

## 1997 COBURG 24 HOUR RACE, HAROLD STEVENS ATHLETICS TRACK, COBURG, 12-13 APRIL

The 1997 Coburg 24 Hour Championship, held on the weekend of 12-13 April and organised by Gordon Burrowes on behalf of the Coburg Harriers, had the traditional 24 Hour Run and Walk categories as well as a 24 Hours Relay category. A good field assembled with 12 ultra runners, 4 ultra walkers and 9 relay teams. As two of my sons were competing in relay teams, I was able to attend the full 24 hours of the event and witnessed some fine performances.

Temperatures varied throughout the 24 hours. On the Saturday afternoon, it was 25C with a blue sky. Competitors were hit with the full impact of the sun and found the first 5 hours very trying. I was on the drinks table and was kept busy with the constant need for water. The night was clear and the temperature dropped towards zero. It was VERY cold and all (competitors and officials) suffered. Finally a clear morning ensued and Sunday was warm and sunny, an ideal end to the event.

### 24 Hour Run/Walk

1.	Yiannis Kouros	266.18 km
2.	Helen Stanger	206.86 km
3.	Carmela Carrassi	166.60 km (walker)
4.	Peter Armisted	163.09 km
5.	Ron Hill	161.46 km
6.	Kevin Mansell	159.46 km
7.	Peter Gray	144.40 km
8.	Michael Greyling	142.92 km
9.	Peter Richardson	135.20 km
10.	Peter Waddell	130.00 km (walker)
11.	Bev Car	126.56 km (walker)
12.	Bill Hick	117.22 km
13.	John Timms	106.00 km
14.	Phillip Essen	103.30 km
15.	Merv Lockyer	100.00 km (walker)
16.	Oskan Turkan	50.00 km

### 24 Hour Relay

1.	Traralgon Harriers	386.49 km (Australian Best)
2.	Coburg Open	322.90 km
3.	Traralgon Veterans	317.59 km
4.	Altona Veterans	304.31 km
5.	Coburg Veterans	301.61 km
6.	Victorian Road Runners	289.24 km
7.	Coburg 10 Fab Females	264.57 km
8.	Coburg Little Athletics	261.56 km
9.	Coburg Young Guns	229.41 km

The event was certainly full of interesting features. The indomitable **Yiannis Kouros** was trying for his world 24 hour running record of 294.504 km (done in this event last year) and was well ahead of schedule at the 12 hour mark. However, a knee problem forced him to slow and he finished up walking to a still incredible final posting of 266 km (165 miles). It was a case of Yiannis and then a 60 km gap to the next finisher.

Helen Stanger was next in with a creditable 206.86 km and incredibly, it was one of the walkers in Carmela Carassi who came in third with 166.86 km. This was the same first 3 positions as the previous year.

Each relay teams had 10 runners and each runner was required to do a 30 minute stint. At each 30 minute mark, a new series of runners would come onto the track and the attack would start again. The only exception to this was the Coburg Little Athletics team which was allowed 20 runners, each doing 15 minute splits. The winning relay team (The Traralgon Harriers) completed 386.5 km (2km further than they ran the previous year) to set a new Australian record for 10 person teams.

So it was a great weekend in many ways. The event was superbly organised and the track is a good one for both ultra-distance running and walking. The overnight lighting is comprehensive and the presence of masseurs and full canteen facilities makes it good for both competitors and officials and spectators.

I report below on the walkers.

**Carmela Carrassi** was back once again and keen to improve on her record breaking performance of 1996. She did not let us down. She walked almost continuously for the full 24 hours (a trademark of her previous performances) and was ahead of schedule at all times. Starting off at about 2:45 pace, she gradually slowed to about 3:00 and was still maintaining 3:40s in the latter stages of the race. She broke all her Australian records on the way and finished with a fine set of results as follows

Performance	1997	1996
50 Miles	11:08:04	11:16:32
100 km	13:52:32	14:16:27
100 Miles	23:09:03	23:44:22
24 Hours	166.66 km	162.54 km

**Peter Waddell** completed 100 km last year in our Melbourne based Centurion walk. This year he was keen to improve on that and was a starter in this event. Unfortunately his preparation had been sporadic due to various family related issues (his mother is very ill in Sydney and Peter had spent much time commuting between Canberra and Sydney). Thus he was not confident but was ready, not the less, to give it a go. He headed off at a conservative pace and showed the same sensible approach to ultra distance walking as he had shown last year. Unfortunately, Peter passed through the 12 hour mark with a distance of 62.1 km (51 miles) which was not fast enough to guarantee him a 100 mile / 24 hour performance so he stopped to rest after completing 100 km and then returned to the track later and walked for the remainder of the 24 hour period. He finished with a final distance of 130 km (80.8 miles) and was walking fine at the end with no ill effects apparent. I am convinced that Peter can do the 100 miler once he has a proper preparation. His style is well suited to the distances and he has a fine mental approach and a good body that seems able to absorb the punishment without too much trouble. He is keen to travel to Brisbane later this year for our own Centurion based 24 hour event and that could be the big one for Peter.

**Bev Car** is a 54 year old veteran lady runner with the Coburg Veterans. She watched Carmela's performance in last year's event and was inspired this year to have a go and see how far she could walk in 24 hours. Now Bev is not a veteran walker - she is a runner, doing distances from sprint to 10000 metres. The 10 km run is the furthest she had ever previously gone. She has no walking background. Now you would say in such a case that she would have no chance to do well and should be off the track well before the 12 hour mark. Well, Bev showed us a fine performance and proved all such thoughts incorrect. She walked for the full 24 hours and completed a distance of 126.56 km (78.7 miles). She started slowly and just kept going. She made the mistake of wearing new shoes initially and blistered on the heels early. She changed shoes and just kept going. She certainly suffered but did not give up at any stage. She showed great courage and determination and is to be congratulated on an outstanding performance. She shows once again just how well suited women are to long distances. They seem on many occasions to absorb the pain better than men and can keep going well beyond the normal pain thresholds.

**Merv Lockyer** was keen to build on his Centurion performance last year and fronted up once again in this event. He had been doing lots of work in preparation for his trip to Europe later this year and perhaps paid a bit of a penalty for this in that he suffered ankle problems early on and was forced to stop at 100 km (achieved in a bit over 14 hours). For most of this distance, he had walked with Carmela and the two had certainly helped each other to maintain a good even pace. Merv was not too disappointed as it was still a good workout and he came back on the track later and walked with Bev Car to help her along. I am sure that Bev appreciated the company. Merv showed that his style is gradually improving - his performance was safer than last year and is gradually ironing out his style with ongoing work.

Tim Erickson