

Orienteering Update

Allston and De Hass make Orienteering World Championships the Best Ever!

Written by Grant Bluett, Images by Bob Mouatt

Australia achieved its best-ever individual result at this year's Orienteering World Championships, it came from 19 year old Tasmanian Hanny Allston, who was 6th in the long race. That was Australia's big story from this year's orienteering World Championships, held in Japan in the second week of August. Allston's result together with Troy de Haas's 7th in the sprint helped to make it Australia's most successful championships ever.

The Japanese forests provided what many considered the most physically demanding World Championships ever. The hillsides were painfully steep, the soil was soft underfoot, and there was the knee-high bamboo grass to plough your way through. Temperatures were generally around 30 degrees with 80% humidity (the sprint race

peaked out at 37 degrees!), everything added together made the week of races a brutal physical test.

There are 4 events contested at the World Orienteering Championships. The Sprint race that has a winning time of around 15 minutes; the Middle Distance with a winning time around 35 minutes; the Long race that has a winning time of around 100 minutes for the men, and 75 minutes for the women; and the relay which is a 3 person team with each running 45 minute legs. We categorise races in winning times rather than distance because of the different amount of distance that can be covered in a certain amount of time, depending on steepness of terrain, vegetation thickness, and difficulty of the running surface. Each country can enter 3 people in each individual race, and each

race has first a qualifier, with the top 45 going on to contest the final.

Sprint Race

The first final of the world championships week was the sprint race held in a forest on the outskirts of Toyota city. This is the race we had big hopes for, and thought would have our strongest chances of top results. Unfortunately the day didn't start very well, David Brickhill-Jones who had shown great form all year by winning a few major international races and coming second in a world cup race, was knocked out after the qualification race. The first 3 Australians to start in the final, Natasha Key, Jo Allison and myself all had very ordinary runs. This left our last starter for the day, Troy de Hass, with all our hopes pinned on him. He didn't let us down and ran a courageous race. After twelve and a half minutes of the 15 minutes race he was in 2nd place! Unfortunately Troy faded both physically and mentally over the last two and a half minutes, making some navigational mistakes that only a body full of lactic acid, and the mental pressure of a World Championships can explain. He still ended up in 7th place, which at the time bettered by one placing the best result an Australian has ever achieved at this level. Incidentally, in the lead up to the event, Troy featured in the national media after being attacked by a monkey whilst training in Hong Kong. It was great to see orienteering get a bit of press coverage, but I think we would all prefer it if it was our performances that attracted the coverage instead of our quirkiness.

Middle Distance Race

This is a race where Australia hasn't had as much success in the past. We have shown promise in lead up events and qualifying races only to disappoint in the finals. This year was to be the opposite, all six Australians qualified for the finals but no one did it very convincingly with everyone amongst the last to qualify in their respective heats. Tracy Bluett ran a superb race in the final to finish 13th. Bluett finished 14th in the same race back in 1999, which was Australia's best result in the middle distance until now. The others

Hanny Allston taking gel during the arduous race.





Troy in the sprint course race.

who performed superbly were juniors Hanny Allston who finished in 18th in the women's race, and Julian Dent who finished 22nd in the men's, the best ever debut performance by an Australian at a world championships. Both were the youngest competitors in their respective races and show massive promise for the future. Allston would show some of that potential a day later!

Long Distance Race

The next race was the Long Distance final, the true physical challenge of the world championships. It is the blue ribbon race, because of its tradition, and that it is the ultimate test of strength endurance and mental toughness. Junior athlete, Hanny Allston pulled out a great race when it really counted and came home in 6th place. Unlike most sports, the top six athletes receive awards on the victory podium at the World Orienteering Championships, making it every runner's goal to reach the elusive top six. To see Allston climb up on the podium was a proud moment for all Australian Orienteers, and was a very visible reminder that we are getting closer to the top of the

world stage. Knowing that Allston is still eligible to compete as a junior next year shows that she has a lot of improvement left in her, considering that most people reach their peak in their late 20's to early 30's. Allston's sporting background comes from swimming where she learnt about hard training and putting in the hours. Runners may know of her recent win in the 82km Cradle Mountain race in Tasmania, placing 4th overall! Or her second place in the Australian Mountain Running Championships. For her age she is the fastest orienteer in the world, and she has surprisingly little big race experience. If she keeps the same progress it won't be long until she is a World Champion. Whilst Allston's race was spectacular, the opposite could be said about the rest of the Australian's. Jo Allison had an allergic reaction to a wasp sting on her foot the night before the race, and did a great job in getting around the race in 28th position with a swollen foot that she could only just fit into her shoe. Troy de Haas quit the race just under half way through after making too many navigational mistakes and deciding to save himself for the relay. David Shepard pulled out at about the three quarters mark after struggling with an ankle injury and physical exhaustion. Personally, I thought I had finished after struggling through the second half, and recording a time that would have given me 25th place, only to find out that I had forgotten to punch one of the check points at a mandatory road crossing. I ran within 1 meter of the checkpoint but was only thinking about the drinks station 5 meters past it, the result was 3 disqualifications from 3 starts in the men's race.

