



The tension is high just moments before the start

## Oxfam TRAILWALKER strides ahead!

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by Yvette Petersen

**The race was on from the outset with four teams jostling for lead position. Taking first place, the 'Sydney Striders Travelling Circus' finished Oxfam TRAILWALKER Melbourne 2006 in just 11 hours and 40 minutes – a record time for the event's current trail! Venturing south of the border for the first time, the Striders have been successful front runners in the Sydney Oxfam TRAILWALKER event for many years.**

**T**HE 'GROIN Sprains', Oxfam TRAILWALKER Melbourne veterans and the first team to grab the title from the 'Gurkhas' in 2004, fought off the 'Best Boys' from the Eureka Athletics Club by a mere minute to take 2nd place in 12hr 10min with the 'Best Boys' 3rd in 12hrs 11min. Not far behind were '8 Feet Under', another repeat Oxfam TRAILWALKER offender and major fundraising team, who took 1hr 20mins off their 2005 time, finishing 4th in 12hrs 21mins.

This year's event overcame terrible weather conditions on the last leg of the trail where dangerously low temperatures, low visibility, risk of snow and a hazardous track on the Mt Donna Buang trail forced organisers to hold the remaining 1888 participants overnight at Checkpoints 7, 6 and 5. By 7am on Saturday morning the weather had cleared sufficiently to allow the trail to be safely reopened. However, much to everyone's disappointment, just 5½hrs later

the weather once again forced the closure of the track to the summit and Millwarra Primary School became the new Finish point at the 88.5 km mark.

Of the record 481 teams of four who took on the physical and mental challenge that is Oxfam TRAILWALKER, 79% finished with at least one member still walking. Of the 1924 participants who set off from Jells Park on Friday morning, 70% crossed the line, with the last team 'Whose Idea Was This' triumphant at 11.11pm Saturday night.

In spite of the adverse conditions organisers would like to congratulate all participants, support crews and volunteers for a fantastic result. "This year saw the fewest medical interventions in the event's history and we particularly applaud walkers for their excellent attention to their preparation and to safety on the trail" said Kathy McLinden, National TRAILWALKER Coordinator.

Away from the drama of the trail, supporters were busy breaking fundraising records. "The real winners of the event are all the people that will be helped by the dedicated Australians who have donated \$200,000 to event walkers this past week alone!" Oxfam Australia is hoping to raise over \$2 million from the event for its long term development projects in Indigenous Australia and around the world. The organisation is one of Australia's leading aid agencies working for social justice and the alleviation of poverty.

Oxfam TRAILWALKER began in 1981 as a



Winners are grinners for the 'Sydney Striders Travelling Circus'

military training exercise in Hong Kong for the Queen's Gurkha Regiment, the Nepalese regiment of the British Army. It now takes place annually in Britain, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia. The next Oxfam TRAILWALKER event will be held in Sydney from 25 – 27 August 2006. **RAYL**



'Groin Sprains' had a heated battle to hold onto second place

### RESULTS

1. The Sydney Striders Travelling Circus	11 hrs 40 min
2. Groin Sprains	12 hrs 10 min
3. Best Boys	12 hrs 11 min
4. 8 Feet Under	12 hrs 21 min
5. Strange Happy Mountain Folk	13 hrs 04 min
6. Grunt	13 hrs 07 min
7. Knox Athletics Temperance Union	13 hrs 33 min
8. Long Horn Willy & The Hot Rods	13 hrs 43 min
9. Athletics Waverlery	13 hrs 46 min
10. The Documents	14 hrs 37 min