

Stop Press: 4 November 2011
Fearnley rounds out season in New York marathon

Australian wheelchair racing champion Kurt Fearnley will round out his 2011 competitive year at the New York marathon this Sunday.

Fearnley will start a strong favourite in the race with a winning record in New York coupled with good racing form having won last month's Chicago marathon. While acknowledging his own strong chance, Fearnley realises he won't have it all his way come race day.

"Sunday should be a fantastic race," Fearnley said from New York base.

"I'm pushing well and have a good record around the streets here but there's going to be twenty or so blokes on the start line that will fancy their chances as well" he added.

"2011 has been a very strong year in wheelchair marathoning and there have been very few multiple winners. I've been lucky enough to grab a couple (IPC World Championships and Chicago) and so has Hug from Switzerland but no one has grabbed three big one's this year. I hope it's me."

Fearnley and Marcel Hug will be joined on the start line by a who's who of wheelchair racing with athletes from 11 countries starting in the elite division including four former New York winners. There is one notable omission however, with defending New York champion David Weir of Great Britain electing to skip this year's contest.

"Dave's got a three month old son keeping him busy and he's decided to skip this year and concentrate on his preparation for next year's Paralympics" Fearnley said.

"It's disappointing he's not here as you always want to beat the best but he's not the only bloke in wheelchair racing and the field is strong and deep and it will still be a cracking race without him."

Fearnley will attempt to win his third straight Paralympic marathon next year in London, having won in Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008.

Stop Press: 10 October, 2011
Fearnley wins Chicago Marathon

Wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley has won the Chicago Marathon for the fourth time. Fearnley crossed the finish line in a time of 1 hour 29 minutes 19 seconds, sprinting clear from a pack of five athletes including world record holder Heinz Frei of Switzerland.

After missing last year's race while competing at the Delhi Commonwealth Games, Fearnley was happy to get back to Chicago and back on top of the podium.

"This is a great race and great city and I'm glad to be back" Fearnley said.

"It was a crackin' race and the lads up the front pushed it all the way. Heinz always finds a way to be there or thereabouts and a couple of locals pushed their case too. Today was my day and I'm glad to come through with the win" he added.

A pack of five athletes dominated from the first kilometre with Fearnley and Frei joined by Josh George and Adam Bleakney from the United States and Josh Cassidy of Canada. The group exchanged surges and attacks throughout but each break was ruled out and the race came down to the last few hundred metres.

Fearnley seized his chance and sprinted clear of the pack finishing four seconds ahead of Frei and George.

Next stop for Fearnley is the New York marathon in November, a race he has also won four times but not since 2009.

“Last year I hit the start in New York a little underdone and missed out on the win so this year I haven’t taken any chances and everything has been pointing to the start line there” Fearnley said.

“Each year I’ve won Chicago in the past I’ve managed to take out New York as well, so I hope today’s result is a good omen” he added.

The New York race will showcase the strongest men’s wheelchair field before next year’s London Paralympic games and whoever wins will take a psychological advantage into their final preparation.

“New York always draws the strongest field outside the games and this year will be no different. I’m looking forward to challenging myself against the best and hopefully I’ll keep my nose clean and out in front and can take that little bit of extra confidence going into London”.

Stop Press: 18 September, 2011 Fearnley wins seventh Sydney title

Kurt Fearnley has won his seventh Sydney Marathon in a course record time. Battling hot conditions and an international field including two-time US Paralympian Tyler Byers, Fearnley crossed the finish line a time of 1 hour 36 minutes 38 seconds, knocking five seconds off his own course record in the process.

The win is Fearnley’s second over the marathon distance this year following his win in the IPC World Championships in January.

Fearnley was happy with the win but is focused on future battles.

“I love racing at home and winning is always a nice bonus” Fearnley said.

“It’s great to get a hit out over the marathon distance before I tackle the end of the US season in a few weeks.”

Fearnley now heads to the United States where he will tackle two of the largest world marathons in the space of four weeks.

“First stop is Chicago in early October before heading to New York in November. I’ve had a bit of success at both races in the past and hopefully I can have a bit more this year” he added.

Fearnley will contest the Chicago race for the first time in two years after missing last year’s race due to Commonwealth Games commitments. He will attempt to win his third title there following wins in 2008 and 2009.

After Chicago he will head home to Newcastle to finalise preparations for the big one, the New York marathon in November, a race he has dominated over the past five years. Fearnley won four straight New York titles from 2006 through to 2009 before finishing third last year.

“I still got on the podium last year after an ordinary preparation but I’d rather be at the top than two rungs down” Fearnley said.

“Outside of the Paralympic games and World Champs, New York is the biggest race out there and one that I want to keep winning. It’ll probably be the strongest field I’ll race against before the London games, so it would be nice to get one up on the boys” he added.

Fearnley will compete in his fourth Paralympic games in London, attempting to win Gold in the marathon for the third straight time.

Stop Press: 19 April 2011

Fearnley finishes second in Boston marathon

Wheelchair racer Kurt Fearnley has finished second in the Boston Marathon behind Japan's Masazumi Soejima.

Fearnley finished the race in 1 hour 18 minutes 51 seconds, just one second behind Soejima, with third placed Ernst van Dyke, a nine-time Boston winner, credited with the same time as Fearnley.

It was the second fastest wheelchair marathon race of all-time, with van Dyke's 2004 win in Boston the only race faster.

Fearnley was disappointed to be pipped on the line but proud of his performance. "This course doesn't really suit the little fellas like me, so to get so close is a fair achievement but also shattering to just miss out" Fearnley said. "With the ups and downs of the course it's always tough to know how you're going here and I had a lot of ground to make up after the first 10km, but I thought I might just have enough to get to the line first," he added.

Van Dyke had a 30 second lead on the field after five kilometres, with his large frame providing a distinct advantage over the early downhill stages. Soejima and Fearnley slowly pegged the South African back over the next 25 kilometres before Fearnley made his move and opened a 30 second lead of his own.

"I knew I had to make a move before we hit the downhill again but the two of them were able to catch me in the end," Fearnley said. "The race was like a 42 kilometre roller coaster ride, up and down, up and down and even though I didn't finish in front, I had a lot of fun out there."

Fearnley was gracious in defeat and honoured to have gone head-to-head with two great racers and friends. "To cross the line with one of the greatest wheelchair racers of all time in Ernst, on a course he's dominated for so long is a huge honour. And I'm really happy for Soejima. The two of us worked hard to peg back Ernst's lead and there's no disgrace finishing second to a racer of his calibre. Soejima is a great competitor and he showed it again today. To come from third with only a few hundred metres to go to finish first is a great effort."

Fearnley's attention now turns to the Seoul Marathon in May, a race he has won three times.

Stop Press: 15 April 2011 Fearnley rolls on to Boston marathon

Wheelchair racer Kurt Fearnley heads to Boston tomorrow for Monday's marathon following a solid hit out in Canada overnight.

Fearnley finished second in the 10km Rolling Rampage in Ottawa, close behind home town favourite Josh Cassidy of Canada. While disappointed to be pipped for first place, Fearnley was happy with the hit out.

"It was a frustrating race out there. 19 laps of a circuit course around the Parliament House, the corners were so tight and that's where Josh got me" Fearnley said.

After spending the past week training with Cassidy, Fearnley wasn't surprised by the Canadian's speed.

"I've spent the last week over here getting ready for Boston, training with Josh and getting adjusted to the time zone. He's been pushing great and stepped up that little bit extra today in his home town. I know how great it is to race in front of family and friends and it often gives you that little bit extra" he added.

The two athletes now get on different planes and head in opposite directions with two major marathons on the same weekend. Cassidy returns to London to defend his 2010 crown while Fearnley heads south to Boston to tackle the marathon there for the first time.

"It's a pity we have to make a choice between one or the other but I can't wait to get to Boston for the first time. It'll be a tough race trying to knock a bloke off who's only lost there once in the last 10 years, with a few other regulars challenging as well."

The bloke Fearnley speaks of is Ernst van Dyke of South Africa, a nine-time Boston champion and perennial thorn in Fearnley's side.

"Ernst is a legend of the sport and has made Boston his own. I've never been able to slot this race into my schedule before but this year I made room for it and can't wait to get out there. We've had some good battles around the world over the last few years and lately I've just had the edge but he's been close to unbeatable in Boston so I'm not taking things lightly. I'm looking forward to a great tussle. Aussies have some form in Boston with Louise (wheelchair racing great Louise Sauvage) winning a few times and Rob de Castella winning in '86 and holding the course record for a long time. Hopefully I can join them on the honour roll," Fearnley said.

Stop Press: 27 February 2011 Fearnley continues unbeaten streak

Wheelchair racer Kurt Fearnley has continued his 2011 winning streak with victory in a Florida road-race overnight.

Fearnley won the 15km Gasparilla Distance Classic in Tampa, crossing the line in a course record time of 31 minutes 4 seconds, more than a minute ahead of his nearest competitor and perennial rival, Krige Schabort of South Africa.

