

**THE FRONT RUNNER ATHLETICS NEW ZEALAND ROAD RELAY
CHAMPIONSHIPS
INCORPORATED IN THE 21st TIMARU ROUND THE GORGES RELAY
6th OCTOBER 2007**

REPORT BY COLIN MACLACHLAN, ATHLETICS NZ TECHNICAL DELEGATE

The event was conducted by the Mid-South Canterbury Harrier Management Committee on the long established course of the Timaru Round the Gorges Relay, west of Timaru. The course had a good mix of undulating, flat, uphill and downhill terrain, being a circuit, starting and finishing on the all weather track at Aorangi Park, adjacent to the SBS Events Centre.

122 teams were entered for the championships, representing 39 clubs, 14 from the North Island and 25 from the South, with the team spread , 56 North Island and 66 South. Wellington Scottish had 12 teams, Wellington Harriers 8, Ariki, Hamilton Hawks, Hill City and Pakuranga 6 each, Canterbury University and Leith 5 each, Auckland City Athletic, Caversham, Lake City Athletic, North Canterbury, Takapuna and Tauranga Ramblers 4 each, a good representation from around the country.

The principal race officials were- Race Manager: Walter Hume, Assistant Race Director: Alistair Lester, Referees: Bob Carter and Kevin Jago, Jury of Appeal: John Smart, Trevor Spittle and Pat Boland. The NZ Vice President, Murray Mckinnon was present, as was Board Chair Annette Purvis as a participant. Prior to the event I kept in close contact Leanne Asher the Athletics NZ Competitions Manager, and Walter Hume the Race Manager, apart from a period during July-September, when I was overseas. Leanne kept in touch with Walter during my absence, mainly with regard to entries. On my arrival in Timaru I was provided with full details of the course, with maps and a copy of the Traffic Management Plan, including aerial photographs, and the safety briefing notes. All entries were lodged with the Race Secretary in Timaru, in conjunction with Leanne at Athletics NZ, for checking of registrations. Registrations were checked post event also, to cover any team replacements. A programme was included in all team race packs.

The Managers Meeting was held at SBS Events Centre on Friday 5th October at 7pm, chaired by Walter Hume, Race Manager, who gave details of the course, road closures, safety aspects and other arrangements. The programme gave comprehensive details of the race rules and course information, which had been included previously on the website.

Race day conditions were fine with a westerly wind in the face of the runners on the outward journey. Thankfully, the gale force westerlies of the previous day had abated. I accompanied the Senior Race Referee, Bob Carter in his car, following the senior race in the main, but observed some of the junior and Women's races in the latter stages.

As can be seen from the results, and the pre-race predictions, the senior race was fought out by five teams, with Canterbury University taking charge on the second lap, followed by Tauranga Ramblers. The real battle was for third place, between North Harbour Bays and Wellington Scottish, with the former prevailing, with their final runner posting the fastest time for the lap. The fastest lap times were spread over six teams. The Women's race was a great tussle, Pakuranga taking charge on the fourth lap, with a close battle amongst four teams for the minor placings. The fastest lap times were again spread over six teams. Auckland City Athletic took control of the M19 race on the second lap, with four teams again battling for the minor placings, over the last four laps. The fastest times were spread over five teams. The W19 grade saw another good race, with the first two places settled by the third lap, with Auckland City Athletic prevailing, but the third, not until the last lap. Fastest lap times were spread over three teams. This all shows an excellent standard of racing.

Course management: I was very impressed with the signage, marshalling of the course and the arrangements at the lap change zones. Marshalls were stationed at every junction, narrow bridge or other potential hazardous spot. Race traffic was not permitted to pass through the change zone areas, being directed into adjacent paddocks prior to the zones, where parking and toilets were provided, and exiting beyond the zone. We were indebted to Timaru Rotary, Pleasant Point Lions and Cave Fire Brigade for their support.

Prize giving: This was held in the SBS Event Centre following afternoon tea at the conclusion of the event. Presentations were made by the NZ Vice President Murray Mckinnon and Board Chair Annette Purvis.

Thanks: The Mid-Canterbury Harrier Management Committee and Race Manager Walter Hume and his team are to be thanked for providing us with an excellent course, an extremely well run event and all the hard work that went into delivering the championship. We are extremely grateful for their efforts on our behalf

Recommendation: I would certainly recommend that the NZ Road Relay Championship be held at this venue again in the future.

I deeply appreciate the honour of being appointed the Technical Delegate for this major inter-club event and thank the Board for the appointment.

Colin Maclachlan.