

Northcote Gift @ Waverley 11th December 2011

The traditional pre-Christmas Northcote gift was held at Waverley on Sunday. After an overnight drenching the grass track was very wet but safe and a full card of ten events was decided. Once again the Waverley little A's provided the canteen, bbq, parking and amenities. The Northcote Athletic Club has been conducting their meeting for over half a century and must be one of the best attended of the pre Christmas carnivals. An interesting sideline to the meeting was the speed with which the equipment was packed up and stored in Coxy's van. Well done to the Northcote committee, just shows how quick it can be done when a few "dig" in to help for 10 minutes.

800metres Victorian Cross Country League Womens and Vet's

With the track still very much affected by the overnight rain the heats of the women's and veteran's 800 metres were leader dominated with Dale Jones (126m) and Garry Connor (160m) winning their respective heats comfortably. And so it continued in the final with Dale Jones running to the line strongly in the time of 1.59.46 to defeat Rebecca Cato (136m) and Dennis King (110m). Dale worked hard early, putting himself in a winning position and always appeared the winner. Rebecca looked a strong chance at the 200m mark when she broke away from the pack to throw out a serious challenge but was held in the final stages. Jones one of the VAL's keenest supporters made the long trek from Wellington, New South Wales for the event.

Stewart Bradley Memorial 70 mts Novice

In one of the most impressive wins of the day the Nick Feidler trained Cam Moss (5m) won his first VAL event in comprehensive style to defeat Dean Dobric ((5.5m) and Travis Pike (7.25m). Cam's time of 7.84 was extremely good under the conditions and was faster than that run in the backmarkers final. Cam having his first run with the Victorian Athletic League showed he was a runner of the future with his stylish win.

Dual Heating & Air Conditioning 70mts Frontmakers

Adrian Fury (4.75m) who made the Stawell Gift final in 1985 showed that age is no barrier with some very solid performances at Waverley on Sunday. His first appearance was in the 70mts where he clearly won the "fronties" final in the time of 8.25. Runner up, Emma Johnson (6m) looked a legitimate challenger after her good heat win but Fury charged to the front mid race and was increasing the margin at the tape. Dominic Hoskins (0.75m) continued on with his impressive move to the sprinting ranks with a nice third. Adrian is self trained and regularly makes the trip from Albury, with his group to compete in Victoria.

Dual Heating & Air Conditioning 70mts Backmakers

Doug Greenough (5.25m) after a quiet 2010/2011 season powered back to his exceptional 2009/2010 form with a narrow win in a blanket finish in the backmarkers final in the time of 7.95. In a quality final, Doug defeated Peter Walsh (4.75m), Jarrod Lindner(5.75m) and Cam Dunbar (3.25m). Greenough, a Stawell gift finalist , Ararat gift and Rye gift winner in 2010 is trained by the race sponsor Todd Ireland . Peter Walsh, always consistent in sprint events, looks set for another competitive season. Jarrod Lindner, winless since 2008, is very close to another win to add to his Wangaratta novice.

Brian Marantelli Open 800mts

The 800 metres final was a one act affair with Craig Harris (86m) clearing out in his heat to record the faster of the two heats. His heat time of 1.53.03 was decidedly better than the 1.57.8 returned by the second heat winner Cameron Yorke (38m). In the final Harris took full advantage of his handicap to open a big break on the field and never looked in danger. He improved on his heat time to record 1.52.52 in the final, defeating Eric Sapac (42m) and Justin Murphy (26m). Craig, who was narrowly defeated at Frankston last week, was never in need of a photo finish this week winning by 10 metres. Eric Sapac chased gamely in the home straight and held out the ever consistent Justin Murphy for second money. An interesting point from the heats was that seven of the eight qualifiers came from Harris' heat. Also with only two heats, but bigger fields, it made for more competitive heats than can often occur in the smaller 800 metres heats.

The Victorian Runners and Trainers Association 100mts Womens/Vets.

Not content with just a win in the 70 metres, Adrian Fury (11.25m) made short work of the opposition in the women's and veteran's final by careering away to win by three metres in the time of 11.07. Paul Hughes (5.5m) and Stephen Taylor (12.25m) were left to fight out the minors in what seemed a dead heat. The finishing machine gave the nod to Hughes by the barest margin. Hughes was defeated by Fury in their heat, and so had the difficult task of turning the tables in the final.

Jim Spain Memorial 100 metres Gift.

The main event was the 100 metres gift and Travis Soutter (13.25) enjoying a good start to the season held out Paul Hughes (10.5m) and Carl Moorhouse (3.5m). Travis made the final of the Frankston gift last weekend and won his semi clearly on Sunday but needed to "find" to defeat those from the faster 1st semi final. In the final Soutter looked in trouble when Hughes

challenged at the 90 metre mark but was able to hold on by a metre, in the quickest time of the day, 10.69. Hughes had to be content with another second and Carl Morehouse made up considerable leeway from his very difficult handicap for third. Soutter is trained by Todd Ireland, giving Todd a double for the day. The race has been sponsored for several years by John and Robert Stewart, both regular competitors for the Jim Spain stable in the 1980's.

300 metres Womens and Veteran's handicap

Shane Ezard running from the very tight mark of four metres bulldozed his way through the pack over the concluding stages to win the final in 35.98. Shane was still in eighth position in the shadows of the post but claimed Julia Boatman (50m) and Darren Naismith (15m) right on the line. Benny Tancredi (78m) who seemed sure to win went from first back to seventh in the last few strides. Shane, winner of the Stawell 400mts backmarkers in his younger days, is a master in the shorter circle events and adds Sundays sash to his many wins. The race was sponsored by three long time and loyal professional foot running workers, Rick Dunbar, Barrie Milligan and Noel Rexter, three heads that wouldn't be out of place in any police line up.

400 metres Ultralast Ecoating System Open

Nick Howard (43m) took the sit early on former stable mate Tom Hecimovic (58m) before charging to the lead before the home turn to run out an easy winner in the time of 47.61. Daniel Lawlor (32m) continued his good form to grab second with Mitchell Palmer (25m) third. Nick, who seems to specialize in the one lap events, was formerly coached by brother Mark but now is under the care of Robert Furness. Mitchell Palmer, a winner of the Wangaratta 400m last season battled on well for his third. Backmarkers Matthew Hargreaves (8m) and Simon Fitzpatrick (9m) struggled to make ground on the wet track. The race was sponsored by Ian Marchesi and his company Ultralast Ecoating Systems.

Jack Gibney Memorial 1600 metres Open.

The 1600 metres final provided another close and exciting finish with Lauren Crowe (320m) grabbing the early leader John Walton (400m) in the last few metres in the time of 4.13.57. Corey Lawson (115m) ran his best race for some time to run third just ahead of the in-form Alex Bacalja (100m). Lauren, who had earlier made the women's and veteran's 800 metres final, chased Walton down over the last 200 metres and it was only in the last few strides that she looked a winner. Walton, running bare foot and a long time VAL supporter, was another to make the trip down from NSW. At the presentation for the event it was announced that the race next year would be worth a minimum of \$2500, making it one of the richest 1600 metre events on the calendar. Norm Charles, major sponsor to the Victorian Cross Country League, has certainly opened the wallet

to make sure that Northcote Athletic Club holds its position as one of the most popular metropolitan carnivals.