

### **St Albans Gift 21st January 2012**

The St Albans Gift meeting was conducted again under twilight conditions before an enthusiastic crowd, although slightly less boisterous than in previous years. The track was in excellent condition and the weather was perfect for night time athletics. The St Albans officials and helpers were "on the ready" and the meeting was extremely well co-ordinated. Once again the St Albans Club provided a great venue for the athletes and officials to have a refreshment during and after the carnival. Unfortunately the VAL's "go to man", Ian Cox took ill during the night and had to leave his post for a trip home to bed. The good news was that "Coxy" was back in business by Sunday afternoon. Ian and the Victorian Athletic League would like to pass on a sincere thanks to all those who stayed behind to help pack up the van. Considering that it was 11.30 before the van was packed the effort was "above and beyond the call of duty" for those that helped.

### **Important Announcement**

As most will be aware the Stawell Athletic Club are organising an "audience with George McNeill" luncheon on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb at the POP restaurant, Hardware Lane, noon to 2pm. George, apart from being an icon of the sport, is an incredible after dinner speaker and one of the funniest story tellers you will ever hear. If you are available or working in the city, do yourself a favour and book a ticket, \$70 per person.

Another **really really really** important announcement; The extremely prestigious St Bernard's kids events are on again this season. Previous winners are now household names and are still signing endorsement contracts worth unknown amounts of cash and prizes. This year the winner of the boys and girls divisions will each take home the much sought after St Bernard's sash. The organisers are currently negotiating with various sponsors for a trip to Disneyland, a lead role in Home Alone 3 and a range of Repco commercials. Failing to delivery these deals we will certainly provide drinks and lollies for all contestants. Runners must be under fourteen on the day and clean shaven.

Any club who wishes to advertise/mention an event for a coming carnival that is not covered by the normal VAL website, please email [bmara2011@hotmail.com](mailto: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.

### **70 metres Le Mans Toyota Open handicap.**

The evening started with the final of the 70 metres and was taken out by Travis Soutter (8.75m) from Peter Walsh (4.75m) and Cam Dunbar (6.75m) in the time of 7.71. Travis is "on fire" this season with Saturdays win his fourth for the season, following wins at Frankston, Waverley and Ringwood. The place getters, Cam Dunbar and Peter Walsh are also enjoying good seasons with Cam winning at Rye and Peter finishing second at Waverley. The winner is trained by todd Ireland.

### **120 metres St Albans Sports Club and Brimbank Council Gift**

Mark Hignett (11.50m) looked sure to continue with his return to form when he held a comfortable lead over the closing stages of the gift final at St Albans. However just as Mark was being called the winner, his dreaded hamstring gave way and his winning charge came to a halt. The recipient of Mark's bad fortune was the Benny Tancredi trained Matthew Mifsud (11.25m) who claimed the win with a narrow victory over Marcus Cooper (11.25m) and Cam Dunbar (6.75m). Mifsud can relate to Mark's anguish as he suffered the same hamstring hoodoo at Keilor last year. Matthew still managed to clock a very respectable 12.57 for his first open gift win. Marcus Cooper's run was good and his form doesn't appear to be suffering from his ever increasing coaching duties. Cam Dunbar, carrying a one metre penalty for his Rye Gift win, showed that he will still be a competitive force for the rest of the season. Hignett had enough momentum to carry himself over the line for fourth but will now have to reset his targets with a four week recovery period on the cards. The other finalists Bros Kelly (7m) and Matthew Eddy (8m), although finishing fifth and sixth, were only a metre from the winner.

### **120 metres Barry Plant Women's handicap**

Sarah Blizzard (9m) has never been one to sit at home with her athletic career, with only a season and a half of competition Sarah notched up her forty fifth start with the VAL at St Albans. Going on the crowd reaction, Sarah, coached at Ararat by Marcus Cooper, didn't make the trip alone. The women's final was her first win and she received a Stawell Gift reception at the sash presentation. Blizzard cleared out to defeat Rita Pana (21m) and Patricia Fox (9m) in the time of 14.75. Although only making one final in her first season, the Stawell novice 100mts, Sarah showed at Maryborough a win was near with her appearance in three ladies finals. Rita Pana ran a great race from her front mark and the ever consistent Patricia Fox was once again in the finish. Megan McMahon, obviously excited about racing in front of her home crowd, made the final and left her blocks behind. Megan the blocks are in the VAL van.

### **800 mts Greenwater Australia Open Handicap.**

Whilst Sarah Blizzard was winning her first race at St Albans, Mark Hipworth(80m) was taking home sash number "who knows" after the open 800 metres. Mark has been involved with the VAL since 1980 and in that time has won races over all distances as well as coaching hundreds of winners. With a CV that includes a Burnie Gift win, Stawell Gift finalist, wins in Stawell 550m ,800m,1600m,3200m and many more he showed that he still likes winning by careering away over the last 200 metres to win convincingly from Justin Murphy (26m) and Jayson Hayes-Hornibrook (52m). Hipworth trailed the early leader Craig Harris (80m) until well into the last lap when he charged for home and never looked like losing. Jayson Hayes-Hornibrook , making a mark on the half mile ranks,is gradually working his way to a win. Backmarkers, Justin Murphy and Dominic Hoskins( 28m), ran great races to qualify for the final but found the task of chasing a tearaway leader just beyond them. In the first heat of the 800mts VAL history was made when Ian Burrows(60m) and Michael Tuhon (56m) ran the first official dead heat since the VAL has been using the new photo finish machine. The finish is now projected on to a computer screen with an actual freeze frame picture of each athlete. A line is then drawn across each athletes chest and the result is clear cut, regardless of the margin.