Relay Race

The final race for the week was the relay. The men's team of Brickhill-Jones, de Haas and myself, were out for revenge after a disappointing week. And the woman's team with Allison, Bluett, and Allston were full of confidence and ready to fire. The woman's team started very well with Allison and Bluett in 7th place after the first 2 legs. They were just out of firing range of the top 4, but a top 6 looked possible with Allston competing on the last leg. Unfortunately Allston did not have one of her better runs with her hectic racing schedule of the past week wearing her down. Australia was passed by Great Britain in the final leg, but still finished a creditable 8th.

For the men our day started badly. David

Brickhill-Jones led off on the first leg and struggled to keep contact with the leaders through the first part of the race. Some navigational errors in the second half of the race saw Australia complete the first leg in 18th position, 9 minutes down on the leaders. After that de Haas and myself did the only thing we could do and ran aggressively, both of us made some small errors, managing to pass three other teams to finish in 15th position, our worst placing since the 1991 world championships.

Overall

As a whole, the World Championships was a great one for Australia. We achieved our best ever results in all 3 individual races. De Hass' 7th in the sprint, Bluett's 13th in the middle, and Allston's 6th in the Long. Most encouraging was how near De Hass came to a medal in the sprint, and the unveiling of our superstars of the future, juniors Allston and Dent. The future looks good for Australian Orienteering, but the next few years Championships will require more running speed from our part, rather than strength on the hills and soft ground like it was this year. This is an area we will have to concentrate and improve on, and I hope to see many of our top orienteers competing in more straight running races to learn from all of the runners out there.



Troy De Haas in the long course race.

Hanny Allston.



Sprint, August 10, Toyota Japan

Women

1. Simone Niggli (Switzerland)
2. Anne Margrethe Hausken (Norway)
3. Heather Monro (Great Britain)
28. Jo Allison (Australia)
32. Natasha Key (Australia)

Men

1. Emil Wingstedt (Sweden)
2. Daniel Hubmann (Switzerland)
3. Jani Lakanen (Finland)
7. Troy de Haas (Australia)
28. Grant Bluett (Australia)

World Orienteering Championships Middle, August 11, Aichi Japan

Women

1. Simone Niggli (Switzerland)
2. Jenny Johansson (Sweden)
3. Minna Kauppi (Finland)
13. Tracy Bluett (Australia)
18. Hanny Allston (Australia)
35. Natasha Key (Australia)

Men

1. Thierry Gueorgiou (France)
2. Chris Terkelsen (Denmark)
3. Jarkko Huovila (Finland)
22. Julian Dent (Australia)
25. David Shepherd (Australia)
32. Rob Walter (Australia)

World Orienteering Championships Long, August 12, Aichi Japan

Women

1. Simone Niggli (Switzerland)
2. Heli Jukkola (Finland)
3. Vroni König Salmi (Switzerland)

6. Hanny Allston (AUS)
21. Rachael Smith (NZ)
28. Jo Allison (AUS)

Men

1. Andrey Khramov (Russia)
 2. Marc Lauenstein (Switzerland)
 3. Holger Hott Johansen (Norway)
- Troy de Haas (Australia) DISQ
David Shepherd (Australia) DISQ
Grant Bluett (Australia) DISQ

World Orienteering Championships Relay, August 14, Aichi Japan

Women

1. Switzerland
2. Norway
3. Sweden
8. Australia

Men

1. Norway
2. France
3. Switzerland
15. Australia

Assorted Results

World Games, July 16, Duisburg Germany

Men:

1. Thierry Gueorgiou (FR) 38m 10.1s
2. Daniel Hubmann (SUI) 38m 31.1s
3. Oystein Osterbo (NOR) 38m 33.4s
12. Grant Bluett (AUS) 40m 06.6s
23. Troy De Haas (AUS) 41m 49.3s

Women:

1. Simone Niggli-Luder (SUI) 36m 44.1s
2. Karin Schmalfeld (GER) 37m 10.1s
3. Heather Monro (GBR) 38m 26.0s
32. Allison Jones (AUS) 45m 00.1s
39. Danielle Winslow (AUS) 50m 03.6s

Junior World Orienteering Championships Middle, July 13, Switzerland

Men

1. Fabian Hertner (SUI) 21:28
2. Philippe Adamski (FRA) 22:43
3. Hannu Airila (FIN) 23:27
8. Julian Dent (AUS) 25:10
22. Simon Uppill (AUS) 27:26

Women

1. Anna Persson (SWE) 25:51
2. Heini Wennman (FIN) 26:00
3. Hanny Allston (AUS) 27:18

32. Jasmine Neve (AUS) 36:00

Junior World Orienteering Championships Long, July 15, Switzerland

Women

1. Mari Fasting (NOR)
2. Elise Egseth (NOR)
3. Paula Iso-Markku (FIN)
11. Hanny Allston (AUS)
50. Erin Post (AUS)
68. Ainsley Cavanagh (AUS)
74. Vanessa Round (AUS)
76. Jasmine Neve (AUS)
79. Zebedy Hallett (AUS)

Men

1. Olav Lundanes (NOR)
2. Andreas Ruedlinger (SWI)
3. Phillippe Adamski (FRA)
4. Julian Dent (AUS)
32. David Meyer (AUS)
58. Simon Upphill (AUS)
105. Louis Elson (AUS)
115. Ryan Smyth (AUS)
119. Conrad Elson (AUS)



Tracy Bluett