

## 1992 VIC 24 HOUR TRACK CHAMPIONSHIP, HAROLD STEVENS TRACK, COBURG, 22-23 FEB

After some last minute scratchings, the 1992 Victorian 24 Hour Championship at Coburg saw 29 runners (24 men and 5 women). Unfortunately the midday Saturday start meant that runners had to face up to 6 hours of torrid heat before conditions cooled and this wreaked havoc with everyone. As a result, there was only one PB out of the entire field.

David Standeven, 2<sup>nd</sup> in current Australian rankings, and Helen Stanger, 1<sup>st</sup> in the female rankings, were the highest ranked runners in this year's field and they both ran true to form. When Peter Gray passed David in the early hours of the morning to hit the front, David took off, regained the lead and put a gap between himself and the rest of the field within minutes, going on to win with 217.051km Helen Stanger amazed all with her relaxed comfortable style, taking 4<sup>th</sup> overall and first female with 196.213km.

Alas, there were no more Westfields to follow. Race Executive Director Chris Bates had announced in October 1991 that Westfield had withdrawn their sponsorship. Thanking the athletes and support crews for their participation in the 9 Westfield races, he said: "If anyone besides Cliff had won (in 1983), the event would have died then." Westfield's General Manager Alan Briggs said in the economic climate, his company would be better served directing its support back to shopping centres.

This decision would soon have dire consequences for Australian ultra running but those in the 1992 Coburg event probably did not foresee the short term ramifications for their chosen sport.

### 24 Hour Run

1.	David Standeven	217.051 km
2.	Peter Gray	213.522 km
3.	Brickley Hepburn	211.447 km
4.	Helen Stranger (F)	196.213 km
5.	Joe Strobalek	185.339 km
6.	Greg Wilson	181.419 km
7.	Michael Bohnke	173.658 km
8.	Rudi Kinshofer	172.873 km
9.	Peter Quinn	170.126 km
10.	Michael Grayling	165.702 km
11.	David Holleran	163.074 km
12.	Andre Lucas	162.914 km
13.	John Champness	157.416 km
14.	Cliff Young	153.851 km
15.	Dawn Parris (F)	151.110 km
16.	Merrilyn Taite (F)	146.703 km
17.	Greg Wishart	145.071 km
18.	Vale Case (F)	142.907 km
19.	Roger Weinstein	137.152 km
20.	John Timms	123.147 km
21.	Lois Wishart (F)	122.671 km
22.	Ian Javes	105.600 km
23.	Terry Cox (Snr)	102.710 km
24.	Neville Mercer	89.200 km
25.	Keith Fisher	80.400 km
26.	Jaques Gaillard	78.400 km
27.	Andrew Law	63.200 km
28.	Kevin Cassidy	62.400 km
29.	Jean-Claude Morre	54.400 km

### Race report by Dot Browne (Race Director & Organiser) - taken from VMC Autumn 1992 Newsletter

As runners started to arrive at the track for a 12 noon start, Harold Stevens, Ground Manager, heaved an enormous sigh of relief. He'd at last got the lap-scoring shelter finished after working incredible hours all week and getting very little sleep. The tubular metal frame that we'd used in previous years had melted in the fire when the basketball stadium next door had gone up in smoke mid 1991.

Anthony Ashley-Brown, masseur from the Society of Clinical Masseurs had started massaging early and in fact worked non-stop with little support for about 26 hours straight, a remarkable performance. He certainly helped runners cope with the tough event.

After last minute scratchings, we started off with 29 runners, 24 males and five females. One third of the field were interstates and Neville Mercer had come from New Zealand. I was pleased to have David Standeven, 2<sup>nd</sup> in current Australian rankings, and Helen Stanger, first in the female rankings in the field. Bryan Smith, first ranked, had just returned from a World Cup 100km event in Spain the previous weekend, so he and his wife Jan, helped Joe Skrobalak. Despite being jet-lagged, he didn't cover enough distance on the hot Saturday afternoon. Never mind. What other 70 year old could run 153 km in a day? I don't know too many. Do you?

