

Taranaki Race Walking Club

Taranaki Open Walks

8 June 2019

This year saw the 55th competition of the 15km event with the Hawera Cup awaiting the winner on handicap. The original cup only lasted for five years before disappearing and the current cup was donated by Waikato Breweries in 1973 and was only for men. Since those early days, the event has been expanded to include 5km & 10km races and for women & young people to take part and racing for their own trophies.


As we had a large number competing today from the Wellington area for the event, we thought we would make them feel right at home by organising very strong winds with intermittent showers, with just a few patches of blue sky and some sun for the locals.

Arriving around 11.15hrs, a dozen people were already there and in the next hour or so the street was a hive of activity as tents were assembled, water station set up, registration and lap scorer facilities organised and traffic management laid out. Finally, perhaps the most important facility arrived, in the form of a mobile Portaloo. Out of this chaos, order emerge and the walkers were now warming up.

Twenty-three lined up for the start with only four being B Grade. After the pre-race instructions, they were off. We were fortunate of having two young up and coming walkers in the race, Daniel du Toit and Lucas Martin, 16 and 14. They showed the bystanders what race walking is all about as they tore around the 1km course leaving everyone for dead, Daniel doing 10km and Lucas 5km. It was a pleasure watching their fluid style which looked so easy to do, which we all know isn't.

Lap one saw these two glued together with Eric Kemsley the local President in third with Clive McGovern a step behind. By 1.5 laps Daniel was already starting to lap the tail enders and Lucas had dropped 50m behind him. Clive overtook Eric with Peter Fox 80m behind. He was about the same distance ahead of the Trentham Blond Bombshell, Jackie Wilson, who was coming off a high after winning medals, in Spain, England, Poland and Australia in various distances. An example of "You're never too old," to do anything.

During this lap, our secretary, Michelle was 15m ahead of an Egmont walker, Vicky Jones who has been slowly improving over the last couple of years. She in turn was 50m in front of a club stalwart Dave Barrett who was only doing the 5km which he considered long enough to keep his style.



Lap 3 saw Eric ahead by a step on Clive but Daniel was now breathing down their necks. In the middle of the race Tony Burrell was leading Ross Allen by 10m who in turn was 15m ahead of Mike Lane, our club member from Wellington. Mike normally walks in a kilt but that not being club uniform, he had to wear black shorts today. That rule was a blessing in this wind, as we all know what men shouldn't wear under kilts. Terri Grimmett was 50m ahead of Helen Baverstock with both these ladies doing the 15km. Helen was 30m ahead of a Scottish lady Arlene Wong-Tung.

Lap 4 saw Daniel starting to lap some for the second time and by lap 5 the gap between Tony, Ross Mike and Terri had started to widen and Helen was closing up on Terri and increasing her lead over Arlene, who now had Phillip Grimmett only about 80m behind her. Eric was now just ahead of Clive; Vicky was hanging on behind Michelle who had doubled the lead over Dave.

Tony on his 6th lap caught and passed Jackie but not before he had shaken off Ross who has been nursing a foot injury for a while now, this enabled Mike to eventually pass Ross on the last lap and hold him off to the finish. By the next lap Tony was 10m in front of Jackie, who did close to within a couple of metres by the next lap and there she stayed.

With two laps to go, Vicky managed to pass Michelle and stayed in front for the rest of the race. They were also a number of people who had their own private battle inside the race. There was Tony and Jackie which ended as a victory for Tony, just. Arlene & Phillip who were tied at the hip for half the race until Phillip did a sprint at the end to cross first. Helen eventually caught and passed Terri on 10km and slowly increased her lead each lap. Finally, Ross after leading Mike the whole race succumbed to a last-minute effort by Mike.

I think Anne Fraser walked the whole race in No Man's Land as she was chasing Arlene & Phillip a few minutes ahead. Peter Sheaf the other Egmont Club walker found the pace too tough for his first race and was glad when he finished. Daphne Jones, also back from overseas triumphs, spent her race a few minutes behind Anne and trying to stave off the attentions of Michelle & Vicky which she managed to do. Jon Roskvist who I understand has only recently returned to race walking and walked B Grade today, was very strong for his 10km, too strong for most. Geoff Iremonger much to my surprise elected to only do



5km today but walked strongly throughout. MaryAnne Costello was another who had a lonely walk on her own.

The two lads regularly lapped the field and Sue Park remarked that during her 5km Daniel lapped her four times. On his penultimate lap, Eric passed Terri and Helen which left just those three, left racing.

Fortunately, the rain held off and eventually the wind eased towards the end and we did get more and more sun, not that you felt it, as the mountain is covered in thick snow.

Many thanks to all those helpers who made this event happen. I hesitate to list you in case I leave anyone out but you all know who you are and we are indebted to you once again. It is nice to know that although some are no longer members, they still respond to our call for help.

We met later that evening for a meal and social time and where the winners were named. Four out of five trophies went to our visitors, so our handicapper must have done a good job, at least the winners thought so.

Next morning with a sunny sky, no wind, and a majestic mountain on full view, we had an hour walk along the Coastal Walkway, before returning to the Park for hot drinks and a natter. Then our guests departed vowing to return next year.

VIEW FROM THE SIDE