

6 hour relay at Yokine was a great success



Near-perfect conditions prevailed at Yokine for this extended event. Early-morning was cool and when the first competitors set off at 7am the shadowed areas were decidedly chilly. A cool wind became stronger through the morning - and runner-resistant towards the 1pm finish.



Tiring legs slowly filling with lactic acid, each athlete felt that wind most keenly in the first kilometre of each circuit, where the path also climbs slightly. But the two-kilometre route, on a solid path winding through the reserve, is custom-made for this relay.



All competitors seemed to prefer this public path to a 400m athletics track. Variety, changing scenery, interaction with the wider public (and their dogs!) were mostly considered advantages. There were even a couple of cricket matches in progress, as well as other runners and walkers on the track.



Alternative locations had been considered and discarded. Distance of each leg was set to give the best chance for quick times, whilst still having acceptable recovery periods. Two kilometres was thought the best bet, and proved to be so. In a balanced, six-person team, each person can expect around five times his/her own performance time in which to recover. Someone taking nine minutes to cover two kilometres will have 45 minutes to recover and rest before going out again.



On this occasion, itself very much a test run for future club events, team numbers and composition were ad hoc.



Our W40 women assembled a full team, as did the walkers with their mixed sextet, four women supplemented by Tom Lenane and Wayne Taylor. M60 men numbered five, but were given a strong boost by the speedy Joe Clark-Murphy.





Fastest performers were in team four, a heroic mixed group that started the day, totally undaunted, with just three runners! Roscoe McDonnell joined them a little late and relieved the pressure. He matched their heroism, battling non-existent early-morning public transport and running the final stretch to reach Yokine. Age range for this mixed team was mid-thirties to early fifties, and the four covered just under 90 kilometres in six hours. It's interesting to speculate just how much faster, and further this talented quartet could go with two more runners of similar quality.



Our W40 women were also impressive, all running consistently around nine and a half minute legs and heaping pressure on the M60 men. Bearing in mind that all of them are avowed distance runners, several having run the South African Comrades ultra-marathon, their switch to two-lap `sprints' is awe-inspiring.



Club support for the relay was limited by short preparation time, but intense support came from those committed to the event.



Accurate timekeepers and efficient administrators are essential. We were fortunate to have the experienced services of Jeff and Dorothy Whittam (veterans of club relay events dating back to the 1980s) Barrie Thomsett, and Christine and John Oldfield.



Final testimony to the staging of this six-hour relay has come from the competitors who, while stiff and aching in limb, were universally keen to repeat the exercise – after a little rest!

MAWA's committee has also committed to placing the six-hour relay on the club calendar, with the first `official' event likely in Spring 2012.



(Report and photographs by Vic Waters)

