

# A special run

By Danielle Galvin

A COUPLE of lollies was all it took to bribe five-year-old Jackson Fitzsimmons to compete in the Melbourne Marathon.

The Pakenham youngster, who has cerebral palsy, rode for three kilometres on his specialised bike in the marathon on Sunday October 9.

The ASICS marathon started at Batman Avenue, with contestants heading north and following the path around to Birrarung Marr.

Jackson managed to participate in the event using his specialised bike, with the help of his mum.

“Once we got him in the bike, it was hard to get him out of it,” mum Melanie Oliver said.

Jackson was all smiles at the event, walking for the Cerebral Palsy Education Centre (CPEC) who have helped give him a better start in life.

He was given a walker and a pram from the CPEC and his speech has improved since he started at the centre.

Ms Oliver has a hard time keeping up with the active Pakenham boy.

“Jackson rode the entire three kilometres from Rod Laver. I had to bribe him with three snakes to get in the bike!” she said.

“It’s the longest he’s ever ridden and he did it in 35 minutes.”

Jackson received a medal at the end of the marathon, which he was impressed by.

His mum was pleased the weather held out. “This is the third year he’s done the marathon. He was a bit tired after it but it was a great atmosphere.”

In the 12 months since the last Melbourne Marathon, Jackson has come in leaps and bounds.

Last year, he participated in the event using his walking aid.

Ms Oliver is betting her cheeky young son will be walking the three kilometres in next year’s marathon.

“On the Sunday Night program they had one young boy Tate Kemp from CPEC who was eight or nine years old and he walked the event. Maybe that will be him next year,” she said.

Jackson was diagnosed with cerebral palsy spastic quadriplegia before his first birthday.



**Above: Five-year-old Jackson Fitzsimmons stood out at the Melbourne Marathon in October.**

It’s been a year to remember for Jackson, who met Hawks stars Michael Osborne, Isaac Smith and Jarryd Roughead in early August at a morning tea run by the CPEC.

The players visited the kids at the CPEC

as part of National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Week on Wednesday 3 August.

The next couple of months are looking up for Jackson. “Like any kid, he’s so excited about Christmas and getting presents.”