### **1600 metres St Albans Football Club Open handicap.**

The final of the 1600 metres was a one act affair with Andrew Patten (110m) racing away from his coach, Mark Hipworth (200m) and Wayne James (270m) in the time of 4.18.6. Andrew previously had raced with the VAL in 2001 and only reappeared at Rye last week, where he finished a very promising second in the 1600m. The fourth placed Sean Beer (370m) set a good early pace but was quickly collared by Patten with 150 metres to travel and was eventually pushed out of the placings by Hipworth and the improving Wayne James. With the sudden emergence of Patten, next week's 3200 metres at Wangaratta will certainly be a keenly fought affair with the expected appearance of Brady Threlfell and "the old bull" Matthew McDonough sure to be in the action.

### **1600 metres Victorian Cross Country League Novice**

Jacob Reed (180m) recorded his first VAL win with his victory in the VCCL novice. Jacob defeated Peter Cowell (260m) and Luke Wilke (200m) in the very respectable time of 4.18.8. Reed raced to the lead over the concluding stages and was never really challenged by the placegetters although the early leader, Ellie Tossol (400m), looked a definite chance at the bell before tiring in the home straight. Reed, in his second season with the VAL has only raced sparingly but has now qualified for the novice final at Stawell. Jacob's win was not only his first win, but also the first win for his trainer Matthew McDonough. Apart from Jacob, Matthew, a regular winner himself, is building a handy team of athletes including the promising Trent Lowery, a more than handy 800 metres competitor. Peter Cowell, a regular competitor in the VCCL novice series is certainly nearing a win on Saturday night's effort.

### **RACV 120 metres under 20's**

Saturday's final of the RACV under 20 year old handicap went to the "star on the rise" Cam Moss (5.25) as he defeated Simon Carey (14.25m) and Jordan Keast (10m) in 13.07. Cam, who opened his VAL career only last month at Waverley with a win, began extra well from his tight mark to gather in the leaders and was easing as the finish appeared. After the six evenly contested heats the race looked to be very open but Moss was a class above the opposition and he should have no trouble qualifying for the final later in the season. The winner is trained by Nick Feidler who continues to produce a group of young and talented runners.

### **300 metres O'Brien Electrical Veterans handicap**

At a time when most veterans are asleep in front of the TV (with their bunny slippers on) Craig Lancaster (50m) was at St Albans handing out a hiding to some of his contemporaries. The final which was the last on the card, at 10.45pm, was an exciting race with Julie Torrini (78m) clearing out early and still holding a commanding lead before the turn when first Garry Connor (58m) and then Lancaster pounced. Over the concluding stages Craig raced away to record an easy win in 37.5. Craig is one of the VAL's stalwarts and with his coach and father, Norm rarely misses a day at the running. Garry Connor, fresh from his recent maiden victory at Ringwood, ran an excellent race and is sure to add to his winning tally before the season finishes. Julie Torrini enjoying her return to the VAL also has been consistently making finals this season.

#### **400 metres Kennard Hire Women's handicap**

Following on from a last start win at Ringwood, Kathryn Heagney (70m) literally fell across the line to win the women's 400 metres final from Mandy Emmett (64m) and Tarryn Fisher (40m) in the time of 58.2. Kathryn ran the fastest heat time, although only narrowly from Rita Pana (68m), and always looked in control of the race. The only danger came when she started to stagger with metres to go and looked a chance to fall before the tape. The photo finish showed Heagney well clear and chesting the tape correctly as she crashed to the ground. Kathryn's recent wins would be very pleasing to most but may not compare too well to another recent win achieved by the veteran. In July last year Kathryn won the world master's 400 metres title at Sacramento, USA. It maybe a little late in arriving but the Victorian Athletic League congratulates Kathryn on her world title. John Knott coaches Kathryn in Bendigo.

#### **400m Hume Turf and Machinery Open handicap.**

One of the highlights of the evenings events was the final of the open 400 metres. The field consisted of ten runners who would not be out of place in any 400 metre event conducted on the professional circuit. The winner was the consistent Chris Hargreaves (23m) who took the race by the "throat" early and made his competitors chase him from the gun. Chris, who made many finals last season without winning, has turned his finals into wins this season. He held a comfortable margin at the finish over Josh Mather (19m) and Matt Grant (26m) in 48.38. Josh looked a winning chance before the turn but just couldn't make up the leeway in the home straight. Matt Grant's effort was good after competing in the heats of the 800 metres earlier. Dominic Hoskins (21m) put up another tough run after also having a busy schedule of events throughout the night. Chris is trained by John Henry, who was dogged throughout the night by serial "bookie pest" Alsie.