

Taranaki Race Walking Club

Taranaki Road Championships

12 August 2017

I can't make up my mind whether race walkers are courageous or stupid, to take part in a race in such horrible, cold, windy and raining conditions as some did yesterday for the Taranaki 10km Road Champs in Inglewood. Obviously most of the club were neither, as only 8 turned up to challenge the elements.

Dave & I arrived at the wrong time because Eric was just starting to put up the club's large tent and we were co-opted into helping. Luck was on our side because we had just got the cover on and the legs pulled out, when the heavens opened and the rain was torrential. We had to squat under the tent until it just became a steady downpour, before we were able to lift the legs to get the tent raised to full height.

We had five judges with Tanya being elected as Chief, which meant we each had a large area to cover because it was a 2km course. I was on duty on the long street after the start. To me it appeared that any passing or lapping took place along this street.

After the start they passed me in Indian file which was apt because Pocahontas was wearing a sweat band. Really, in this weather? Eric led, then Laura who did 5km, Rodney, Ross, Tony with Serena on his heels, Anne was followed by Dave in his usual position two steps behind and to the left. Last of the A Graders was Vicki Jones. Besides Laura in the 5km were, Albie Jane, Carol, Sue, an Egmont & a Stratford walker and Dennis Jordan.

First around was Eric who was all seriousness with his hat on back to front to prevent drag. He passed the Stratford woman during his first lap. Rodney was about 50m behind Eric now with Ross a further 100m back, then Tony/Serena, Anne/Dave with Vicki way behind.

Coming around for the final time was Laura just ahead of Albie, he was walking the best I have ever seen, not quite upright but straight legs. Why he doesn't do this more often I do not know. He passed Laura just before they got to me and despite the determination on her face, he had increased his lead by about 3m as they turned the corner and disappeared.

Carol who was behind them, got overtaken by Eric and Rodney was about 150m behind Eric now with Ross a further 150m behind. Tony who had shaken off Serena was only 80m behind Ross, with Serena 40m behind him and just overtaking Sue. I don't think the cold wind was doing any favours for Serena's asthma. Anne & Dave still joined at the hip, then passed by.

On their last two passes I took the times of the 10km walkers because it was obvious the positions were not going to alter with only perhaps Tony catching Ross. Eric did his lap in 11.02 pace. Rodney 11.43, Ross 11.53, Tony 11.44, Serena 12.36, Anne 13.59, Dave 14.00 and Vicki 14.44.

As Rodney passed for the last lap it started raining which soon turned into a torrent. I was now cowering in my car but did start to get out to show Dave a Bent Knee paddle for the previous lap but decided that discretion was the better part of valour and stayed put. They went passed with rain pouring off the sweat band and Dave with a bowed head and shoulders, like a suppliant praying for it all to stop.

I thought Ross walked really well, staying upright all the while as did Anne and Serena. Sue walked A Grade and Tony was all fired up to catch Ross which he failed to do. Dave started to buckle under the pressure towards the end as he tried to keep up with 'sweat band'. He did but couldn't produce his end of race wind up to pass.

What was very, very disappointing besides the foul weather was the fact according to Tony's GPS, the laps were around 200m short because the dog leg cone was in the wrong position. Quite outrageous for such an important race.

Serena invited Anne, me and my soaking wet passenger Dave around to hers for a change and cuppa which was most welcome. Other than that, many thanks for the full wet weather gear dressed judges, except for Graeme who was wearing walking shoes instead of gumboots. I bet the old twinkles were a tad soaked by the end Graeme?

Sorry, but leaving to get Dave dried, I clean forgot to help getting the tent down Eric afterwards, apologies for that, so I hope you had plenty of volunteers to help you?

VIEW FROM THE SIDE