

Peninsula Gift, Frankston Park Sunday 4th December.

John Barry, Matthew Boyes and the Peninsula committee provided an entertaining program of events for their 3rd Peninsula Gift on Sunday at Frankston Park. With a quality group of sponsors, headed by Core Health Club, the day's events provided some of the closest finishes of the season. A great initiative was the quick display of results on an electronic scoreboard. Once again the 70 metres was divided into a front and back format, with numbers up 14% on 2010, the concept is gradually gaining increased interest. The first heats of the Broo Ladies 400 metres series were conducted. The Victorian Athletic League would like to welcome former VAL runner and official Leo Keating back as the video operator.

Core Health Frontmarkers 70 metres.

The front markers 70 metres final was taken out narrowly (2/100ths) by Travis Soutter (3.25m) in the time of 8.55 from Dominic Hoskins (0.75m) and Kelly Sheldrick (0.75m). The final was run true to form with Soutter running the fastest heat time (8.53) from Hoskins heat time of 8.58. Travis Soutter a winner previously of the St Bernard's 120metres is trained by Todd Ireland and has run with the Victorian Athletic League for several seasons. Travis also made the gift final .Dominic Hoskins continuing with his sprinting ran a creditable second before switching to his favoured 800 metres distance later in the afternoon, making the final there also. Peninsula committeeman Tony O'Shea was another to make the final.

Core Health Backmarkers 70 metres

Edward Ware (4m), first up for the season , narrowly won the backmarkers division from Fabrice Melanie (5m) and Sean Law (4.75m) in the time of 7.81. Once again the margin was 2/100ths of a second and once again the heat form continued into the final. Fastest heat time went to Ware from Melanie, with a difference of again 2/100ths. Ware, runners up in the 2011 Stawell Gift, looks set for a good season and must be a highly fancied chance at the Bay Sheffield. Melanie also responsible for a consistent 2010/11, looks to be on a similar path for 2011/12. Making the final was 2008 Stawell Gift winner Sam Jamieson, hopefully recapturing the form that ranked him amongst the quickest in the country. Ware is trained in New South Wales by Brian Wright.

120 metres Core Health Gift

After a couple of seasons of great promise Ballarat athlete Matthew Wiltshire (7.5m) won his first open race in convincing style from Cam Dunbar (7.75m) and Augustine Carty-Cowling (8.25m) in the time of 13.01. The finalists faced a strong headwind and coincidentally finished in colour order, a rare occurrence in VAL history. Wiltshire, winner of last season's Bill Howard handicap at Stawell, improved on his heat placing to win his semi final clearly from the days earlier winner Travis Soutter. Kendra Hubbard (16.75m) the other semi final winner and Katie Moore (17.75m) were collared early by Soutter(16m) and struggled to get into their stride. Cam Dunbar and Augustine Carty-Cowling looked good winning chances in the closing stages but found the winner a shade too strong. The winner is trained by Peter O'Dwyer who also trained the winner of the womens 400 metres.

800 metres "I love Frankston" Open.

In the open 800 metres final, Greg Hilson (88m) led from the start and was a narrow winner from Craig Harris (86m) and Daniel Lawlor (56m) in the time of 1.53.72. Hilson turned for home a narrow leader and looked sure to be headed by Harris but the margin although narrowing was still a body width on the line. Daniel Lawlor was the only runner from the main bunch who set out after the leading two, and still looked a chance at the 200 metre mark, but found the task of chasing into a head wind too difficult. Greg Hilson enjoyed a successful season in 2010/11, amongst his wins was the 2010 version of Sundays race. The Backmarkers Justin Murphy (26m) and Justin Rinaldi (28) found the wind combined with their handicaps a difficult task. The winners margin was once again very close, 3/100ths of a second.

800 metres "I love Frankston" Women's and Vets handicap.

