

Albury 29th January 2012

Professional foot running returned to Albury for the first time since 1994 and Tom Burbidge with his committee and the assistance of some first class sponsors provided a great day of competition. The Albury Tiger's ground in an idyllic setting with a magnificent picket fence and excellent viewing areas made for a very pleasant afternoon although the weather was very hot. Tom, in his first attempt at staging an athletic carnival did an outstanding job and with his running stable's support handled the day with ease. Tom clocked enough miles throughout the day to be a candidate for a distance career when he tires of the straight track.

The day also involved the Little Athletes from the surrounding area and was conducted in an incredibly orderly fashion. The kids knew the routine and their officials had everything running smoothly and on time. The little A's, as with Stawell last Easter, Noble Park and now Albury fit easily into the VAL handicap style of athletics.

Stean Nicholls 70 metres final (backmarkers).

In heat three of the back markers 70 metres Adam Parkes (5.75m) defeated Dylan Panizza (3.75m) by 1/1000th of a second in the fastest time of 7.83. The two raced to the line together in the final with Panizza turning the tables on Parkes also in 7.83. Matthew Hargreaves (3.5m) finished third just in front of Brandon Gallic (2.25m). Panizza showed a great deal of promise recently in South Australia with a win in the sprint final at the Bay Sheffield meeting. Dylan is trained in Western Australia by Glenn Ross. John Adams(3.25m), after a couple of years away from the sport, made his first final on the comeback trail.

Borderbandag 70 metres final (frontmarkers).

In the front markers division of the 70 metres, Kevin Matthews (7.5m) continued on with his good form from the previous day to record a good win in the time of 8.43. It was Kevin's first win in the VAL and he defeated Tenneille Trigwell (7.25) and Jay Blake (3m). Kevin turned the tables on Trigwell, who defeated him in the women's and veterans handicap at Wangaratta. For Jay Blake the final was his first open sprint final. Kevin is trained by Matt Beckenham.

Albury Wholesale Chickens Novice 120 metres

Clinton Gray (7.5m) scored his first win with the VAL in the novice at Albury, defeating Nathan Howse (4.5m) and Aldis Jaunzems (15m) in the respectable time of 12.87. Clinton who was a very promising sprinter several years ago gave the sport away and has only had limited runs this season in his comeback year. Clinton is trained by John Henry.

Turvey Park Veterans 120 metres handicap.

Fresh from a 400 metres victory the night before Paul Hughes(6.5m) switched to sprint racing to record another win, this time in the veterans final in the time of 13.29. Paul narrowly defeated Craig Lancaster (24.25m), with Kevin Matthews (17.25m) in third place. Hughes defeated Lancaster in their heat and was able to repeat the dose, although only just,

in the final. Paul has now had victories this season over 120,200 and 400 metres as well as many placings. Paul is trained in Wangaratta by Greg O'Keefe.

Joss Albury Wodonga 120 metres Gift

The heats of the Joss Albury Gift seemed to be rolling along with no significant chances until the arrival of Joel Bee (5m) in the fifth heat . Joel scorched down the track in the very quick time of 12.38 and certainly set the standard for those still to run. It wasn't until the semi final stage that a danger appeared when Khan Marr(3.5m) won the first semi in 12.39, giving Bee a definite challenger. The second semi was won by Kevin Brittain (5.75m) in the fairly sedate time of 12.65, not causing any great alarm to Marr or Bee. However the race was clearly on when in the third semi final David Tinney (8.5m) threw down the gauntlet and pushed Bee right to the finish to miss Bee by 1/1000th of second in the season's fastest time of 12.24. The final was an anti climax with Bee quickly racing to the front and never looking in danger to win by over a metre in the time of 12.41. The winner's time was a slight disappointment but Joel eased over the final stages as the win was never in doubt. Tinney finished second a clear margin in front of Glenn Ross (10.25m), the position he also held in that quick third semi final. Joel has only had a few starts in the VAL but they have all been of a high standard. Amongst his runs has been a Stawell Gift heat win in 12.41 and a good second in the final of the Ballarat gift.

120 metres Commercial Club Women's Gift.

Another to finish the Wangaratta-Albury weekend with multiple wins was Kim McDonough who raced away to win the main event for the ladies in 14.11. Kim(13m) defeated Bridget Oakley (6m) by a metre and a half with Alice Paltten (6.75m) hanging onto third just ahead of Katie Moore (2.5m). After the heat times it appeared that Katie Moore(14.50) and Bridget Oakley (14.45) had the race to themselves as Bridget had defeated McDonough clearly in their heat. However the final was a completely different event as McDonough had a clear five and a half metre start on the field as they went to their blocks. Kim simply sailed along in front whilst the main pack appeared to struggle amongst themselves. Kim is trained by husband Matthew who was to finish ninth in the 1600 metres later in the day. I trust that Matthew still produced the "fitty" from his ninth to pay the accommodation for the weekend.