In Florida to collect a new race wheelchair, Fearnley was elated with the win. "I've been over here the last week in the chair factory, trying a few things and getting a chair ready for London," Fearnley said. "The race organiser is a good friend and has been hounding me for years to race and I was glad that the stars finally aligned and I could compete. It's a great little course and it was nice to get a race in as it's a quiet time of the year. When I'm on a winning roll I want to keep racing so finding somewhere to push in February was great."

The win is Fearnley's third for the year, following his seventh straight Oz Day Classic win in Sydney and his world-championship marathon win in Christchurch, both in January.

"It has been a good start to the year but there's a long way to go. I start back on the marathon trail soon then I need to qualify for London."

Fearnley's next stop is a road race in Canada in April before tackling the Boston Marathon for the first time.

"I normally race the London marathon in April but this year I've decided to try Boston. It's one of the biggest marathons in the world so one that I've always wanted to add to the calendar but never been able to schedule. I'll be in London a couple of times next year so 2011 is an ideal year to race somewhere else" he added.

Boston will present Fearnley with one of his greatest marathon challenges. Ernst van Dyk of South Africa has only been beaten once over the Boston course in the last 10 years and the downhill course favours the heavier South African athlete.

"Boston will be tough and on paper, the course definitely favours Ernst and he has an amazing record there."

As we all know though, Fearnley loves a challenge.

Stop Press: 30 January 2011 Fearnley win world marathon title

Australian wheelchair racer Kurt Fearnley has successfully defended his marathon world championship title at the IPC World Athletics Championships in Christchurch.

Fearnley won the race in a time on 1 hour 30 minutes 9 seconds with marathon world record holder Heinz Frei of Switzerland second.

Fearnley was overjoyed with the result.

“To come here and grab back to back wins is amazing” Fearnley said. “World champs only come around every four years, so if you miss out there’s a long way in between drinks. To win the last two is great, I’m not sure where the next one is but I’d love to make it three straight”.

The race was contested over a tight, multi-lap circuit with strong winds playing havoc with competitors. Fearnley was in the lead pack throughout and fought off the challenge of Frei and France’s Pierre Fairbank over the last of three 13km road laps before entering the QEII Stadium for the final stages of the race.

“Circuit races are always tough and always close. Some of the turns were a bit hairy but I managed to stay out of trouble and keep my nose in front of Heinz” Fearnley added.

Fearnley was full of admiration for the 53 year old world record holder Frei, who also finished runner-up to Fearnley in the 2006 World Championships in the Netherlands and last Wednesday’s Oz Day 10km in Sydney.

“Heinz was one of the reasons I got into marathon racing and is not only a great racer but a great guy too. He was a pioneer of the sport and to still be competitive at 53 is just amazing. I don’t know if I’ve got another 23 years of this in me”.

Fearnley now takes a well-earned break before preparing for an international marathon assault in 2011, including his first attempt at the world marathon major Boston Marathon in April.

Stop Press: 8 November 2010 Fearnley finishes third in New York marathon

Australian wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley has finished third in the New York Marathon behind England’s David Weir.

Fearnley finished the race in 1 hour 38 minutes 44 seconds, a little over a minute behind Weir and Japan’s Soejima Masazumi , and more than nine minutes outside Fearnley’s 2006 course record.

Four-time defending champion Fearnley was disappointed but resolute following the race.

“I’m shattered. That was hard work, easily the toughest time I’ve had here” Fearnley said.

“Today there were seven blokes in the lead pack through 25km, normally there’s only one or two by then. It was a tough field in tough conditions but that’s no excuse. Full credit to Dave on the win but I’ll be back and pretty bloody determined next year” he added.

The lead pack of seven was whittled to five 15 kilometres from the finish, before Weir and Masazumi surged to open up what we would be the race defining break. Fearnley and two-time New York champion Krige Schabort of South Africa counter-attacked but could not keep pace with the lead two as they worked together to build an insurmountable lead.

Fearnley chased hard over the closing kilometres in Central Park, dropping Schabort in the process but the damage was done and he was left to settle for third.

Fearnley’s third place finishes off a year of mixed results with the highlights being Commonwealth Games Gold in Delhi and a sixth Sydney Marathon title.

Stop Press: 5 November 2010
Fearnley heads to New York chasing another marathon win

Australian wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley will attempt to win his fifth consecutive New York marathon this Sunday.

Fearnley will take on a line-up boasting the strongest field outside of the Paralympics with four former New York winners on the start line, plus reigning London Marathon champion Josh Cassidy and English racer David Weir.

With the strong field sure to push Fearnley to the limit, he is not expecting an easy day out.

“Outside of the Paralympics, this is the biggest race. The strongest guys come here, the fastest guys contend and it always turns out to be a cracker” Fearnley said from his New York base.

“There’s a dozen or so guys that will start on Sunday that have won marathons in the last couple of years and could contend for the win.

There’s not one man in particular who I see as the biggest threat but I’ll obviously be looking out for the guys who have won here before and those that have been racing well this year” he added.

Fearnley himself has had a quiet year by his standards with the New York race only his third over the marathon distance in 2010, following six wins from six marathon starts in 2009. In April, Fearnley tasted rare defeat over the marathon distance finishing fifth behind breakthrough-winner Cassidy before winning his hometown Sydney marathon for the sixth time in September.

Fearnley does however enter the race with form and confidence following his victory on the track in the 1500m at the New Delhi Commonwealth Games.

“The Comm Games were amazing and were a key focus for 2010. I’ve pushed a few less marathons but it was the first time a men’s wheelchair race had been held at the level and it wasn’t something I was going to miss.

My training has been tailored to the shorter distance for most of the year but i’m feeling strong and the extra speed work I was doing might come in handy in the last few miles on the weekend”.

Stop press: 25 April 2010
Fearnley finishes fifth in London Marathon

Australian wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley has finished fifth in the London Marathon.

A slow start following a surprise rain downpour on the start line left Fearnley with too much to do, and despite passing a number of athletes in the closing stages he finished well behind surprise winner Josh Cassidy of Canada.

A disappointed Fearnley was pragmatic following the race.

“At least I was in the game” Fearnley said.

“The shower on the start line made it real tough and I just couldn’t stick with the pack. It’s disappointing to not finish on the podium, but this time four days ago I was in Sydney with no chance of making the start line so I’m happy to have raced and lost than not raced at all” he added.

Fearnley’s preparation for the race was severely hampered by the flight chaos across Europe over the past two weeks. His usual preparation has him in London five or more days before the race, this year he had just 48 hours.

“The short preparation was tough but it’s no excuse.

I just couldn't stick with the guys early on and on such a flat course it's tough to make up time on your own.

I'm really happy for Josh (Cassidy) though. He's been racing really well over the last few years and this is a big race to breakthrough for your first win".

Cassidy finished the race in 1 hour 35 minutes 21 seconds, some six minutes outside Fearnley's course record set in 2009. Marcel Hug of Switzerland finished second and David Weir of the United Kingdom third.

Fearnley's attention now turns to the track after being selected to make his Commonwealth Games debut in New Delhi.

"It's the first time there's been a men's wheelchair race at the Comm Games so I'm really looking forward to challenging for the first ever gold medal."

Stop Press: 7 February 2010

Dawes breaks through for World Championship win

Australian wheelchair athlete Christie Dawes has broken through for her first major international victory winning the 10 kilometre World Road Race championships in the United Arab Emirates. Dawes led home a surging pack, out sprinting her rivals to win in a time of 23 minutes 58 seconds, finishing less than a second ahead of the United Kingdom's Shelly Woods and Canada's Diane Roy.

The four-time Paralympian was overjoyed with the result.

"This is just awesome. I came here feeling strong and looking to contend, but to finish as World Champion is something else" Dawes said.

"I've been pushing great the last couple of years and have been getting closer and closer to a big win, so to finally do it is a great relief. Hopefully it'll be the first of a few this year" she added.

Fellow Australian Kurt Fearnley was not so lucky in the men's race, finishing third in a time of 20 minutes 28 seconds.

Despite leading for the majority of the race Fearnley was overcome by France's Julien Casoli and Denis Lemeunier in a tight finish. Seventeen men finished within 10 seconds of the winner with the first four athletes credited with the same time.

It was Fearnley's first loss on the road over the 10km distance since 2006 but while disappointed at the end of his winning streak, he was more than happy to celebrate with compatriot Dawes.

"Christie and I spend a lot of time together in training and racing around the world, and she's always the first one there to congratulate me at the end of a race and share a celebratory beer" Fearnley said.

"She's come close so many times and to finally breakthrough is testament to her mental toughness and character and I couldn't be happier for her" he added.

Dawes and Fearnley now head back to Australia to finalise preparations for the international marathon season. The first major race is April's London Marathon, where Fearnley will be looking to defend the title he won in 2009 and Dawes looking to improve on her fifth place in last year's race.

