

City to Surf Race Report:

Aug 8th 2010
By Steve Nielsen

Last Sunday week, about 20 Cannibals took up the challenge of competing in the annual City to Surf fun run. The race proved more popular than ever this year over 80,000 registrations – with just fewer than 68,000 of those finishing the event.

True to form and as has been the case almost every year since its inception, the weather again was perfect. Cool, crisp and sunny and very conducive to fast times (albeit a little cool at the start with the new 8.30 am start time).

While the event and the numbers involved create some inevitable frustrations, it is such an amazing event. It provides an experience that few (if any) any other fun runs in the world can. And of course, it gives you a time that provides a benchmark and comparison with yourself and others in the future. It just takes a bit of organisation and planning. Accordingly I would urge all cannibals who didn't make the start line, to think about taking up the challenge next year.

Pre-Race

For myself and a buddy of mine from Brisbane; honouree CTC Member - Brendan Greenwood (BG), the day started early with getting up well before 6.00 am. I am not a morning person at the best of times, however if you want to get to the start line at a reasonable time, you have to get up early whether you like it or not (I don't, but hey that's life). Anyway after some breakfast (coffee, energy drink and caramel space food stick for me – breakfast of champions) and a warm up around the dark and cold streets of Annandale, BG and I head over to Stanmore station. There we meet up with Jim and Michele who have also decided to train it in. Jim's untrustworthy GPS system almost leads him astray, but he gets there on time and we catch the 7.07am into Town Hall. (We miss Stretch who apparently boards at Petersham instead).

We arrive at Town Hall with masses dressed in old / soon to be discarded clothes and then face the first challenge of the day – finding a toilet without a long queue for BG who appears to be still learning about race timing in this regards. A quick tour around QVB does the trick and not long after then we are on the way to the start line.

En-route we make another customary stop at one of the bag drop points. Already at this early stage it is completely manic with people hurryingly trying to drop off their post race gear. Eventually we pushed our way through the hordes of fellow runners to locate the color bags appropriate to our start groups. Once done, time for a very quick snap, then it's off to the start line.

We then wave good bye to Jim who is running (for Cath) and starting in the Green Group (we are in red). We get there about 7.45 am and already there seems to a couple thousand people lined up in front of us. (So



much for trying to get off to a quick and unimpeded start. Arrangements to meet other friends / fellow Cannibals are also rendered forlorn. Once then a position is secured, it's then time to relax, try and keep warm and patiently wait for the starter's gun to go off.

Waiting at the start is pretty much like ground hog day if you've done the race a few times before. The usual mix of pre-race banter and race time predictions, as well as the same year on year remarks provided by the race commentator over the PA system. Of course, there is always the marvellous spectacle of old clothes being tossed away as the start time draws every nearer. If you haven't been hit by an old pair of tracky dax, then you probably haven't done a City to Surf. (I do note this year however, there was no beach ball to keep the troops occupied).

Then after what seems always seems a considerable wait, Grant Hackett (official race starter) is introduced and has a few words before a rendition of the National Anthem is played – a new innovation this year I believe. The Race Commentator then tells everyone to “relax you have plenty of time” and then a couple seconds later (as usual) the gun sounds and we are off.

The Race

Similar to waiting at the start line, the race itself changes little from year to year. I think I speak for most others, when I say for the most part it's a bit of a blur. You try and stay focused and relaxed, knowing it's a testing course – especially towards the back end – but nevertheless take in as much as you can. Some of the things that always stand in my mind are;

- The nervous exciting shuffle up to the starting line after the gun has gone off (oh how would love to get into the seeded running group of course there is always next year!)
- Trying to find clear running room / dodging other runners feet in the first k
- The chant of 'Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, oi, oi, oi' in the tunnel - God I hate that!
- The first incline through Edgecliff
- The band pumping out high energy music at the Golden Sheaf hotel – God I love that!
- Trying to get up heartbreak hill in one piece
- Seeing your first glimpse of Bondi Beach not long after Dover Heights realising that it's all downhill from here
- The long last k – which seems to go on forever

Post Race

Despite modest aims, I managed to come in just under the hour. (A satisfactory result I think to myself given average form and little running in the lead up due in part to spending most of July overseas). After I cross the finish line, collect another finisher's medal (which usually goes straight in the bin) and head off to drink copious amounts of Gatorade. There I wait around for a few minutes bumping into Travis (who of course runs a blinder), Frank (who seems happy with his time), Michele and Brendan - who finished within 6 seconds of each other, thus creating some future rivalry should they both contest next year's event.