Yes Optus 300 metres Women's and Veterans Final

Kevin Matthews (41m) continued on with his busy weekend when he cleared out to win the women's and veterans 300 metres final from Dale Jones (59m) and Simon Dare (35m) in the time of 36.25. Kevin qualified for the final by winning the slowest of the heats, but he obviously had plenty "in the tank" as he never looked like losing the final. Dale Jones added to his Wangaratta second with another solid effort and Simon Dare recorded the fastest heat time and battled on well for his third place.

Albury City 400 metres handicap.

Not only did Albury provide a first class prize for the gift final but also spread the money around in the circle events by conducting one of the richest 400 metre events of the season. The heats were red hot with some spectacular performances recorded by runners on their way to the final. Darren Naismith (37m) led most of the way to win the first heat and defeat backmarker Ollie Wurm (11m) in 49.26. National champion Brendan Cole(7m) rounded up the field mid race to record 48.90 in a very easy win in heat two. Chris Hargreaves (20m),with a minimum of fuss accounted for heat three in 50.33. Peter Spence(28m)had a very comfortable win in heat four in the time of 49.08. British decathlete, Martin Brockman (22m) stole heat five with a barnstorming run around the field to charge to the front at the 200 metre mark and ran up the straight doggedly to record 48.48,the fastest qualifier.

In the final Chris Hargreaves began quickest of the middle markers and worked himself into a nice position whilst Brockman tried to repeat his heat tactics and make an early move on the leaders. Cole, giving the field a minimum of thirteen metres made a dash down the back straight and quickly had himself in contention. On the home turn Naismith, still in the lead, was joined by Cole and Peter Spence with Brockman tiring on his run. In the run to the line Cole was a convincing winner from Spence and Naismith in the time of 47.83. Cole, coached by Matt Beckenham, is a regular on the national athletics team and will now concentrate on the London Olympics.

The River 105.7m Border Radio 1600 metres.

The 1600 metres was also one of the richest on the VAL calendar with a prize pool of \$3000,the winners share \$1600.A classy field lined up but unfortunately after a lap the scratchman Lachlan Chisholm pulled out of the race with an injury. The race quickly developed into a two man race with stablemates Andrew Patten (100m) and Paul Munro (95m) settling down to fight out the finish over the last 300 metres. Munro opened a break before the home turn and held Patten in the run to the line to win by 10 metres in 4.12.26. Cameron Bishop (100m) once again showed he was a young runner with a future to finish third ,inches ahead of Daniel Lawlor (155m). Munro ,who won the backmarkers 3200 metres at Stawell last Easter is trained by Mark Hipworth.

Jetts 120 metres Backmarkers

In a special event for those eliminated from the Albury Gift the club staged a backmarkers final over 120 metres. The winner was Dylan Panizza (2m) narrowly from Ben Gallic (0.5m) and Brendan Matthews (0.25m) in the time of 13.12. Panizza's run in this event and earlier in the sprint showed that he is a sprinter with potential and is certain to back with the VAL before the season ends. Both first and second are from Western Australia.

Reminders; This Saturday, Avondale Heights , TEA GARDENS Gift. Canning Reserve , Start 1.30—finish 7.30 As well as a very comprehensive VAL running program the Tea Gardens gift committee is providing plenty of entertainment with a free live outdoor concert under lights, featuring **BLACK MAGIC**, commencing at the completion of the athletics. As well as the regular food and drink stalls the club is also providing a jumping castle for the kids.

On Sunday St Bernard's will be staging an excellent program with the Don Furness Memorial (\$5000), the richest 70 metres in Australia and the Bendigo Bank 800mts (\$4350). Also, for the under 14's there is the St Bernard's kids sprint with a sash for the winner of each of the two divisions. Drinks and lollies for all kids.

Distance athletes; don't forget the Noble Park 2000 metres Classic. Prize money is increasing as co-sponsor Bill Sutton digs up another Milo tin in his back yard. Trophy and prize pool currently \$1300, could get higher if Bill can borrow a bobcat for his front yard. If you haven't entered you know "Rexter" will be at you. Enter and avoid the pain. Email the office and let Mark or Noel know.

Any club who wishes to advertise/mention any events for a coming carnival that are not covered by the normal VAL website, please email bmara2011@hotmail.com These events maybe Little Athletics, kids races, tug war, beauty contests, relays, most insane athlete competition etc. We will endeavour to mention your event a couple of weeks prior to your carnival.

For any budding Journalist, author, graffitist or even a part time face painter who wishes to add to their CV, why not have a crack at writing the VAL wrap. You never know, Lachlan Murdoch may be researching the wrap one day in search of a foreign correspondent. Recently Eric Sapac went undercover and did a terrific job with his Rye wrap. Contact Mark Howard or Brian Marantelli if interested.