Stop Press: 25 January 2010

Fearnley aims for six straight on the streets of Sydney

Paralympic champion Kurt Fearnley will attempt to win his sixth-straight Oz Day 10km around Sydney's Rocks district tomorrow morning.

Since posting his first win on the course in 2005, Fearnley has been challenged but not beaten around the scenic Rocks route and is looking to stretch his winning streak.

Fearnley will start the race a warm favourite but won't have everything his way, with a strong, in-form international field joining him on the start line.

Leading the chasing pack will be David Weir of Great Britain, Switzerland's Marcel Hug and Tyler Byers of the United States.

The Oz Day course record will be in danger, with Fearnley and three other athletes, including Hug, going under the World Record time over the same distance on the track in Canberra last week.

Fearnley finished ahead of the sprinting pack in Canberra, and while his record time is still to be ratified by the sport's governing body, the form of his competitors is undeniable.

"I was surprised at how fast we went the other night as it everyone's first race in three months, but it helps shape up an exciting one for Tuesday" Fearnley said.

"There's usually a bit of to-ing and fro-ing early in the race (Oz Day 10km), testing each other out to see how the off-season has gone but after doing that time last week, we know we're all pushing fast and I think it'll be hells bells from the start gun this time around" he added.

The Oz Day 10k commences at 9:00 am on Tuesday 26 January and begins and ends on Alfred St in Circular Quay. The course will take competitors on two five kilometre loops down George Street, through The Rocks and along Hickson Road.

Stop Press: 2 November 2009 Fearnley wins fourth straight New York marathon in photo finish

Australian wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley has won his fourth straight New York marathon in spectacular fashion.

Fearnley edged South African veteran Krige Schabort in a photo finish, with both racers stopping the clock in 1 hour 35 minutes 58 seconds. Marcel Hug of Switzerland out sprinted a pack of athletes to finish third, more than four minutes behind the lead two.

An exhausted Fearnley was overjoyed with the result.

"I couldn't be happier" Fearnley said.

"That was one of the hardest races I have ever pushed and to finish in front is amazing" he added.

It was a two-man race from early on with Fearnley and Schabort clearing from the pack in the first five kilometres. By the half-way mark they had built up a lead of more than two minutes and continued to pull away as the race continued.

Nothing could split the duo as they entered Central Park steaming towards the finish line. With fifty metres to go the athletes pulled side-by-side before Fearnley surged to snatch the win by the narrowest of margins.

"I can't believe it came down to the last metre" Fearnley said.

"I attacked more than a dozen times during the race and tried to get a bit of a lead, but I couldn't break him down.

"We've both had success here before and know the course well, and it's as if Krige knew when I'd attack and vice versa when he had a go. With all the toing and froing we ended up nullifying each other and not even the clock could split us.

"To finish a race like that as the winner is incredibly satisfying and it's a great way to round out the year" he added.

Fearnley finished 2009 unbeaten, with six marathon wins from six starts – from Seoul, Paris and London, to Sydney, Chicago and New York.

Despite rounding out his racing year, Fearnley now faces his biggest challenge of 2009 and perhaps his life, by crawling Papua New Guinea's Kokoda Track.

Joined by a group of 15 family members and friends, Fearnley will tackle the 96km track from next Sunday, a journey he will complete to raise awareness of men's health issues and in support of the charity initiative Movember.

Stop Press: 21 November 2009

Fearnley wins fourth straight New York marathon in photo finish

Australian wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley has won his fourth straight New York marathon in spectacular fashion. Fearnley edged South African veteran Krige Schabot in a photo finish, with both racers stopping the clock in 1 hour 35 minutes 58 seconds. Marcel Hug of Switzerland out sprinted a pack of athletes to finish third, more than four minutes behind the lead two.

An exhausted Fearnley was overjoyed with the result. "I couldn't be happier" Fearnley said. "That was one of the hardest races I have ever pushed and to finish in front is amazing" he added.

It was a two-man race from early on with Fearnley and Schabot clearing from the pack in the first five kilometres. By the half-way mark they had built up a lead of more than two minutes and continued to pull away as the race continued.

Nothing could split the duo as they entered Central Park steaming towards the finish line. With fifty metres to go the athletes pulled side-by-side before Fearnley surged to snatch the win by the narrowest of margins.

"I can't believe it came down to the last metre" Fearnley said. "I attacked more than a dozen times during the race and tried to get a bit of a lead, but I couldn't break him down. We've both had success here before and know the course well, and it's as if Krige knew when I'd attack and vice versa when he had a go. With all the toing and froing we ended up nullifying each other and not even the clock could split us. To finish a race like that as the winner is incredibly satisfying and it's a great way to round out the year" he added.

Fearnley finished 2009 unbeaten, with six marathon wins from six starts – from Seoul, Paris and London, to Sydney, Chicago and New York.

Despite rounding out his racing year, Fearnley now faces his biggest challenge of 2009 and perhaps his life, by crawling Papua New Guinea's Kokoda Track.

Joined by a group of 15 family members and friends, Fearnley will tackle the 96km track from next Sunday, a journey he will complete to raise awareness of men's health issues and in support of the charity initiative Movember.

Stop Press: 11 October 2009

Fearnley makes it three straight in Chicago marathon

Australian wheelchair racer Kurt Fearnley has won his third straight Chicago marathon.

Fearnley battled near freezing conditions and a strong international field to win in a time of 1 hour 29 minutes 9 seconds, nearly two minutes ahead of his nearest rival Masazumi Soejima of Japan, with South African Krige Schabot a further four minutes behind.

The victory was Fearnley's eighth straight marathon win stretching back to May last year and continues his unbeaten run on the Chicago streets.

"It's nice to keep the roll going" Fearnley said. "I enjoy coming to Chicago, the course is great and the people are fantastic. You never know what sort of weather you're going to get here and it was tough today in the cold. The pace was good though and I'm happy to have finished in front" he added.

It was a two man race for the majority, with Fearnley and Soejima breaking from the pack in the first five kilometres. By the half way mark the duo had opened up a two minute break on the chasing athletes, and it was at this point that Fearnley elected to make a break on his own.

"I've spent a bit of time away from racing this year so wanted to see how the arms would go. I felt good for the first half and Soejima is a great finisher so I thought I'd try and open up a lead and avoid a sprint finish. It worked out well and I'm glad the arms have still got it".

Fearnley now heads home to Australia where he will finalise his preparation for next month's New York marathon, a race he has won for the last three years.

"I'm feeling good and can't wait to get to the start line in New York. It's a streak that I'd like to keep going for a while yet but I'll have to be at my best. Most of these guys will back up and will be there and an extra dozen or so top racers from Europe so it will be a ripper of a race" Fearnley added.

Among those on the New York start line will be the only man to beat Fearnley twice over the marathon distance in last three years, the United Kingdom's David Weir.

The last time they met was in London this May with Fearnley finishing less than two seconds ahead in their trademark sprint finish.

There has been less than three seconds separating the duo in their last three races and with both racers in top form this year's New York battle is promising to be just as exciting as their last

Stop Press: 21 June 2009

Australia's most inspirational athlete confronts the toughest challenge of his amazing life

UNABLE to use his legs since birth, Paralympic champion Kurt Fearnley says he's willing to risk his sporting career - even losing his arms - in a quest to crawl the Kokoda Trail.

If that sounds over-dramatic, consider that two Australians died within a week of each other while walking the trail in April. Walking.

[Read more](#)

Stop Press: 10 May 2009

Fearnley rolls on another Marathon win

Australian athlete Kurt Fearnley has won the Seoul International Wheelchair Marathon for the third time.

Fearnley edged out local hero Suk-Man Hong of the Korean Republic and South African Ernst van Dyk in a bunched sprint of six, finishing in a time of 1 hour 29 minutes 49 seconds.

After a tough six week schedule that has seen him win in Paris, London and now Seoul, Fearnley is looking forward to heading home for a well-earned break.

"I've managed three from three this year and it's nice to be on a bit of a roll, but I'm looking to forward to getting home and giving my arms a rest" Fearnley said.

"I've managed three from three this year and it's nice to be on a bit of a roll, but I'm looking to forward to getting home and giving my arms a rest" Fearnley said.

Since his runner-up finish in the corresponding race last year, Fearnley has been undefeated on the road with four victories over 10km to go with his six marathon wins, highlighted by last month's London Marathon, a third straight New York title in November and Beijing Paralympic Gold.

Fearnley will now have a four month break from international competition, spending his first winter in Australia since 1997.

"My schedule this year has a couple of tough book ends with three marathons early and two or three at the end.

I normally spend a month or two in the US over their summer but this year I've got a few things to achieve out off racing so I've decided to take a break and enjoy an Aussie winter.

With the way things are lining up, I might be able to race a couple of times in Australia this year which will be a nice change. While I enjoy racing anywhere, there's nothing like a good home crowd cheering you on."

Stop Press: 26 April 2009 Fearnley wins London Marathon

Australian wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley has won the London Marathon for the first time.

