



update

Athletics Australia

Young Distance Runners On The Move

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THE DE CASTELLA 3000 METRES for junior men has been a highlight for our young distance runners for over 20 years. It was the brainchild of the Victorian Marathon Club president Fred Lester.

The event was first run in 1981, when Ricky Wright defeated Malcolm Norwood in 8.21. (Norwood went on to win the next two). It became known as the De Castella 3000m in 1996, in recognition of Deek's performances in distance running.

Although as a senior he made his name as a marathon runner, it was in the 3000m that Deek excelled as a junior. "The 3km was a huge stepping stone for me up to the tougher 5km and 10km. It's a great event," he said recently. "I think it's great to have an event that enables the young, talented kids to be spotted".

He still holds the Associated Public Schools record for 3km at 8.21. He also held the Victorian



Ryan Gregson leads eventual winner Mitch Frey (116) and second placegetter James Matthews (40) in the De Castella Under 20 3000m.

All Schools record of 8.17. Both records were set in 1974, when Deek was 18.

This year's junior race had 37 entries – the most ever – and ensured the organizers had to have two divisions, with 8.40 the cut-off time for the 'A' race.

Stephen Kelly, who was controversially left out of the 'A' race, won the B race in 8.30.84, outrunning the promising young West Australian Dan Wallis, one of a number of boys

sporting Mottram-like mullets. In the 'A' race, there was the added incentive of the World Junior Cross Country qualifier and the World Youth qualifier, both of which were 8.20.

One of the good things about junior races is the uninhibited style of racing. This was never more evident than in this year's race, when the pacemaker, Damien Nugent, took 600m to get to the lead. When Damien dropped out just after the 1km mark (2.48), Mathew Bayley of Victoria became the aggressor, taking them through 2km in 5.31 (2.43 for the 2nd km). At this point there were still 8 guys in the mix running for the win.

The final 800m saw a break in the lead pack, with Mitch Frey (17), James Mathews (19) and Ryan Gregson (16, also sporting a Buster mullet) making a move. Frey and Gregson were both coming off successful weekends at the Australian All Schools Championships in Sydney, where they had double victories in the 1500m and 3000m in their respective age groups, but this was the race they wanted.

"I rate the De Castella higher; it gives me a chance to race against all the big boys. The fact it's named after Robert de Castella makes you want to win it more," Gregson said.

Frey and Mathews managed to work away from the younger Gregson, with Frey running a final 400m in 59 sec to seal the victory in 8.17.97, followed by Mathews in 8.19.17 and Gregson third with 8.19.94.

Frey and Gregson joined Mathew Bayley on the list of junior guys who have run qualifiers for the World Junior Cross Country, whilst Gregson was also rewarded with a World Youth qualifier.

The depth in the race also yielded a significant outcome with the top 10 all finishing in 8.31 or better. It is very encouraging for the future that 8 of the top 10 Australians have at least 1 or more years in the junior ranks (Frey and Bayley have two more, Gregson three). These juniors face the challenge of making the progression from junior to senior; this requires time and patience.

RANKINGS

De Castella Under 20, 3000m – A Race

1. Mitch Frey	VIC	8.17.9
2. James Mathews	NSW	8.19.1
3. Ryan Gregson	NSW	8.19.9
4. Sam Crowther	VIC	8.23.2
5. Brenton Rowe	VIC	8.23.4
6. Matthew Bayley	VIC	8.25.3
7. Terefe Ejiu	NZL	8.26.1
8. Benjamin Ashkettle	VIC	8.27.7
9. Matthew Coloe	VIC	8.30.7
10. Chris Hamer	VIC	8.31.7
11. Courtney Carter	WA	8.40.5
12. James Nipperess	NSW	8.56.1

De Castella Under 20, 3000m – B Race

1. Stephen Kelly	VIC	8.30.8
2. Dan Wallis	NZL	8.31.6
3. Richard Everest	SA	8.34.2
4. Kane Wille	VIC	8.36.9
5. Tyson Popplestone	VIC	8.40.0

Past Results

1981	Ricky Wright	8.21.00
1982	Malcolm Norwood	8.22.90
1983	Malcolm Norwood	8.10.50
1984	Tim Pugh	8.08.20
1985	Jason Agosta	8.10.35
1986	Tony Ford	8.11.36
1987	Darren Wilson	8.11.82
1989	Julian Paynter	8.15.21
1990	Julian Paynter	8.11.95
1991	Darren Abbott	8.19.83
1992	Trent Harlow	8.14.47
1993	Michael Power	8.10.52
1994	Paul Cleary	8.20.41
1995	Michael Power	8.02.94
1996	Mark Thompson	8.15.64
1997	Clinton Mackevicius	8.06.56
1998	Mark Thompson	8.08.64
1999	David Byrne	8.20.38
2000	John Chandler	8.22.77
2001	Mark Fountain	8.17.72
2002	Shawn Forrest	8.07.50
2003	Collis Birmingham	8.28.12
2004	Brendan Woodman	8.31.45
2005	Liam Adams	8.23.00
2006	Mitch Frey	8.17.97



Mitch Frey after taking first place in 8.17.97.

Now as a senior, it is about winning and racing well, and being in the race for as long as possible to get the chance to win".

David McNeil, who finished third in the Deek 3km in 2004 and placed third in this year's Australian 10,000m champs (29.03) at the Zatopek event, is a young Aussie who is on the right path to mastering this step.

To win the De Castella 3km is tough, but to do it twice is exceptional. There have been only 4 runners who have achieved this: Malcolm Norwood (1982-83), Julian Paynter (1988-89), Mark Thompson (1996-98) and Michael Power (1993 and 1995).

Power's 8.02.94 in 1995 is also the fastest time run in the race, just outside Craig Mottram's Australian U20 record of 8.02.77.

The 3km distance is a good distance for juniors, because it tests their endurance without totally flattening them as a 5km might. It also tests judgment, as in 2004 when Collis Birmingham made a surge for home thinking he was approaching the bell. To his horror, he discovered that he had 3 laps to go, misjudging by 2 laps! Collis did hang on to win, however, in the 2nd slowest winning time for the event.

The depth this year is equal to any other in the 26-year history of the race. There is as much potential as we have ever had, but as a wise man said: potential is a fancy word for saying you ain't done nothing yet!!

The junior boys take the line for the De Castella 3000m, from right to left Chris Hamer, Damien Nugent, Terefe Ejiu, Brenton Rowe, James Matthews, Sam Crowther, Ben Ashkettle, Courtney Carter, Ryan Gregson, Mitch Frey, James Nipperess, Matt Coloe, and Matt Bayley

