

## 1998 COBURG 24HR RACE, HAROLD STEVENS ATHLETICS TRACK, COBURG, 22-23 AUGUST 1998

The 1998 Coburg 24 Hour Carnival was delayed until late August after a major track refurbishment meant that the track would be unavailable during the traditional April/May timeframe. August is winter in Melbourne so it was a risky gamble and numbers were down overall. All types of weather were encountered over the 24 hour period with high winds and intermittent downpours on the Saturday, an icy cold night and calm and sunny conditions on the Sunday morning. But at least the track was brand new and provided a super running surface for the 12 competitors who were in attendance.

Gordon Burrowes had finally retired as Race Director and a new Coburg Harriers committee, led by race director Bernie Goggin, had taken over the event. A new perpetual trophy, labelled the "Gordon Burrowes Endurance Award" was instituted, with Cliff Young the inaugural recipient. One of their other changes was to do away with manual lapscore and bring in a computer lapscore program. This has now become the norm in all such events.

### 24 Hour Run/Walk

1.	Helen Stanger	228.680 km
2.	Andrew Lucas	168.405 km
3.	Shirley Young	162.330 km
4.	Peter Gray	152.125 km
5.	Kevin Mansell	146.050 km
6.	Cliff Young	141.570 km
7.	Phillip Essam (walker)	122.726 km
8.	Peter Waddell (walker)	120.830 km
9.	Bill Hick	111.080 km
10.	Frank Overton (walker)	62.829 km
11.	Ken Matchett	52.400 km
12.	Bob Fickel	46.800 km

Kevin Cassidy reported as follows on the event.

**Helen Stanger**, 48, shattered three of her own Australian records with new marks at 150km [15.01 approx], 200km [20.56] and just missing Margaret Smith's long standing 100 mile Australian record of 16.02 on her way to a new Australian 24 hour track record of 228.680 km. It also ensured that she won the event overall, some 60km ahead of Andrew Lucas in second place. There is a lot I could say about Helen's run but I will sum it all up in one word "AWESOME".

**Andrew Lucas** was an amazing example of raw courage. After suffering burnt feet in a house fire during the week, he was advised by his doctor to not run for six months. The next day saw Andrew run 5km, then 10km the next and followed up with the 24 hour in which he took the race right up to Helen for 12 hours before his sore feet understandably slowed his progress in the second half.

Another woman who is AWESOME is the amazing **Shirley Young**. As she approaches her 70<sup>th</sup> year she continues to churn out performances that 30 year olds could not even dream about. Shirley holds all the ultra world records in her age group up to 100km and was attempting her first 24 hour event. She was ably crewed for by husband Ron and daughter Lorraine, both of whom are former Australian representative athletes. Shirley suffered for the entire second half and at the eighteenth hour had dropped behind 100 mile pace but managed to dig deep enough to find something extra and she passed the 100 miles with twenty minutes to spare, much to the delight of her cheering family, grandchildren and all. Shirley, drained of every ounce of energy, managed two more laps before collapsing with exhaustion. A tougher, more determined person than Shirley has not yet been born.

**Phillip Essam** was looking rather pleased with himself after surpassing his goal of 120 km and, of course, the presence of 76 year old **Cliff Young** was a real highlight. Cliff's running exploits back in the 1980's were what put the sport on the map and he has not stopped since, Cliff ran the entire time with a large piece of sponge rubber under his armpit to relieve the pain of a dislocated shoulder. A favorite of the media, Cliff's presence saw the arrival of the Herald-Sun newspaper, channel 10 TV and radio station TTFM. It was amazing to see Cliff doing kangaroo leaps across the chairs at the completion of the race while all the other runners were laying down exhausted. Also present at the finish was the great Yiannis Kouros who lives nearby.

With an entirely new organising committee, the Coburg Harriers are to be congratulated on their efforts as things went very smoothly, two areas that need looking at are having a portable toilet on the track to prevent the inconvenience of runners having to go inside the clubrooms and a leaders board that is legible and easily updated, the scoreboard that was used was so impracticable that by the fifth hour I gave up trying to adjust it, in fact, if I had had a bomb I would have blown it up. Without the scoreboard we relied on the hourly printed updates from the computer.

From an organisational view, the biggest highlight was the computer lap scoring system. Malcolm Matthews has spent three years developing and testing his system and it was a great success at Coburg. He had computer equipment and screens all laid out as well as a back up system in case of a power failure. The system was capable of producing updates at almost a second's notice and included a staggering number of splits, lap times and other relevant information, I have been very impressed with Malcolm's computer program and it is proof that track ultras can be conducted without the need to have numerous volunteer lap counters sitting in a tent with their pens and scoresheets. In a completely unsolicited advertisement I would recommend that race directors give Malcolm a call and discuss his program, he can be found at 03 9521 0169. His program will next be put to good use at the upcoming Centurions Club 100 mile walk.

Report and results by Kevin Cassidy