Fearnley won in a course record time of 1 hour 28 minutes 56 seconds, just metres ahead of defending champion and local favourite David Weir of the United Kingdom.

After the disappointment of losing to Weir by less than a metre in 2007 and 2008, Fearnley was overjoyed with the win.

"I've been so close here before so to finish on the other side of the ledger is just awesome" Fearnley said. This was one of the strongest fields the sport has ever seen and it's a huge honour to come out on top. Everything I've done in the chair this year has been geared towards this race and it all clicked today".

The race was tightly fought with a pack of four clearing out by the half-way mark. Fearnley and Weir were joined by world-record holder Heinz Frei of Switzerland and last week's Boston Marathon winner Ernst Van Dyk of South Africa.

Four became three for the last 10km with veteran Frei dropping out of contention as the younger trio powered ahead.

For the third year in a row the race came down to a final straight sprint but this time it was Fearnley who had the edge, ruining Weir's tilt at a record four straight wins, with Van Dyk a further two seconds behind.

"I knew Dave's tactic was to try and hang around to the end and win in it a sprint, so to turn the tables and pip him on the line is that much sweeter. After what happened here the last two years there was no way I was going to let it finish that way again" Fearnley added.

The win completes Fearnley's record of winning at least once on every marathon course he has competed on, spread over five continents, from London, Sydney, New York and Los Angeles, to Beijing, Athens, Rome and Port Elizabeth.

It is his second win of the year after winning the Paris Marathon three weeks ago, and his fifteenth marathon win in the last three years.

Stop Press: 23 April 2009 Fearnley seeks breakthrough win in London Marathon

Australian wheelchair racer Kurt Fearnley will attempt to erase the only black mark on his marathon dossier with victory in the London Marathon on Sunday.

The two-time Paralympic champion and winner of more than 20 marathons worldwide, is yet to taste success on the London circuit, finishing runner-up in 2007 and 2008.

In 2007, his second placing was the only blip on an otherwise perfect season with wins in his 10 other marathon starts.

Despite an early collision in last year's race, Fearnley was still in with a chance heading into the final corner, but could not overcome a bent wheel and Englishman David Weir, finishing less than one metre behind his rival.

After a win in this month's Paris Marathon and a two week training camp with his coach in the hills of Spain, Fearnley heads into Sunday's race with good form and confidence, determined to add the London title to his impressive resume.

"It was nice to dust the wheels off with a win in Paris" Fearnley said from his London base. "Last year I skipped it (Paris Marathon) and came into London a little rusty and a little jet lagged. 2008 was all about the games in Beijing, but this year London and New York are the two big ones, so I've geared my preparation accordingly. After coming so close the last two years, I've got a real hunger for this race and can't wait to get out there on Sunday" he added.

Fearnley won't have the race all his way, with two-time defending champion and home-town hero Weir lining up alongside the best from the rest of the world, including last week's Boston Marathon winner Ernst Van Dyke of South Africa.

"Dave and Ernst are both great racers and Dave always seems to pull out something special here. The crowd in London is always huge and Dave, of course, gets a lot of their support. Ernst will be a danger too; he's in form and has done it here before. He's been around the traps and we've had some great battles."

Fearnley is looking beyond the challenge of the star duo and suggests the race will end in another tight finish.

"They're not the only two out here and there are plenty of other guys on the start line capable of winning. Everywhere we go the racing is getting tighter and faster and there's more than a dozen blokes who could win a race on any given day. London attracts one of the best fields every year, and if I'm good enough and lucky enough to come out on top on Sunday, I'll be a very happy man."

Stop Press: 5 April 2009 Fearnley wins Paris Marathon

Australian wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley has won the Paris marathon for the second time. Fearnley won in a time of 1 hour 30 minutes and 17 seconds finishing just four metres ahead of French racer Julien Casoli and Spain's Roger Puigbo. It was Fearnley's second victory on the Paris circuit after winning in 2007 at his only previous attempt.

Fearnley was happy with the performance, his first over the marathon distance in 2009.

"It's good to get the first one out of the way and to get a win on the board is great. Last year I started a little slow but finished well, this year I wanted to get away to a flier" Fearnley said.

"After the big focus on Beijing last year I've got a more balanced program (in 2009) and it's important that I carry my form throughout the year. After today I head to London for the marathon in three weeks time, before a race in South Korea then a break until September with Sydney, Chicago and New York rounding things out" he added.

Fearnley's start in London carries extra weight as it is the only major course that he has competed at and not won on. He finished second in 2007 and 2008, both by less than a metre, to his nemesis from the United Kingdom David Weir.

"I'm really looking forward to London. The last two years it hasn't gone my way there and it's a race I'd love to add to the collection."

"Dave's a tough racer, especially in his home town. He won't be the only one out there though. There'll be a great field with plenty of depth and no doubt a tight finish again."

Stop Press: 20 February 2009

Australian Paralympian Kurt Fearnley visit refugees in Syria

Paralympian and NSW Young Australian of the Year Kurt Fearnley has taken time out from his wheelchair racing schedule to visit refugees and Australian volunteers in Syria's largest refugee camp.

Fearnley spent two days in Damascus with representatives from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and Australian Volunteers International (AVI), sharing his experiences as a school teacher and as an athlete with a disability, with local dignitaries, children, teachers and health professionals.

"It was amazing to see the work that is done here. I had a basic awareness through my connection with AVI (board member), but to experience it first hand has brought a whole new perspective" Fearnley said. "I'm privileged to travel the world racing marathons, so when I get the opportunity to do something like this I try to help where I can," he added.

Helping where he could included sharing racing stories with school children and their parents and teachers within the Yarmouk refugee camp, and speaking to local health professionals about life in a wheelchair.

"To see the kid's eyes light up just when I visited their classroom was amazing. The teachers had so many questions and the parents of the children couldn't stop thanking me for sharing some of my stories. My visit isn't much though, compared to the assistance that other Aussies give in these communities".

The other Australians that Fearnley refers to are volunteers that work in camps like Yarmouk around the world, providing countless hours of work in local health clinics and schools.

"I had the chance to talk with some of the occupational therapists, physiotherapists and teachers that are here as volunteers through AVI. The assistance given to these communities is incredible and the programs being put in place to provide mobility aids to kids with a disability will make a real difference."

"I'm lucky enough to have a sponsor that provides custom fitted day and racing chairs, but most of the kids with a disability here have nothing at all. Hopefully through the programs in place their general mobility access will improve, and maybe even a racer or two will come out of it."

Stop Press: 23 January 2009

Wheelchair racer Fearnley begins 2009 season on Australia Day

Australian wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley begins his 2009 racing season in Monday's Oz Day 10km race around Sydney's Rocks precinct.

Fearnley will attempt to win his fifth straight Oz Day title in the 20th staging of the iconic road race. After an extended lay off over following his hectic 2008 calendar, Fearnley is looking forward to getting back into racing mode.

"I don't get to race on home soil very often and Sydney's a great place to kick-start the year " said Fearnley.

"For the first time in about 10 years I actually took a holiday over the Christmas break, and I'm feeling refreshed and ready to go. The competition here is always tough and a win first-up has set a solid platform for the season in the last few years, so to get another this year would be great" he added.

Following on from his career defining success in 2007 with 10 wins from 11 marathon starts, Fearnley solidified his position as the world's leading road racer in 2008 with a number of wins around the globe. His Oz Day 10km win was followed by success in a number of Northern Hemisphere road races, defence of his New York and Chicago marathon titles, and the crowning glory, his second Paralympic marathon Gold medal at the Beijing games.

Despite winning wheelchair racing titles all around the world over the last few years, Fearnley may race with an extra special title this Monday - Young Australian of the Year. In December last year Fearnley was awarded the 2009 New South Wales Young Australian of the Year title automatically qualifying him for the national honour to be awarded by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on Australia Day Eve in Canberra.

"I love racing and am proud of my achievements in sport, but to be considered for the Young Australian title is quite humbling and a little unexpected. I don't consider the things I do on and off the track to be extra ordinary, I just do my best and help out where I can".

Fearnley's help includes his role as an ambassador for a number of organisations, including children's charities Royal Far West and Day of Difference Foundation, and his work championing the Paralympic movement around Australia.

The Oz Day 10km race is held annually around Sydney's Rocks precinct, starting and finishing opposite Circular Quay train station. Competitors complete two loops of a 5km track that travels through the Rocks and under the Harbour Bridge before returning to the start line.

Stop Press: 12 October 2008 Fearnley defend title in Chicago

Australian Paralympic champion Kurt Fearnley has dominated a strong field to defend his Chicago marathon title.

Fearnley finished in a time of 1 hour 30 minutes 16 seconds, more than two minutes ahead of his nearest rival Masazumi Soejima of Japan, with Krige Schabort of South Africa a further four minutes behind.

The win comes just four weeks since Fearnley defended his marathon Gold medal in the Beijing Paralympic Games.

