

by Kevin Cassady

Back in the early nineties many of our major city marathons looked to boost participation rates and interest by offering shorter options. Several other events went against the norm, and introduced events of extended length, also considered ultra distance. Two particular events which have grown in status in recent years are the Six Foot Track (Blue Mountains) and the Canberra Ultra Marathon. As an addition to the traditional Canberra Marathon, the decision was made to offer a longer choice, a 50km distance.

AUSTRALIA'S TOUGHEST off-road marathon, The Six Foot Track, started in 1984 and follows the 45km footpath stretching across the Blue Mountains National Park from The Explorer's Marked Tree, near Katoomba, to the Jenolan Caves. The event is Australia's 5th largest marathon and doubles as the Australian National Ultra Trail Marathon Championships. In 2006 it attracted almost 800 starters.

The 2006 event was won by NSW's Kaspar Sollberger, finishing 8 minutes ahead of 2005 champion Daniel Green. Taking out third place was Jonathon Blake. Ultra marathon running freak Emma Murray

RESULTS		
Canberra 50km Ultra		
Men	(Marathon Time)	Overall Time
1. Mark Hutchinson	(2.40.14)	3.09.05
2. Jonathan Blake	(2.38.17)	3.11.47
3. Tim Cochrane	(2.41.41)	3.14.35
4. Trevor Jacobs	(2.47.48)	3.20.45
5. Tom Gleeson	(2.46.25)	3.21.24
6. Ray Wareham	(2.45.39)	3.28.37
7. Chris Graham	(2.56.04)	3.31.34
8. Greg Love	(2.57.19)	3.36.26
9. Adrian Pearce	(2.57.02)	3.37.51
10. John Mackenzie	(2.59.01)	3.38.02
Women		
1. Siri Terjesen	(2.58.35)	3.35.19
2. Suzanne Kelly	(3.02.28)	3.41.38
3. Natalie Wallace	(3.26.45)	4.12.08
4. Sue Cooper	(3.32.18)	4.20.01
5. Ngoh Ngoh Nestor	(3.28.50)	4.20.33
6. Tina Torpy	(3.35.38)	4.21.31
7. Vivieni Kartsounis	(3.40.22)	4.28.40
8. Keri Vaughan	(3.39.37)	4.29.36
9. Karin Kaehne	(3.49.44)	4.39.38
10. Dee Duncan	(3.53.21)	4.46.51

Johnathon Blake in the Canberra 50km



(ACT) won the women's section for a second consecutive year, finishing an astonishing 4th overall. Murray finished 11 minutes behind the winner Sollberger and was 42 minutes ahead of second place getter, Suzanne Kelly. Dearne Fulcher finished in 3rd place, a further 4 minutes back.

The idea of including a 50km event into the Canberra Marathon was simple. Competitors needed a road 50km and what better course to use than the Canberra Marathon. 50 kilometre competitors would run through the marathon finish and be recorded as finishers while continuing on for another 7.8km loop. An instant success, the Canberra 50km has grown into a prestigious event in its own right providing favourable conditions and a fast course. With the recent introduction of an annual 50km trophy race by the International Association of Ultrarunners [IAU], the Canberra event established itself on the world stage in 2006 by being awarded Selection Race status as well as hosting both the Australian Ultra Runners Association [AURA] and Athletics Australia championships.

A 40% increase in participation since 2005 saw 79 runners, 18 of which were women, start and finish, with a depth and quality that could only be described as outstanding. In fact, one in ten marathon finishers went on to complete the 50km. National 100km team mates, Mark Hutchinson and

Jonathan Blake staged a remarkable and absorbing battle along with Traralgon local Tim Cochrane and former Australian representative, the ageless Trevor Jacobs. Ultimately, Mark narrowly prevailed over Jonathan in an exciting finish. Amongst the women, the exuberant Siri Terjesen stormed home after a sub three hour marathon split ahead of the improving Suzanne Kelly, with the reliably consistent Vivieni Kartsounis completing the AURA podium.

Amongst the age group categories, no fewer than three Australian records were to tumble. Suzanne Kelly's 3.41.38 shaved 13 minutes off the previous W40 best whilst the unstoppable "Ageless Wonder", Norma Wallett, established a new W75 mark of 6.32.28. A regular face on the Victorian running scene some 15 to 20 years ago before moving to triathlons, Tina Torpy returned with the biggest bang possible. Her 4.21.31 obliterated the W60 record and was also three minutes faster than the official World Record set by Germany's Ursula Schmitz in 1994. Tina now awaits ratification by the IAU.

As winners and having achieved the IAU qualifying standard of 3.20/3.40 respectively, both Siri and Mark have gained automatic selection and funding to represent Australia at the IAU Trophy event in Europe.

Although similar to the marathon, the 50 kilometre distance provides an excellent platform for marathon runners to step up to the longer ultras. With the IAU 100km World Challenge being held on October 8th in Korea, and the 2007 IAU World 24 Hour Challenge scheduled for July 28-29 in Quebec City, Canada, positions for the Australian teams are open for selection. The National 100km Championships at the Gold Coast on June 11th are fast approaching and offer an opportunity for all ultra runners aspiring for national selection. **RAYL**



Siri Terjesen competing at the Six Foot Track



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