

Should've Been There: 35th Sun-Herald City to Surf 14K

Riding the Waves Down Under

By Candace Karu

As featured in the December 2005 issue of Running Times Magazine

The festivities for the 2005 edition of the world's second largest road race (this according to Running USA) included a celebration of its 35th anniversary. In 1970, inspired by a clipping about the Bay to Breakers 12K in San Francisco, Sydney Sun-Herald editor Jack Tier decided that his city also needed a road race to showcase its abundant charms. In less than a year, he had organized 2,100 people to participate in the self-proclaimed fun-run, which was won by U.S. Olympian Kenny Moore. In the intervening years, this spectacular event has grown exponentially. This year 50,270 finishers took part in an event that has become equal parts serious athletic competition, Mardi Gras, and community love fest.

Some people will tell you that road racing is the same all over the world, and in many instances that is surely the case. But running and racing Down Under differs from that in the United States in several ways, both simple and profound. As steeped in tradition and history as the City to Surf is, the organization and implementation of the event is surprisingly straightforward and uncomplicated. There is no race expo—imagine U.S. organizers giving up the merchandising opportunity that 55,000 runners and their families represent. There is no packet pick up, because there is no packet. Runners simply pick up their bib numbers in a city parking garage in the hours before the starting gun goes off. As for the huge number of participants, there is surprisingly little stress or tension. For many it's just another Sunday stroll with friends.

There is also the issue of the "J" word. In Australia there are still many people who happily refer to themselves and their training partners as joggers. In this very active country there doesn't seem to be a great divide or any real philosophical differences between walkers, joggers and runners. The majority of the proudly named "Back of the Pack" were walkers; very fit, very athletic walkers, but walkers nonetheless.

The race is a festival with a variety of ways to savor the day. Three different starting groups accommodate the vast number of participants. The smallest group is at the front; invited athletes, qualified runners, and those who finished last year's race under 75 minutes. The last group is definitely the most colorful. Here is where you'll find the gorilla suits, walking beer cans, brides, and many, many superheroes.

For eight of the last 10 years, the readers of Travel + Leisure magazine have named Sydney "The World's Best City." The point-to-point course of the City to Surf, which starts in the center of downtown, showcases many of the beach communities that contribute to its sparkling reputation. Bondi Beach, where the race finishes, is a surfer's paradise surrounded by a seaside town of cutting-edge charm; think Malibu surrounded by Greenwich Village. As you round the corner of Campbell Parade and head to the finish line, runners are treated to a spectacular view of surfers enjoying some of the best waves the southern hemisphere has to offer.

Can you imagine a race in the United States where 50,000 runners were timed without the aid of the ChampionChip and computers? In Oz they pull off the perforated strip of your bib and paste it to a paper timing card. Voila, you're timed. Want to get back to downtown where you started? Public transport or shank's mare—it's your call.

The thrill of participating in an event of epic proportions in a sublime setting surrounded by healthy, happy, fit people cannot be overstated. Visiting the World's Best City to do it is just an added bonus.

Results

Men:

- 1 Patrick Nyangelo (TAN) 41:12
- 2 Dickson Marwa (TAN) 41:15
- 3 Martin Dent (AUS) 41:19
- 4 Steve Moneghetti (AUS) 41:34
- 5 Simon Field 42:20
- 6 Scott McTaggart 42:45
- 7 Damon Harris 42:56
- 8 Barry Keem 43:06
- 9 Oswald Revelian 43:21
- 10 Louis Rowan 43:37

40 to 44—Steve Moneghetti, 41:34; 45 to 49—Andrew Edwards, 48:40; 50 to 54—Keith Bateman, 48:39; 55 to 59—Jim Owen, 51:08; 60 to 64—Ian Graves, 54:37; 65 to 69—Colin McLeod, 54:41; 70+—Neil McPherson, 75:50

Women:

- 1 Kerryn McCann (AUS) 46:27
- 2 Lisa-Jane Weightsman (AUS) 48:40
- 3 Lauren Shelley (AUS) 49:02
- 4 Melissa Moon (NZL) 50:13
- 5 Liz Miller 50:32
- 6 Belinda Wilsher 50:43

7 Lucinda Chapman 50:48
8 Jane Miles 51:25
9 Lisa Dick 51:42
10 Helen Verity Tolhurst 52:22

40 to 44—Liz Miller, 50:32; 45 to 49—Margaret Beardslee, 55:45; 50 to 54—Belinda Dent, 62:17; 55 to 59—Merri Mack, 68:01; 60 to 64—Marie Rivet, 76:55; 65 to 69—Vivienne Walker, 85:20; 70+—Anne Young, 88:46

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