

Sandown Road Relays Report

Sat Aug 9, 2008

Saturday August 9 had the Geelong Region Cross Country team back at Sandown Race Course for the 2nd time this year for the prestigious Sandown Road Relays. In what I believe was a first for many years, we had no junior teams this year - hopefully we can have double the usual number in 2009!

I couldn't justify having Chris Sly, our junior team manager, drive the bus just for the senior runners and so it was that the car pool organisational challenge took place once again. That said, Phil Christian came up with the goods by providing his own "minibus of sorts" in the form of his 7 seater Hyundai Odyssey into which piled one big Geelong Cross Country Team happy family!

Having won the men's open division 1 title in 2007, we were keen to have a crack at defending the title. With Box Hill looking like they might be slightly weaker this week with 1 or 2 of their runners out for the City to Surf, combined with Matt McDonough running for us for the first time this season, it was looking like it would be an interesting race.

Matt lead off for us in the first of 6 x 6.2km legs (each lap being 3.1kms). It would be an understatement to say that he ran an absolute blinder! Having not raced for some time, he wasn't sure what to expect. Towards the end of the 2nd lap, he pulled up alongside the leader, Sandringham's Clint Perrett. Reportedly Clint looked over his shoulder briefly, then looked again with a clear expression on his face that read "who the (add your preferred expletive) are you!" Matt handed over only a few seconds behind Perrett to record a time of 18.11 that would end up being the 3rd fastest time of the day.

Following Matt was Nick Wightman, Michael McNaughton, Lee Troop, Ryan Christian and myself. The lead chopped and changed multiple times and by the time Troop took the stage, we were running 4th with Knox, Box Hill & Ballarat City ahead. Troop was looking for his final hit out before Beijing on the 24th and with the headwind having picked up for the uphill back straight, conditions would certainly prove challenging. Despite that, he once again flew around the course making steady progress on the runners ahead and recorded the fastest time of the day with his 17.57. Despite this feat, we still found ourselves in 4th place but there was now only about 200m from 1st to 4th.

Ryan took off after the runners ahead and quickly caught both Ballarat City and Knox. I warmed up for the final leg with simple instructions, "Don't let Ballarat beat us!" And so it was that I headed off in 2nd place, no idea how far ahead of Ballarat City but fully aware that their final runner, Ash Watson, usually runs faster than I! Things looked great, right up until I hit the home straight with about 600m to run when Ash went flying past. I won't repeat what my mind was saying but if you added an expletive above, feel free to use it again! Ash quickly opened a sizeable gap that started to reduce as we

got closer to the line but in the end, he was 1 valuable second ahead, a second I'll rue for some time to come! The plus for us was that we finished 3 places ahead of Ballarat YCW and are now 2nd on the overall ladder, 11 points clear of 3rd.

Meanwhile, our Div 3 men's team were having a battle of their own. Yes, we had a Div 3 team for only the 2nd time this season! Wes Benson ran leg 1 to be first in of the Div 3 teams in a time of 20.01. But amazingly, we weren't first out. Phil Christian who did a stellar job getting us all to Sandown on time in the Odyssey, must have been on an odyssey of a different kind because he simply wasn't there! As Wes sat on the sidelines, contemplating another 6.2km journey, out of the crowd jumped Phil, looking back to see if Wes was coming but unfortunately being told to look forward for him at the changeover. I thought about compiling a list of the top 10 things Phil might have been doing to make him late, but after my run, I decided that a list of the top 10 places I could have made up 2 secs may have been just as appropriate...

Overall we only lost about 25secs. Whether this made Phil run 25 secs faster than he would have, I'm not sure. To follow Phil was Colin Thornton (his first run back since the Gold Coast marathon), Andrew Chalmers and Hugh Thyer. Would that 25 secs cost us? Unfortunately it wasn't "lucky Phil" this time with Box Hill well ahead in 1st but Melb Uni finishing only 3 secs ahead of us to take 2nd! I know Phil felt bad about the incident but I was rubbing my hands together in glee knowing that it would give me something for the report. Don't worry Phil, we were simply happy to have a Div 3 team racing and unfortunately we are so far behind on the overall ladder that one place makes absolutely no difference. But Ballarat beating us above, that's different....

Our open women ran over the same distance but with 4 runners. Apologies for not being able to give a fuller account of exactly how it panned out but as with most males, my multitasking is not my strong point! Kristen Wyatt ran a great first leg to run 17 secs faster than her 2007 effort and she came in 7th of the Div 1 women. To follow was Cathryn Hoare, Eliesha Byrt and Julie McNamara. Overall the women finished in 12th place.

Results:

Mens Open Div 1 (6.2km)	3rd overall
Matt McDonough	18.11
Nick Wightman	19.47
Michael McNaughton	20.13
Lee Troop	17.57
Ryan Christian	19.26
Brett Coleman	19.58

Mens Open Div 3 (6.2km)	3rd overall
Wes Benson	20.01
Phil Christian	23.56
Colin Thornton	21.20
Andrew Chalmers	24.50
Hugh Thyer	21.05

Women's Open 8k	12th overall
Kristen Wyatt	22.49
Cathryn Hoare	26.03
Eliesha Byrt	34.15
Julie McNamara	26.03

Geelong Region Team Awards:

SANDOWN RELAYS

Open Women:

3 votes: Kristen Wyatt

2 votes: Cathryn Hoare

1 vote: Julie McNamara

Open Men

3 votes: Lee Troop

2 votes: Matt McDonough

1 vote: Ryan Christian

BUSH INN AWARD

The worthy winner of the **Bush Inn Award** for this round is **Kristen Wyatt**. At a time when runner numbers have been down, I think it's very important to recognise those who have made an outstanding effort to represent Geelong. Kristen has not missed a round so far this season and in recognition of that commitment, wins the **Bush Inn Award** this week. Well done Kristen and we hope you enjoy the hospitality of the **Bush Inn**.