It obviously wasn't the day for breaking records. Some of our greatest prospects pulled out early - Andrew Law, top Westfield runner from Tasmania, pulled out with leg problems, Ian Javes, multi-day race director and multiday athlete from Queensland had stomach problems, Neville Mercer, 220km athlete from New Zealand, setting himself for a 250km in this one, developed painful kidney problems after eight hours of running fast and leading the field, and was distraught at having to withdraw. So disappointing when they'd come so far. David Standeven ran true to his ranking. When Peter Gray passed him in the early hours of the morning to hit the front, David took off, regained the lead and put a gap between himself and the rest of the field within minutes. David's always a class runner. Helen Stanger amazed us with her relaxed comfortable style. She never appeared to tire throughout the whole event. What a remarkable champion this lady is! We wished her all the best for her international race in Switzerland in May.

I was also interested to see how Greg Wilson would go. He's a 2.30 marathoner and had performed well in his two previous ultras - 50 km road races in which he'd come fourth and first. Brian Simmons was so attentive as his crew-person, carefully monitoring his speed and food intake so he wouldn't go out too fast and blow himself to bits. It paid off. He covered 181.419km to place sixth. A learning experience.

However, the effect of the weather was evident in the results. During Saturday afternoon, the temperature in the shade rose to 28 degrees, but the temperature on the new rubberised black track was recorded at a mammoth 55 degrees!! No wonder only one person recorded a PB! It was just too hot! I don't know how he did it, but David Holleran from Queensland managed 17km further than he'd ever run before in 24 hours. On the six hour turns, he even managed a handstand on the track to celebrate!

We changed the runners' direction every six hours and they slapped hands as they returned in the opposite direction after rounding the marker on the finish line. David Holleran did physical jerks to celebrate the occasion.

An ardent band of lap-scorers wrapped themselves in blankets and parkas and sat out the night and we fed them hot drinks...and sandwiches...and hot drinks...and pancakes...and hot drinks...and fruit...and hot drinks...and porridge. We tried to keep everyone happy. They were just great. Joe Skrobalak took out the Graveyard Award (midnight to 6am). He clocked up the most laps after the major placegetters and ran 96 laps in the wee small hours when half of the field was otherwise engaged...sleeping, or resting or being massaged. The dawn light was a welcome relief after the bleakness of the night.

The media drove us mad. Cliffy was going for the over 70 years World Record of 173km as he'd had his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday only two weeks before. We had five radio stations and four television channels ringing us up every hour. "How's Cliffy going? Is he still on target?" They couldn't give a stuff who was winning the event or how anybody else was going. Only Cliffy. We told them what they wanted to know. Cliffy stayed on target for quite a few hours but the heat got to him like everybody else, and Ground Manager, Harold Stevens, organised a couple of very successful Fun Runs (4km and 8km) at 10.00am from the ground on the Sunday morning. Around 150 starters turned up and stayed to cheer our tiring athletes on after they had finished their event. We were glad of their support. They hollered and cheered as the 12 noon finish time drew near. TV and radio crews turned up in their droves to photograph Cliffy and the rest of the field got incidental coverage on national and commercial channels.

As the sandbags were handed out and the countdown of minutes began, exhausted athletes found new life and started sprinting around the track, goaded on by the encouraging cheers of the hundreds of spectators now lining the track. As the gun sounded, runners flung their sand-bags onto the track and collapsed into the arms of their crews. It was congratulations all round.

Because of the efficiency of Colin Browne's computer back-up, the results and placing were ready within 10 minutes of us measuring the extra metres on the track, so we were able to hold the presentations immediately.

Famous ultra runners, George Perdon and Bryan Smith, helped present commemorative pottery mugs, badges, teeshirts, medals and certificates to competitors who had survived, and we were grateful that the ninth Victoria 24 Hour Track Championship had been completed without serious incident. Thanks to the crews, lapscorers and helpers who gave of their waking hours to make this event successful once again.