

2007 Feilding Marathon report

With a trip to Kathmandu on his mind, Linton army engineer Sam Baker wasn't expecting to finish the Feilding Marathon on Saturday, let alone to sneak into third place.

But by the halfway mark, the Tokomaru athlete was feeling so comfortable he kept running and kicked past Palmerston North hope Tim Carroll.

"I had no intention of running the marathon," Baker, 26, said.

"I was always planning to stop around the 20km mark, but I was feeling reasonably good and decided to keep on going."

On Wednesday, Baker flies to Kathmandu to compete in the world's highest marathon, the Mount Everest teams' event.

With three years of planning and saving for the race of a lifetime, Baker said he was treating Saturday's event as a warm-up.

"I'm conscious that I need to look after my body for the event over there."

It was also a fast finish at Timona Park for Wellington Scottish's **Rohan Biggs, who won the men's** event in 2hr 46min 18sec.

"This is my best time by two minutes which I was really surprised by," Biggs said. "I went into the race without huge expectations, but the conditions were really good. I caught up to Tim Carroll at about the 8km mark, we ran together for another 10km and then I pulled away."

Biggs said it was a fantastic day on the flat course and was the first time he had completed a marathon in a negative split time - recording a faster second half.

Brendan Quirke from Hutt Valley was second and Baker was third in 3:04:12. Kim Black from Rangiwahia won the veterans event and came in fifth on the 42.195km course.

In the women's section, Hamilton's Nikki Edwards won comfortably in a time of 3:23:07. Palmerston North's Patricia Stichbury was second, a further 18 minutes back.

A feature of Saturday's race was the eight members of the 100 club - athletes who have completed more than 100 marathons.

Michael Stewart from Hutt Valley celebrated his 30th Feilding marathon finish, Malcolm Gray completed his 100th marathon and Roger Morrison his 99th.

Hutt Valley won the men's team event with Wanganui second.

Race organiser David Penfold said he was pleased with the size of the women's field.

"We had over 50 men and a large women's field."