In the first of the Womens/Veterans 800 metres for the season Rosamond Gilden (110m) held on to win in a tight finish from Lauren Crowe (138m) and Dale Jones (126m) in the time of 2.02.07. There looked to be many chances throughout the event with Kathryn Heagney (176m) clearing out with a big lead early only to be collared by a group of runners at the 200 metre point. First Crowe, then Jones hit the lead but finally Gilden edged to the front in the closing stages and drew away to win by two metres. The winner is trained by Wally Meecham who has started the season well with wins to Rebecca Cato, Daniel Lawlor and now Gilden. The backmarker , David Haigh (20m) ,chased hard and continually made ground on the leaders but was unable to get a continuous cart into the finish, and we all know how Haighy LOVES a cart into the race. Amongst the tailenders, it was good to see the return of Matthew Bateman, back running with the VAL after a couple of years away from competition.

1600 metres Frankston Football Club Open handicap.

The 1600 metres was taken out by Sean Beer (385m) who cleared out with a big lead in the middle stages and held a comfortable lead in the home straight to defeat backmarker Michael Marantelli (90m) and Ian Burrows (140m) in the time of 4.16. Beer always looked to have the race in his keeping and adds Sundays win to his St Albans and Dandenong wins over the last two years. Sean who has more coaches than Cobb & Co will have to divi up the trainers percentage amongst Sean Quilty, Wayne James and wife Martine. No doubt sons Sam and Jack will also require a share for their valuable input on the Waverly training track. On the final turn third placegetter Ian Burrows received a severe buffeting from his stable mate Michael Marantelli and this week's pairing at the "Hippo" training sessions maybe interesting. The "hundg" difference in prizemoney may come up in conversation. Also good to see, making a comeback to the VAL after serious injury is former St Bernard's gun cricketer Tom Kelly.

300 metres Harper Group Veterans Handicap.

Martin Barrows (23m) continued on his winning way with his third win of the season in the veterans 300 metres , following on from his double at Terang last week. Martin beaten in his heat by Paul Hughes (7m), turned the tables in the final to hold out John Mackay (29) and Hughes in 38.9. Barrows is trained by Kerry McConnon (not Justin Lewis as reported last week) and is clearly racing in the best form of his career.

120 metres "I love Frankston" Womens and Vet's handicap

Robert Vidler (scratch) flashed home to win the womens/vets sprint event at Frankston by an ever increasing margin from Paul Hughes(7.75m) and Stephen Taylor (16m) in the impressive time of 13.39. Vidler, although not the fastest heat winner, was always considered the one to beat and showed by the ease of the win that he may have been very competitive in the open gift off his allotted 3 metres. Vidler has always been a class sprinter in his time with the VAL as shown by last season's wins at Burnie and Burramine. The winner is trained by John Henry who was in Mount Gambier with the rest of his stable. Chris Hargreaves was the best performed of the Victorian runners with a second in the gift and winning the 70metres.

400 metres B Select Tyres open handicap.

David Woods (41m) overcame a third place in his heat to win the final of the 400 metres in the time of 48.8 from Nick Magree (22m) and Chris Cato (23m). Woods had a perfect sit on Nick Howard and surged to the front on the home turn, holding the placegetters comfortably in the run to the line. Chris Cato chased hard down the back straight and worked himself into a handy position before the turn only to be touched off for second on the line by Magree. The remaining backmarkers never really featured in the race, always having trouble to make ground. Woods is trained by Benny Tancredi

400 metres Broo Womens Series

The Victorian Athletic League's newest sponsor staged the first heats of the Broo 400 metres womens series at Frankston on Sunday. With only seven scratchings the event was well patronised by the runners and Tara Domaschenz (40m) opened her VAL winning account with a comprehensive win in the final in 55.35. Tara started her VAL career with a close second in the 2007 Stawell Women's gift but has since struggled to win. However on Sunday Tara ran the fastest heat time and always looked in control of the final as she raced away to defeat Rosamond Gilden (34) and Steph Mollica. Rosamond was going for a unique double having earlier won the 800 metres.

Renegade underground news source

Anyone wishing to read a different slant on Sunday's events, log on to www.hippoathleticclub.com.au Scroll down to latest news. The scribe may not necessarily be representing the views of the entire Hippo group, but remember he is a distance runner.