Fearnley and Soejima cleared away from the pack early in the race and by the 25km mark had opened up a two and a half minute gap on the rest of the field. The Australian broke the Japanese athlete over the next five kilometres, pushing strongly to put a two minute break between first and second. He maintained the lead to take his fourth marathon title of 2008.

A tired Fearnley was happy with the result.

"That was hard work out there today. Soejima is such a strong racer and I couldn't drop him. He was one of the strongest in Beijing and unlucky to finish out of the medals, so I knew he'd be there or thereabouts today" Fearnley said.

"This year was all about Beijing with any other results a bonus. To finish ahead here is really pleasing as I wasn't sure how I'd pull up after the games" he added.

Fearnley's attention now turns to New York in three weeks time, where he will attempt to finish his year with a third straight New York marathon title.

"It's been a great year so far. New York's my favourite race and another win there would really put the icing on the cake".

Fearnley will face the second strongest field of the year in New York, with the Paralympic marathon the only one deeper. Fierce rival David Weir of the United Kingdom will be there, as well as the other medallists from Beijing, Ernst van Dyk of South Africa and Sasahara Hiroki of Japan.

Stop Press: 10 October 2008
Fearnley to tackle Chicago Marathon

Australian Paralympic champion Kurt Fearnley will attempt to defend his Chicago marathon title on Sunday.

The race will be Fearnley's first since winning Gold in the Beijing Paralympic marathon last month.

Fearnley, who also picked up three individual medals on the track in Beijing, had an arduous Paralympic week with crashes, protests and controversy dogging his campaign. After a short break with family and friends, he is excited to be back on the marathon trail.

"I needed a break after Beijing. It was always going to be a long week, but after everything that happened I was emotionally drained. It was great to sit down with everyone, relax and reflect on what had happened. I feel refreshed and ready to attack. Last year was the first time I'd raced in Chicago and I like the course, so it's a good place to start up again" Fearnley said.

After Chicago, Fearnley will finish his 2008 season in New York where he will attempt to win his third straight title after wins in 2006 and 2007. Fearnley's 2006 New York win started a run of success that has seen him dominate the marathon distance around the world with 13 wins on five continents, culminating in the defence of his Athens Paralympic Gold in Beijing.

Stop Press: 4 July 2008
Fearnley finalised Beijing preparation with another win

Australian wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley has rounded off his Beijing preparation in style with his third road race win in a week at the Peachtree 10km in Atlanta.

Fearnley defended his Peachtree title in a time of 19 minutes 54 seconds, finishing well clear of South African Krige Schabert and Mexican Aaron Gordian. Earlier this week he won the Long Island 10km in New York and the 5km title in Cedartown, Georgia.

Peachtree is recognised as the pinnacle of short course wheelchair road racing, and after dreaming of winning the title for so long, Fearnley was overjoyed with his second win.

"Peachtree has always held a special place in my heart. I've been coming here for 10 years now and it was the first place I raced internationally. To win here once was great, to do it back-to-back is just awesome" Fearnley said.

Fearnley has not been beaten over 10km since July 2006, an unprecedented streak taking in seven straight wins. His win rounds off his Beijing Paralympic preparation and he will enter the games with a target on his back. A target he is happy to wear.

"I had a slow start to the year so I came to the US this year to try and be competitive, get a couple of good times and try and squeeze a win. To win at every start is a huge bonus. I'll go to Beijing now with a bit of extra confidence and probably a target hanging over me. With the races being so close now, the psychological advantage I gain from these three wins is great and adds to everything I've put in on the training track" he said.

The Australian Paralympic Committee confirmed Fearnley's selection in the Paralympic team this week and he will compete in the 800m, 1500m, 5000m, Marathon and relays in Beijing. It will be Fearnley's third Paralympic games and we will attempt to add to the two Gold medals he won at the 2004 Athens games.

Stop Press: 2 July 2008

Fearnley makes it two from two in the US

Australian wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley made it two from two in the United States by winning the Cedartown 5km road race in Georgia overnight.

Fearnley won in a time of 9 minutes 45 seconds, finishing a wheelchair length ahead of a pack of athletes including Switzerland's Marcel Hug, Mexican Aaron Gordian and South African Ernst van Dyk.

The win - Fearnley's second at Cedartown - follows his victory in the Long Island 10km in New York on Sunday. Fearnley was surprised at the time after a tight, tactical contest.

"I can't believe we were only four seconds outside the course record. The race was really tight and the lead changed plenty of times. Things are really close. I think the records will tumble in China (at the Beijing Paralympic Games)" Fearnley said.

The depth of the field was illustrated by the top five finishers, only one was in the top five on Sunday at Long Island. Fearnley.

"We've got guys here from all over the world, pushing great times and it's so even. There's 10 - 20 blokes who could win on any given day, so it's definitely a psychological advantage to get up twice in three days" he said.

Fearnley hopes to make it three from three on Friday when he defends his Peachtree 10km title in Atlanta.

Stop Press: 29 June 2008

Fearnley wins in New York - again

Australian wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley has won the Long Island 10km road race in New York for the fourth time.

Fearnley won in convincing fashion, blowing away the field to finish 30 seconds ahead of his nearest rival, completing the 10km course in a time of 19 minutes 54 seconds. In second place was Japan's Yamamoto and in a breakthrough performance, Australia's Richard Coleman third. The win is Fearnley's fourth at Long Island in the last five years and alongside his two New York Marathon titles (2006 & 2007) cements his dominance in New York. With just 68 days until the Beijing Paralympics, Fearnley's win over a strong field is a welcome result.

"I came to the US this year with a different mindset, instead of win at all costs, it's about survival and preparation. The focus is on September, so to come out unscathed with a good time was my goal today. To finish in front and by such a margin is a nice bonus" Fearnley said.

Fearnley's Beijing preparation continues in the United States with a 5km road race in Cedartown, Georgia, on Wednesday (AEST) before finishing his trip in Atlanta with another 10km race and a track meet over the weekend.

Stop Press: 17 June 2008

Fearnley receives Commonwealth honour

Wheelchair racer Kurt Fearnley has been named best in the Commonwealth in an awards ceremony in Glasgow, Scotland last week.

Fearnley beat out an English archer and a Cypriot athlete to be named Outstanding Elite Male Athlete with a Disability at the 27th Commonwealth Sports Awards. Unable to attend the awards due to training commitments for the Beijing Paralympics, Fearnley's win came as a surprise to him.

"I hadn't heard anything after the awards last Thursday so I assumed I didn't win. My mate saw an article in the paper saying that only two Australians had won (Swimmer Lisbeth Trickett and Lawn Bowler Kelsey Cottrell) so again, I assumed I'd missed out" Fearnley said.

That was until Monday morning when Fearnley received an email from the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Commonwealth Games Association, Perry Crossthwaite, telling him that he had a trophy to deliver.

"When I got that news I was so excited. To be named best in the Commonwealth is the highest international honour that I've received, and to be recognised in the same company as previous winners like Ian Thorpe, Paula Radcliffe and now Lisbeth and Kelsey is just awesome".

Fearnley was recognised after dominating the sport of wheelchair athletics in 2007 with 10 wins from 11 marathon starts and a Gold medal in the 1500m at IAAF World Athletics Championships.

Stop Press: 13 April 2008 Fearnley nudged out in London Marathon

World Champion wheelchair racer Kurt Fearnley has made a promising yet disappointing start to 2008 with second place in the Flora London Marathon overnight.

Fearnley finished in a time of 1 hour 34 minutes, 4 seconds behind defending champion David Weir of England. A disappointed Fearnley battled a flat tyre and an early collision to finish runner-up to Weir for the second straight year.

"I'm gutted right now. To fight back from the crash at 10km, to get a flat at 20km and to finish just a couple of metres behind is devastating. I'm pushing great and to get so close again is hard to take" Fearnley said.

The incident packed race featured a number of collisions including a pile up on the final corner as seven athletes rounded together. Fearnley managed to steer clear of the final corner crash, however, was caught up in a collision at the 10km mark.

Despite his disappointment, the result is a good start to Fearnley's Beijing Paralympics preparation, with the games less than five months away. After a record breaking year in 2007 with 10 marathon wins from 11 starts – the one loss was in London – Fearnley has limited his schedule this year to ensure he is in prime condition for the games.

"This year's all about Beijing, so when I look back on this race in a couple of weeks I'll be happy. I've cut my racing right back this year to try and stay fresh for the games, so every chance I get to push with these guys is important".

Fearnley has little time to get over his London disappointment as he defends his Seoul International Wheelchair marathon title in two weeks time. He then races just one more time over the marathon distance before attempting to defend his Athens 2004 gold medal in September.

Stop Press: 26 January 2008 Fearnley's rolls continues into 2008

Australian Wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley has continued his amazing 2007 form into 2008, with victory in the Oz Day 10km race around Sydney's historic Rocks precinct.