We then head over to try and pick up our gear from the baggage collection points – big mistake. The area is already manic. There are people everywhere trying to recover dropped items (especially all those recent finishers in the red group). Its only 75 mins after the race start and there are people 15 deep trying to catch the eye of one of the volunteers to locate their bag. Some even jump the fence which causes the guy on the PA system to go into melt down. For the next hour he continually yells at people to stop jumping the fence and pushing (evidence of which we did not see), driving us all spare in the mean time.

Not known for my patience, and because it's now just warm enough to lie around with not many clothes on, I find a spot in the sun and read the paper, while BG and then Michele battles with the hordes to recover dropped items.

An hour or so later, we head to the designated meeting point where we catch up with Scott (minus Zeiger) and Kate, James and Jim. They all seem relatively happy with their times – save for the possible exception of James who (because of a misplaced entry) is smarting, having to start in the Back of the Pack Group with the Elvis impersonators and strollers and dodge the slow coaches from both his and the blue group. We had also expected to see a number of other cannibals e.g. Dax, Amanda, Stretch, David as well as Chris Sayers (who is decided no show after a bucks the proceeding night), but the scene is truly chaotic. Even finding / getting to the designated area prove difficult.



We agree to adjourn to quieter pastures and head up to the final turn to bask in the sun while watching the masses arrive. Meanwhile Scott and Kate go off to try and retrieve their gear from the bag collection area. 20 minutes or so later, Scott and Kate rejoin us.... still minus one red bag. Lucky it's a warm day.

After a bit of rest and relaxation, it's then time to face one of the other main challenges of the day – getting home. Michele, I, Jim and BG look at the bus line and decide instead on walking to Bondi Junction. A good 2-3 k's, not quite what the doctor ordered as race soreness already has starting setting in. We leave Scott (and Kate) to go and retrieve his gear I trust by now you have got it Scott!

Not long after (and for the next couple of days after), a multitude of texts, calls and emails are sent inquiring into race times. Tuesday's Sydney Morning Herald reveals all.

Results

The adjacent table shows **Net Results** of all Cannibal runners I could track down (sorry in advance if I have omitted anyone):

There were some very impressive times, with many running PB's. Notable mentions to:

- Travis for running an exceptionally quick time – apparently 30s outside his PB, but still very fast
- David Issa for beating the magical 1 hour mark. A just reward for hard efforts over the past year. And he didn't he look happy about it (see picture below)
- Michele Pezzutti who posted a great time on an extremely limited preparation caused by an ongoing calf injury
- Jim for beating the 75 min mark – and getting Cath into the SH1 Group Next Year. Pity however he didn't honour his promise to run in a dress
- Stretch for posting a highly respectable time given an interrupted preparation. There's life in the old dog yet!

▪ Travis Shields	50.30
▪ Steve Nielsen	58.14
▪ Marcus Cockshutt	58.46
▪ Scott Aliprandi	58.55
▪ David Issa	59.50
▪ Brendan Greenwood	66.59
▪ Michele Pezzutti	67.05
▪ Frank Calcara	68.28
▪ Jose Barea	1.08.58
▪ Jane Shields	1.11.16
▪ Jim Kirkpatrick	1.13.18
▪ Amy Dutch	1.15.11
▪ James Connell	1.15.27
▪ Stephen Hill	1.15.43
▪ Carmen Calcara	1.18.36
▪ Stretch	1.28.16
▪ Amanda Stanley	1.33.31
▪ Dax Stanley	1.33.31
▪ Fiona Cowen	1.40.19

Unfortunately both Steve De Francesco and Chris Sayers didn't make it to the start line due to injury. I trust boys you will live to fight another day soon!

Here are some more pictures of Cannibals taken by **Marathon Photo's** just as they are about to cross the finish line.





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