot more that comes into the equation when you line up on the start line. Australian athletics is looking pretty good for the future so if it’s not me there will be plenty of other runners coming in that will line up for a crack at the record.”

Two-time City 2 Surf winner Cassie Fien will be back to defend her Sunshine Coast half marathon title as she consolidates her form for Commonwealth Games team selection.

She is currently Australia’s fastest female marathoner and half marathon, with her sights set on breaking 71 minutes on August 20.

“I ran last year’s half marathon and had a blast, it’s a fast course, a well-run event and there’s great crowd support,” she said.

“Having the opportunity to run a fast half marathon is rare and I think this is one of those events that has the potential to be one of Australia’s biggest.”

ENDS



EXISTING HALF MARATHON TIMES

2016 FASTEST HALF MARATHON IN AUSTRALIA BY AN AUSTRALIAN

Men - Liam Adams - 1:03:33

Women's - Cassie Fien - 1:11:21

ALL TIME FASTEST HALF MARATHON IN AUSTRALIA BY AN AUSTRALIAN

Men - Pat Carroll - 1:01:11 (1994)

Women's - Lisa Weightman - 1:09:00 (2010)

About the 7 Sunshine Coast Marathon

The 7 Sunshine Coast Marathon & Community Running Festival will be held on Sunday August 20, 2017. Since the inaugural event in 2012, it has raised more than \$1 million for dozens of charities and community groups including Ronald McDonald House Charities.

It starts and finishes at Alexandra Headland on the Sunshine Coast and includes five distances of 2km, 5km, 10km, 21.1km and 42.2km.

Up to 7000 runners are expected to take part in this year's event. Of those 60 per cent will be female and runners will come from as far as London, the US, Japan, New Zealand and China.

The event organiser is Atlas Multisports, a Sunshine Coast-based event and training business.

www.sunshinecoastmarathon.com.au

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fastest half marathon by an Australian in Australia.