The win, a record fourth consecutive around the Sydney circuit, came in a time of 20 minutes 32 seconds, equalling his own course record. Fearnley was happy with the result and his form, he said:

"It's great to get off to a winning start in a Paralympic year. After last year's results I really wanted to make sure I didn't start flat."

He added "I was a little surprised at the time, it's early in the season and I've been in heavy training. It's a great start to a big year".

2007 was a career defining year for Fearnley, with 10 marathon victories from 11 starts, and two world championship titles to sit alongside the three he won in 2006. As reigning World Champion over every distance from 800m to the Marathon, and defending gold medal winner in two events, Fearnley will definitely be the man to watch at the Beijing games.

Stop Press: 6 November 2007
Kurt's disability no handicap

KURT Fearnley could never get his wheelchair across those dusty paddocks surrounding his home in Carcoar.

"But that didn't stop him chasing rabbits with the rest of the boys," his father Glenn recalls. "Kurt just dumped the chair and crawled along with them . . . for kilometres sometimes."

This is one of those stories every young sports fan should have plastered on their bedroom wall.

[Click here to read the full article on the Daily Telegraph website](#)

Stop Press: 6 November 2007 New York, New York - Fearnley repeats

Australian Wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley has capped off a memorable 2007, by defending his title at the ING New York City Marathon overnight.

Fearnley broke the tape in 1 hour 33 minutes 58 seconds, beating home South African Krige Schabort by a little over a minute, with Soejima Masazumi of Japan in third. The result has capped off an amazing year for Fearnley with ten marathon victories from eleven starts, and two world championships over shorter distances (1500m & 10,000m).

A crowd favourite in New York, Fearnley was overjoyed with his win.

He said "That was hard work. The last 10km really hurt and I just kept thinking, keep going, just keep going. To win here once is amazing, twice is just unforgettable."

Fearnley, from the small NSW country town of Carcoar, had one fan in particular that was overjoyed with the win, a proud mother Jackie.

He said "It's not very often that I get to race with either of my parents in the crowd, so it's great to win with mum here. Last year I got to bring dad over and managed to show him the sites from the back of the winner's limo, so to repeat it for mum is just great".

Fearnley will now take a well earned break after an arduous 2007 campaign, before setting his sights on next year's Beijing Paralympics where he will defend his Athens 2004 marathon victory.

He said "I definitely won't be trying to repeat this year's program in 2008. I haven't finalised my calendar, but it will be lighter than this year, everything will revolve around Beijing."

Fearnley, however, has one other race inked into his schedule for 2008, a return trip to New York.

"I won't be partying too hard after Beijing because New York will be on the program for sure. I love everything about the race, the city, the crowd, the competition, there's nothing else like it."

Stop Press: 8 October 2007 Fearnley takes another title

Australian wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley has won the 2007 La Salle Bank Chicago Marathon in a course record time despite stifling conditions. With temperatures peaking in the mid-thirties, Fearnley edged out South African rival Krige Schabert in a time of 1 hour 28 minutes and 6 seconds. It was Fearnley's ninth marathon win in 2007, and his third major US marathon win in the last twelve months.

Fearnley said "That was a tough push. I've just come from the UK where we lucky to see double digit highs, so to race in the mid-thirties was a shock to the system. I'm really happy with the time though, and it's great to push a good race leading into New York."

Fearnley now heads home to Australia to finalise his preparation for his season-ending race in the ING New York City Marathon. After winning the race for the first time in 2006, Fearnley is looking to finish his record breaking year with a convincing title defence.

He said "I love everything about the New York race, the location, the crowds, the competition, they're all first class. I'm looking forward to defending my title and hopefully I can give the course record a nudge as well."

Stop Press: 1 September 2007 Fearnley triumphs in Osaka

Australian Wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley has added to Australia's golden results at the IAAF World Athletics Championships in Osaka with a win in the 1500m demonstration race.

Fearnley edged local hero Soejima Masazumi by 0.3 of a second in a time of 3:26.30, with Switzerland's Marcel Hug a further 0.1 of a second behind.

In a slow, tactical race, Fearnley stayed patient throughout before leaving the field in his wake with 100m to go.

Fearnley said "It's great to finally win one of these demonstration races. I went close in Athens, but couldn't quite get there so to get this one is special".

Fearnley now gets back on the road, attempting to retain various titles in the UK before finishing his year at the ING New York Marathon title, a race he won for the first time in 2006.

Stop Press: 15 April 2007 Fearnley's Roll Continues

Australian Paralympic champion Kurt Fearnley has got over the disappointment of missing out the Laureus World Sports Awards by taking out the Paris Marathon overnight. In a tight, tactical race Fearnley triumphed in a sprint finish over Mexican athlete Saul Mendoza, in a time of 1 hour 30 minutes and 45 seconds. The win is Fearnley's seventh straight marathon victory, with six from six in 2007.

Pushing through Paris' city streets is another highlight on Fearnley's whirlwind international tour, Fearnley said "It's quite surreal to push down the Champs Elysees in front of a big crowd, and to finish in front is a great thrill".

The race didn't look like going Fearnley's way early on with tough competition from Swiss veteran Heinz Frei "Saul (Mendoza) and I kept breaking from the pack and Heinz kept reeling us back in. It was tough to keep out in front, but we managed to break them after about 30km."

The Aussie star's 2007 season continues next week with the London Marathon, before crossing the European continent to defend his title at the Seoul International Wheelchair Marathon the following Sunday.

Stop Press: 3 April 2007 Fearnley Misses out at Laureus Awards

Wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley has missed out on the top gong at this year's Laureus World Sports Awards. Fearnley, Australia's sole 2007 nominee, was nominated for his performances in the sport of Wheelchair Athletics with fantastic results on both track and road throughout 2006.

His fantastic year featured 3 World Championship gold medals and 4 World Class marathon wins including the prestigious New York City Marathon in November.

Fearnley said "It's been an honour to represent Australia at these awards. To be a part of the festivities over the past couple of days has been great. Hopefully I'll be able to keep pushing well and will get back here one day to take out the trophy".

A number of past and present Australian athletes - including Laureus Academy member Dawn Fraser - have criticised the awards and their nomination process in local press after a number of Australian stars missed out on nomination this year. Fearnley, however, was far from disappointed, he said "Martin's (Martin Braxenthaler, Germany's 3 time Paralympic gold medallist Skier) results have been amazing and it's great to see the performances of a fellow disabled athlete get recognised on the world stage. I'm looking forward to sharing a beer with him later to offer my congratulations".

Fearnley is well on his way to being nominated next year with an outstanding start to his 2007 season. Marathon wins in Los Angeles, South Africa and Rome, coupled with track wins in Australia and Japan have maintained his status as the man to beat in Wheelchair Athletics. The next two months will see him compete in four more marathons, with races in Paris, London, Switzerland and South Korea, before tackling the American Summer Series and the IAAF World Athletics Championships in Osaka, Japan (pending qualification).

Stop Press: 19 March 2007 Fearnley Conquers Rome

Australian Paralympic Champion Kurt Fearnley has continued his amazing run of form with a victory in the Rome Marathon overnight. Battling a weak field, the clock was Fearnley's major rival as he pushed in at 1 hour 35 minutes 28 seconds, more than half an hour under the previous wheelchair course record

The winding cobble stoned course proved hard work for Fearnley, he said "There was about 20km of cobble stones out there, so it was a rough ride. Racing on my own is more of a mental test than physical, so I am really happy to pull a time that far under the record".

The win is Fearnley's fourth marathon victory of the year, going with his win two weeks ago in Los Angeles and his double-win in South Africa in February. Fearnley's next stop is the Laureus Sports Awards in Barcelona, where he is Australia's sole finalist on sports glamour night. The break from competing will be short lived however, with 2 top-class marathons in April (Paris and London).

Stop Press: 29 April 2007 Fearnley back in the winner's circle

Australian wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley has shrugged off the disappointment of a second place in the London marathon last weekend, by defending his 2006 title at the Seoul International Wheelchair Marathon early this morning.

Fearnley pushed a personal best time of 1 hour 22 minutes 17 seconds to break the previous course record by nearly three minutes, finishing in front of a group of Japanese athletes and South African rival Ernst van Dyke. After a tight finish Fearnley had to wait more than two hours to confirm his win while race officials studied video footage of the closing stages.

Fearnley said "I was sure that I got there in front, only by a couple of inches, but I knew I got there. To have to wait that long made brought in a few doubts, but I'm glad the tape proved my victory. It's the closest race I've been in and to push a course record and a PB after the workload I've had over the past couple of months is great. I'm looking forward to a bit of a break."

Fearnley's idea of a break is 3 weeks of intensive training with his Australian coach Andrew Dawes in Europe, before tackling a number of European track meets throughout May and June. July then sees him cross the Atlantic to North America where he aims to defend a number of short-course road titles.

Stop Press: 22 April 2007
Fearnley pipped at the post

Australian wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley's 2007 unbeaten run has come to an end at the London Marathon overnight.

