

**1985 VICTORIAN VETERANS' ATHLETIC CLUB 24 HOUR TRACK RACE, BOX HILL, 2-3 FEBRUARY**

In the second annual Victorian Veteran's Athletics Club 24 Hour Track race at Box Hill, held in early February 1985, a full field of 38 runners lined up, a huge increase on the 9 starters the year before. Geoff Molloy won again, breaking his 1984 Australian record with 232.400 km. Cliff Young was second with 216.095km, also bettering Geoff's 1984 Australian record.

Margaret Smith was the first of women to finish, coming 5<sup>th</sup> with a new Australian women's record of 177.600km. But there was more to the story than that. A deeply religious member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Margaret's beliefs prevented her from participating in the first two hours of the race. Her 177.600km for fourth place overall was a national record with many believing her self imposed "handicap" along with searing heat of nightmarish proportions put paid to Australia's first 200km plus performance.

The Saturday 6PM start time meant that the first half of the race was run in good conditions but the downside was that the second half of the race had to be run during the Sunday daytime period and the forecast was for horrid conditions. And for once the forecast was correct, the clear day ensuring that the scheduled temperature of 35C was reached. In fact, being inland, the temperature was even hotter, being registered at 38C.

Boy, did they breed them tough in those days!

**24 Hour Run**

1.	Molloy, Geoff	M	VIC	1942	M40	232.400 km
2.	Young, Cliff	M	VIC	1922	M60	216.095 km
3.	McKellar, Jack	M		1940	M40	193.461 km
4.	Riley, Gerry	M	NSW	1930	M50	187.550 km
5.	Smith, Margaret	F	VIC	1936	W45	177.600 km
6.	Pfister, Peter	M		1939	M45	176.725 km
7.	Rafferty, Tony	M	VIC	1939	M45	175.198 km
8.	Miskin, Stan	M	VIC	1925	M55	172.020 km
9.	Hook, Geoffrey	M	VIC	1944	M40	169.600 km
10.	Hart, Gerry	M		1938	M45	166.870 km
11.	Bell, John	M		1944	M40	163.082 km
12.	Stephenson, Chris	M	NSW	1956	M23	162.615 km
13.	Schnibbe, Klaus	M		1943	M40	161.600 km
14.	Biviano, Frank	M		1944	M40	161.600 km
15.	Harrison, Bill	M		1942	M40	161.091 km
16.	Grinsberg, Bill	M		1949	M35	161.010 km
17.	Richter, Trevor	M			#NA	153.900 km
18.	Cook, Bruce	M		1938	M45	146.880 km
19.	Vernon, Peter	M		1954	M23	146.400 km
20.	Marden, Bob	M		1952	M23	141.415 km
21.	Young, Mary	F		1960	W23	132.895 km
22.	Swift, Keith	M		1941	M40	131.200 km
23.	Ryan, Peter	M		1947	M35	131.563 km
24.	Ross, Howard	M		1945	M35	126.684 km
25.	Vucak, Mate	M		1940	M40	125.981 km
26.	Champness, John	M		1941	M40	122.260 km
27.	Gobel, Joe	M		1937	M45	120.000 km
28.	Schickert, Bob	M		1941	M40	114.820 km
29.	Light, Graham	M		1948	M35	114.410 km
30.	Vaughan, Caroline	F		1950	W23	92.800 km
31.	Down, Jeffrey	M		1958	M23	80.800 km
32.	Whiteoak, Michael	M		1944	M40	80.800 km
33.	Wilson, Ron	M		1936	M45	80.468 km
34.	Sleeman, Lionel	M		1940	M40	65.600 km
35.	Toet, Robert	M		1953	M23	63.200 km
36.	Wilson, Alfred	M		1945	M35	44.400 km
37.	Sabo, Josip	M		1942	M40	40.000 km

The Victorian Vets. 24 hour track run was initiated last year, in response to a request from Geoff Molloy. He wanted to test himself before he applied for a start in the Westfield Melbourne to Sydney run. Eight others joined in to give him support. In a small way, it was really successful. Geoff broke the existing residential 24 hour track record and went on to win the big one.

So February 1985 was our second 24 hour race and we were amazed at how interest in ultra-running had developed in the space of 12 months.

We announced the race was on and within three weeks, we had 40 starters with late entries being turned away. Twenty-two of those had never run an ultra before and the rest were fairly experienced ultra runners. The class of the field was fantastic. We had the winners of almost every ultra race held in Australia in the last two years competing. There was Cliff Young, winner of the '83 Sydney to Melbourne Westfield run, Geoff Molloy, '84 winner of the same race (going in the opposite direction), Keith Swift, who took out the Melbourne to Colac 100 miler in November, Gerry Riley, winner of the Sri Chinmoy 24 hour race in Adelaide, Margaret Smith, holder of the female 100 mile record and Caroline Vaughan, 3 times female winner of the Sydney to Wollongong 50 miler.

Westfield had agreed to sponsor the race and was using it as a qualifying trial for their 1985 Westfield run. They had half the field drop out on the first day of the Melbourne to Sydney last year and were making sure it didn't happen again. A figure of 110km. was mentioned as being the qualifying distance.

Ray Callaghan, Race Director, started the race right on 6pm. at Box Hill track in ideal conditions. It was a beautiful night, not too cold for the lapscorers, huddled there in the early hours. We had great support from spectators. They came and went all night, some stopping to help Jim Seymon call times, count laps or help keep our leader board up to date. Col Browne and Margaret Brown updated it every hour and people arriving at any hour of the day or night could immediately see how the field lay.

Unfortunately, the weather bureau was right for a change, a clear cloud-less sky. It was 35°C allright, in fact it hit 38°C. and made running conditions on the black rubberised track nightmarish. Runners said the heat bounced off the track in waves and it felt like staring into a furnace. A thermometer on the track measured 52°C.

We hosed the runners and offered dripping sponges every lap. Klaus Schnibbe borrowed a flowery umbrella and carried it the last few hours. We filled up the water-jump and the kids got into it, clothes and all and had a ball. The heat took its toll on the spectators. They stayed home with their air-conditioners until the last hour. Then they turned up in droves.

What amazed us was that no-one else called it quits during this nightmarish period. Twenty-six runners stayed to guts it out. In fact, they not only survived the heat, two of them broke Australian records. Margaret Smith ran 177km. to break the female Australian 24 hour record by 7km, while Geoff Molloy broke his own and Joe Record's overseas record by covering 232km.

With five minutes to go, we handed out labelled sandbags for the runners to drop when the final whistle sounded. You'd reckon they'd be too wrecked to do anything but collapse when the 24 hours was up and six o'clock finally arrived. Not on your life. Many of them hurled their sandbags onto the track with gusto and leapt into the air shouting when the whistle went. The crowd went wild.

They cheered and clapped, appreciating the incredible performances on such an impossible day. Westfield and Puma supplied prizes of running gear for all those who participated and Leo Jones, V.V.A.C. president, presented age-category medals to members.

What a day!.....and a night .....and a day!