

Home-grown Champion Returns

A home-grown champion returns to the Garden City this weekend, hoping for a repeat of the last time he lined up for the ASB Christchurch Marathon.

Dougal Thorburn has been a lot of places and won a lot of races. But Christchurch is where it started, and where he clocked his fastest marathon.

The 36-year-old doctor was bought up in Christchurch, before moving away for medical school. For the past decade he has been a doctor in Wellington, and sometimes one of New Zealand's best distance runners.

Running plays second-fiddle to Thorburn's medical career, he has found time every now and then to claim national titles over the marathon (2013) and mountain running (2016), not to mention several top 10 placings at the ASB Christchurch Marathon.

Having previously finishing seventh and ninth and then second in the half marathon in Christchurch, in 2016 he notched up his fastest ever full marathon to run away from 2015 winner Hirotaka Tanimoto (Japan) and 2017 champion Ciaran Faherty (Ireland) to clock 2hrs 24min 51secs.

Dougal Thorburn



With the fastest time in this year's field, not to mention course experience and local support, Thorburn is the odds-on favourite to repeat his win when the 38th ASB Christchurch kicks off from Cathedral Square at 8:00am this Sunday. But he will need to keep a wary eye on a handful of other visitors to the Garden City.

Palmertson North's Will O'Connor won the Buller Marathon and was second in the Hawke's Bay Marathon in 2017. New Zealand mountain running rep, Dwight Grieve from Te Anau, is also expected to challenge. But Australian Brett Ellis has a best of 2hrs 29min and has come to the flat, fast and cool Christchurch course in the best shape of his life and looking to run 2hrs 25min.

Race director, Chris Cox, is thrilled to see Thorburn returning to his old stomping ground, saying, "Dougal cut his teeth on the Christchurch running scene, so it's great to see him returning to support the scene of his last marathon victory."

The ASB Christchurch Marathon is more than merely a footrace, however. With options including the Full Marathon run, Half Marathon run and walk, the 10k run and walk and the Kids' Mara'Fun, this is a festival of fitness with something for everyone.

"We're still taking late entries on Saturday down at Cathedral Square," says Cox. "So, we challenge everyone from individuals to schools, businesses and community groups to be a part of a great occasion."

City host ChristchurchNZ General Manager of Attraction Linda Falwasser says the Marathon is a great opportunity for people all ages to participate in a renowned running event. "Christchurch is the perfect location for events like these - we have an accessible city surrounded by mountains all the way to the sea," Ms Falwasser says.

Race day is this Sunday 3rd June. Late entries for the 2018 ASB Christchurch Marathon will be taken on Saturday at Cathedral Square marathon HQ. Full info at: www.christchurchmarathon.co.nz.