Coming off six straight wins in 2007, Fearnley was beaten in a photo finish by defending champion and hometown favourite Englishman David Weir. Both athletes finished in the identical time of 1 hour 30 minutes and 51 seconds, however, the photo gave Weir the win by the barest of margins.

It was a two man race for the majority, with Weir and Fearnley opening up a 2 minute break by the half way mark, stretching the gap to 3 minutes by the finish line.

Despite the defeat, Fearnley was pleased with his performance "Full credit to Dave (Weir). He had a lot of supporters out here today and he pushed really well. I haven't raced a competitor that tough in a long time, although it's always tough to finish second I still hold my head high."

Fearnley and Weir have built a strong rivalry over the past 3 years and they have become the pair to beat on the international racing circuit. Last year they both won 3 IPC World Championship gold medals each, however, this year Fearnley holds the edge with a two-one win margin over Weir.

Fearnley said "I managed to beat Dave in Sydney this year as well as in Los Angeles, but he's taken one back off me here. I enjoy the rivalry and look forward to the next time we meet."

Fearnley's journey does not end in London, with a whirlwind trip to Korea to defend his title at the Seoul International Wheelchair marathon next weekend, before joining up with his Australian coach in Europe for some intensive training before the North American summer series.

Stop Press: 15 April 2007
Fearnley's Roll Continues

Australian Paralympic champion Kurt Fearnley has got over the disappointment of missing out the Laureus World Sports Awards by taking out the Paris Marathon overnight. In a tight, tactical race Fearnley triumphed in a sprint finish over Mexican athlete Saul Mendoza, in a time of 1 hour 30 minutes and 45 seconds. The win is Fearnley's seventh straight marathon victory, with six from six in 2007.

Pushing through Paris' city streets is another highlight on Fearnley's whirlwind international tour, Fearnley said "It's quite surreal to push down the Champs Elysees in front of a big crowd, and to finish in front is a great thrill".

The race didn't look like going Fearnley's way early on with tough competition from Swiss veteran Heinz Frei "Saul (Mendoza) and I kept breaking from the pack and Heinz kept reeling us back in. It was tough to keep out in front, but we managed to break them after about 30km."

The Aussie star's 2007 season continues next week with the London Marathon, before crossing the European continent to defend his title at the Seoul International Wheelchair Marathon the following Sunday.

Stop Press: 3 April 2007
Fearnley Misses out at Laureus Awards

Wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley has missed out on the top gong at this year's Laureus World Sports Awards. Fearnley, Australia's sole 2007 nominee, was nominated for his performances in the sport of Wheelchair Athletics with fantastic results on both track and road throughout 2006.

His fantastic year featured 3 World Championship gold medals and 4 World Class marathon wins including the prestigious New York City Marathon in November.

Fearnley said "It's been an honour to represent Australia at these awards. To be a part of the festivities over the past couple of days has been great. Hopefully I'll be able to keep pushing well and will get back here one day to take out the trophy".

A number of past and present Australian athletes - including Laureus Academy member Dawn Fraser - have criticised the awards and their nomination process in local press after a number of Australian stars missed out on nomination this year. Fearnley, however, was far from disappointed, he said "Martin's (Martin Braxenthaler, Germany's 3 time Paralympic gold medallist Skier) results have been amazing and it's great to see the performances of a fellow disabled athlete get recognised on the world stage. I'm looking forward to sharing a beer with him later to offer my congratulations".

Fearnley is well on his way to being nominated next year with an outstanding start to his 2007 season. Marathon wins in Los Angeles, South Africa and Rome, coupled with track wins in Australia and Japan have maintained his status as the man to beat in Wheelchair Athletics. The next two months will see him compete in four more marathons, with races in Paris, London, Switzerland and South Korea, before tackling the American Summer Series and the IAAF World Athletics Championships in Osaka, Japan (pending qualification).

Stop Press: 19 March 2007 Fearnley Conquers Rome

Australian Paralympic Champion Kurt Fearnley has continued his amazing run of form with a victory in the Rome Marathon overnight. Battling a weak field, the clock was Fearnley's major rival as he pushed in at 1 hour 35 minutes 28 seconds, more than half an hour under the previous wheelchair course record

The winding cobble stoned course proved hard work for Fearnley, he said "There was about 20km of cobble stones out there, so it was a rough ride. Racing on my own is more of a mental test than physical, so I am really happy to pull a time that far under the record".

The win is Fearnley's fourth marathon victory of the year, going with his win two weeks ago in Los Angeles and his double-win in South Africa in February. Fearnley's next stop is the Laureus Sports Awards in Barcelona, where he is Australia's sole finalist on sports glamour night. The break from competing will be short lived however, with 2 top-class marathons in April (Paris and London).

Stop Press: 5 March 2007 Fearnley's Success Continues

Australian Wheelchair racing champion Kurt Fearnley has continued his amazing form with a win overnight in the Los Angeles Marathon. Fearnley, Australia's sole nominee at April's prestigious Laureus World Sports Awards, took out the race for the second time (2005) in a course record time of 1 hour 23 minutes 40 seconds. His 4 minute victory is his 3rd Marathon victory within a month and his 5th straight international win. The course record time beat the previous record of 1 hour 24min 48sec set by 2006 Laureus Athlete of the Year with a Disability, Ernst Van Dyk of South Africa.

Fearnley's win solidifies his reputation as the "Marathon Man" of Wheelchair sport and he is now the reigning champion in 7 world marathons across 5 continents, including the Paralympic and World titles. The race did not run as planned for Fearnley, however, he is over the moon with the result. Fearnley said "Having raced Dave (English racer David Weir) a lot over the last 6 months I expected this race to follow form into a tight finish. But around the 15km mark I had a surge to the front and saw a small gap open. I made a metre on Dave which turned into 2, then kept the head down until he was out sight". Fearnley and Weir had dropped the pack in the first 5 kilometres of the race, and after shaking Weir at the 15 kilometre mark, the only competitor Kurt had was the course record.

Fearnley now heads to Japan for a track race over 5000m before heading to Europe for the Rome, Paris and London marathons. In between race meets he will take in the sights of Barcelona whilst in town for the Laureus World Sports Awards "Just to be nominated for the Laureus Award is amazing,

but as the sole Australian nominee I feel extremely honoured. To be recognised on the world stage alongside sporting stars like Federer and Woods is an amazing feeling, something I'll never forget".

Stop Press: 27 February 2007

Kurt Fearnley nominated for the prestigious Laureus World Sports awards

REIGNING Paralympic and World Wheelchair Marathon champion Kurt Fearnley will carry Australia's hopes at the prestigious Laureus World Sports awards.

Fearnley is the sole Australian after the country's cricketers, women's basketballers, and seven-time world surfing champion Layne Beachley missed nominations.

He will battle for the prize of world sportsperson with a disability after an amazing year in which he won the New York City Marathon and emerged as the dominant force in men's wheelchair racing.

Fearnley, who won Paralympic gold in Athens despite having a flat tyre, won four marathons from six starts in 2006. He survived a crash at the 20km mark in New York to win by more than six minutes in record time.

A record number of leading sports journalists from 128 countries voted this year to select the nominees for the Laureus awards. The winners, to be chosen by a specialist panel, will be announced at a ceremony in Barcelona on April 2.

Stop Press: 11 February 2007

Fearnley's success rolls into 2007

Australian Paralympic Wheelchair racing champion Kurt Fearnley has continued his outstanding 2006 form into the New Year, winning his second race from as many starts.

Fearnley took out the South African National Championship Marathon in Port Elizabeth, with a win over local hero and defending champion Krige Schabort. In Fearnley's first trip to the African continent he won in a close finish from Schabort and Mexican Athlete of the 20th Century, Saul Mendoza in a time of 1:40.03.

The win, alongside his Oz Day 10km success in Sydney, continues Fearnley's dominating form from 2006, where he won an astonishing 4 marathons and 3 World Championship gold medals in the space of 6 months.

Fearnley said "It's great to get these early wins under my belt. I worked hard over the Australian summer on my strength and technique, and it's good to see the training paying off on the road".

The hard work does not end there for Fearnley, with an arduous 2007 schedule on the horizon "From here, I race once more in South Africa, before heading to races in Los Angeles, Tokyo, Paris, Rome, London and Zurich, before heading home in July to prepare for the IAAF World Championships in Japan".

Fearnley has now won Wheelchair Marathons on 5 different continents with his African victory sitting alongside wins in Australia, Europe, North America and Asia. "I haven't managed to get to South America yet, but it would be great to race there one day. I've really enjoyed this trip to Africa, it's been a real eye-opener and can't wait to see more of the country over the next 7 days".

The South American conquest will have to take a back seat for now with Fearnley's 2008 Beijing preparations taking precedence over individual race success. As reigning Paralympic and World Champion Fearnley is an early favourite for the gold in China, however there are thousands of kilometres to push, roll and fly before reaching the Beijing starting line.

Stop Press: 19 January 2007

Fearnley looking to the future

After a bumper year in 2006, Australian Paralympic Wheelchair champion Kurt Fearnley is looking to continue his outstanding form into 2007.

2006 was a career defining year for Fearnley and he is looking to build on his successes leading up to next year's Olympic and Paralympic Games in Beijing. Finishing with 3 major marathon victories, 5 middle-distance professional road race wins, and 3 World Championship Gold medals in 2006, Fearnley heads into this International season as the man-to-beat.

After a two day track meet and a 5km Road Race Time Trial in Canberra, the roadshow then moves on to Sydney for Australia's premier wheelchair race, the Oz Day 10km, contested in Circular Quay's iconic Rocks precinct.

Fearnley is attempting to win his 3rd straight Oz Day Race, with competitors hitting speeds of up to 50km an hour on the winding 10km course.

"This race kicked off my career and also kicks off my competitive season each year. It's my only chance to race in front of family and friends, and is a great opportunity to show my international rivals the best place in the world to race. It doesn't get any better than racing in my home-town, on Australia Day, on one of the world's best road courses."

2007 will see Fearnley jet-setting across the world with major races in the USA, Great Britain, Europe and South Africa, before finalising his Beijing preparation back in Australia next summer. Fearnley concedes that this year could make the difference between victory and failure next year "Success in 2007 won't guarantee medals in Beijing, however, it certainly would be a step in the right direction".

Stop Press: 6 November 2006 Australian Champion Conquers New York

Australian Paralympic champion Kurt Fearnley has won the ING New York City marathon in spectacular fashion.

Fearnley, the reigning Paralympic and World Wheelchair Marathon Champion dominated the race, winning by over 6 minutes smashing the course record in the process. His time of 1 hour 29 minutes and 17 seconds broke the previous course record of 1:31:11 set in 2005 by South African Ernst Van Dyk.

Fearnley has a knack of winning in spectacular fashion, and New York was no exception. Following on from his flat tyre win in the Athens Paralympics, Kurt was involved in a crash at the 20km mark of the New York course. After hitting a series of pot holes he was thrown from his chair, connecting with the city sidewalk damaging his ribs and shoulder in the process. "When I hit the deck, my first thought was to get up and reach for my chair. I was worried that it may roll away down the street. Thankfully it was still there and I managed to get back in without losing too much time". The pain of his injuries soon set in, but with gritted teeth and a steely determination he pushed on through the pain barrier.

Crowd support played a big factor in the closing kilometres with the New York crowd cheering him on like one of their own. US television network NBC televised the entire race live and after seeing the footage of the crash, locals rushed from their buildings to cheer him home "They were running on to the street going crazy. Outside of the Sydney Olympics, I've never experienced crowd support quite like it. It was a real buzz, something I'll always remember".

The win capped off a terrific year for Fearnley, and after an exhausting schedule he's looking forward to a well earned break. With four marathon wins from six starts this year, Fearnley is now seen as the dominant force in men's wheelchair racing, and is looking to carry his form on to the 2008 Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games. The win in New York, goes with victories in Sydney, Seoul and Assen, and with two World Championship track medals to boot, 2006 has been a defining year in the career of this young Australian champion.

Stop Press: 30 October 2006 Fearnley's Fastest Marathon

Wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley has pushed a personal best time in Japan's Oita Wheelchair Marathon. Smashing his previous PB set in his Athens Paralympic win, Kurt crossed the line in 1 hour 24 minutes and 16 seconds, 1 minute and 20 seconds quicker than his previous best.

In a photo finish, only metres separated the top 5 racers after 42km, with Kurt getting pipped on the line by home favourite Hiroki Sasahara. Fearnley finished with silver, in front of another local Choke Yasuoka and Swiss World Record holder Heinz Frei.

"I usually pay little attention to finishing times as my only intention is to get to the line first, but it is definitely nice to see an improvement and to know that I'm still headed in the right direction. I was really hurting over the final 10km and after seeing the time it's no surprise."

Kurt now has seven days to rest and rebuild for his final race in 2006, the ING New York City Marathon. In a season to rival his 2004 Paralympic success, Kurt has taken out 3 World Championship titles, the Seoul Marathon, 3 Professional 10km victories and numerous other podium finishes.

"Between now and Sunday my sole focus is the Marathon. I don't get out of bed unless I'm doing something that will help me win next weekend".

Kurt is focused on finishing the year on a winning note and it all comes down to NY this Sunday.

Stop Press: 4 October 2006 Fearnley's Great North Run

Kurt Fearnley has completed the British leg of his world tour with a win in the Great North Run. After leaving his competition at 3km Kurt pushed his way to the win in 42 minutes and 42 seconds. His time was three and a half minutes ahead of his closest rival, Ralph Brunner of Germany, and just 7 seconds outside the course record.

"It's great to finish with another win. The Run was quite an event and there were Aussie's all over the place. With Craig Mottram winning the 3km in a world record and Benita Johnson taking silver in the Half Marathon it was nice to be at a race with Aussie accents and familiar faces". Fearnley was under record time until the 16km mark, before battling a head wind to finish just outside.

The win confirms Kurt's status as the man to beat in wheelchair racing and he will start favourite in his two remaining races of the year, the Japanese Oita Marathon and the New York City Marathon.

Stop Press: 29 September 2006 Fearnley dominates the Tunnel 2K

Another impressive victory for Kurt occurred over night in the UK at the Tyne Tunnel 2K. Kurt came from behind at the halfway mark to win the race by 30 seconds. His time breaks the previous course record by more than 40 seconds showing that he is the man to beat in international wheelchair racing. "I'm absolutely stoked with the result, everything seems to be rolling in the right direction and with only 3 races left on my 2006 calendar I've definitely had a year to remember". Within the last month Kurt has won the Sydney Marathon, 9 out of 10 World Championship races and now the most prestigious 2 kilometre wheelchair race in the world.

Kurt will now contest the Great North Run in Newcastle upon Tyne on Sunday before finishing his year in November with 2 marathons in 7 days, in Japan and New York.

Stop Press: 12 September 2006 Fearnley closes with another Victory

Kurt Fearnley has finished with his most successful result in a major athletics meet. In the first major event since the 2004 Athens Paralympics, Fearnley has taken home 3 gold medals and 1 bronze from the 2006 IPC World Championships staged in Assen, Holland. After starting the meet with a bronze medal in the 1500m, Fearnley finished with a flourish taking out three Gold medals in the final 2 days of competition. He started his run with the 800m, winning by just 0.2 of a second in a Championship

Record time, edging out Swiss rival Marcel Hug. Later in the day he took out the 5000m, an event he's made his own since Athens. Winning in a time of 11:20.56 Fearnley again edged out his competition by less than a second.

Fearnley finished his championship with a win in the Marathon, a race that wended through the cobblestoned streets of downtown Assen. After battling through fatigue early in the race, Kurt built momentum with each kilometre and at the 27km mark made a break on the field with 2 others, Swiss World Record holder Heinz Frei and Japan's Masazumi Soejima. With just 500m to go, Kurt hit the lead, out sprinting his rivals to win in a photo finish from Frei.

Finishing the meet with 9 wins from 10 starts across heats, semis and finals Kurt was obviously spent, "Meets like this don't come along very often, and to finish with 3 golds and a bronze, I'm really happy with my performance". Fearnley's season isn't over yet with a number of upcoming meets including the New York Marathon, Oita International Wheelchair Marathon and Britain's Tunnel 2km.

Stop Press: 16 August 2006 Fearnley chases World Championship Gold

Kurt Fearnley's month long campaign to gain the title of World Champion begins 17 August 2006. Fearnley will compete in the Zurich Golden League meet with international athletes including sprinters Marion Jones, Asafa Powell, and long distance masters Kipchichir and Aussie Craig Mottram.

Zurich is hosting a Men's 1500m wheelchair event, inviting only 2 Non-European athletes, American up and comer Jordan Bird, and Fearnley.

This is Fearnley's first chance to race in a Golden League event and he is enjoying the whole experience, "A chance to race in front of a big crowd, in a class field and with a few dollars on the line, it doesn't get much better". The race is definitely a highlight of the wheelchair track racing circuit, with a healthy prize pool and additional incentives for world records.

IPC World Championships: 2 - 9 September 2006

This is the first of Kurt's warmup events leading into the IPC World Championships in Assen, Holland, in September. Kurt is hoping to add a World Championship title to his growing list of successes. Over the past two years he has won 2 Paralympic Gold medals, back to back Ozday 10km titles, LA Marathon, Seoul marathon, Toronto 10km, Long Island 10km and is the current holder of the Road World Record in the 5km.

A win in Assen would be Kurt's first World Championship, and he is looking to find out if he can once again top the podium "This is why I train through the days, weeks, months and years. To throw yourself at the best in the world and see if you can end up on top." Kurt will compete in the 800m, 1500m, 5km, Marathon and 4 x 100m relay at the World championships.