

## **Report on Australian Schools Cross Country Championships, Hobart, Tasmania 12/08/2017**

With all of the younger age group runners out of the way and a respite from the rain our NZ athletes were ready to start on the often bumpy cross country course at the Tasmanian Police Academy at Rokeby near Hobart, Tasmania.

The Under 18 Boys Team started strong and ended up in the front group. Four runners ran a tactical race pacing each other within the group. The 4 worked together up the hill the first time, a 600m steady climb which started a small gap on the rest of the field by the time they turned at top, about 2km into the race. The steady wind that had been behind them now faced them on the zig zag back down the hill.

George Corey-Wright, Murdoch McIntyre, Kalani Sheradin and Sam Tanner continued their effort around the next flat part of the course while Stuart Hofmyer and Logan Slee worked in a similar fashion in the middle of the field. Up the telling hill the second time and the front runners put in that extra effort to pull away. The Kiwi lads stayed on the pace and were all within a few metres of each other. Just before they crossed the road George made charge to put himself with the front runners. As the final 400m went around a bend then with the last sharp corner leading to a rising 150m leg to the finish line. From about 7<sup>th</sup> place back Sam Tanner put in a huge last and fast finish to overtake 4 runners to maintain a strong sprint to cross in third place...woo hoo! A podium finish in the first race of the day. George Cory- Wright finished in a well-deserved 6<sup>th</sup>, Murdoch McIntyre hanging on for 9<sup>th</sup> chased in by team mate Kolani Sheridan 5 seconds later in 11<sup>th</sup>. Team NZ with their team running and finishing with 4 in the top 11. Logan Slee had an on the line split finish, coming out at 26<sup>th</sup> in front of the Queensland runner. Stuart finished in 41<sup>st</sup> position with a time of 20.02.....not bad for a 6km on a cold windy day.

This sent a message to the other competitors that Team Kiwi was here with a mission. This started the trend for the afternoon.

The Under 18 Girls race...not to be out done, the girls started in a similar manner staying in a group behind the early Queensland leader, Jamie Hiscock. By the time the runner had turned at the top it was obvious that there were going to be 6 runners prepared to pull in the early gap set by the leader. By the half way point Hannah O'Connor and Abbey Rockliff from NSW were in for a battle. Coming down to the road crossing Hannah showed that body language that she was thinking about how to put into action strategies that would give her an edge. Experience, tactics, tenacity and the support from her kiwi supporters to cross the line next to Abbey. Only the people at the finish line could see who was in front. Hannah.....GOLD-GIRL! A superb and gutsy performance from Jayme Maxwell saw her finish 5<sup>th</sup> in the 6 km event. Phoebe McKnight the young 16yo from HVHS placed 8<sup>th</sup>, right with her was Tessa Hunt on the same time. Just 3 seconds behind, Aimee Ferguson was 11<sup>th</sup>(not a bad deal the day before ya 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.....yah Rototuna Runner )

Liliana 21<sup>st</sup>, Sofia 36<sup>th</sup>... What a great sight for us (not for our Tasman Neighbours though) to see all those Black tops coming up to the finish area so close together.....5 runners in the top 11.

When the big boys came out to play.....8km = 3 times up the hill. At least it had stopped raining. Again the Kiwi Contingent stayed grouped at the front with Team Captain Joe pushing hard and James, Connor, Jacob and Chris forming a group with 2 other runners to pace one another through 6 kms. Up the hill for the third time and eventual winner, Joshua Torley from ACT was 300m out in front and never looked like losing. To his credit big striding Joe was caught alone in second place for

most of the second half of the race. On the third lap the others were steadily closing down the 100m gap. In the final 200m Connor, Joe and James all chased home to get those podium placings. Connor Melton edged ahead, Joe Clark had enough to hang on for 3<sup>rd</sup> just to hold of a fast finishing James Uhlenberg, 1 second adrift to gain 4<sup>th</sup>. Chris Devany and Jacob Holmes dug deep to keep pushing into 6<sup>th</sup> + 7<sup>th</sup> respectively. More NZ apparel in the finish shoot than any other state.

Joel Carmen can also be pleased with his 13<sup>th</sup> placing.

So far so good...and in the meantime our podium finishers were getting actual medals.....on a podium....announcements and all. Whoooo. (is that a first)

Last race of the day and it was another game plan that went a similar way. After the 4km point we had three NZ'ers out front with team captain Samantha Burke and Bride Edwards leading the charge down the hill followed closely by Grace Ritchie. On the second 3 km loop the break became more evident and the two South Island girls moved away from Sarah Eckel from SA and Courtney Hopkins NSW.

On to the slippery turn to home Samantha had a gap she needed to take line honours chased home by Waimea Colleges star Bridie....a 1-2 finish. Gracie Ritchie, as usual, ran strongly to finish 5<sup>th</sup>. In the last part of the race Harriet Bush edged past Navajo Prentice to take 13<sup>th</sup> place.

What a day....A chilly morning with a snow dump on the Mountain behind us, rain, wind, which eased of a bit by the start of our races. Gazebo at half-mast and anchored with warratahs, vans parked behind and athletes hunkering down inside them to stay warm and out of the blasts.

The performances, team wise, were outstanding. 6 individual podium finishes. 3 boys and 3 girls.

A one two finish in the U20 girls.

Our 4 person teams ... with 3 firsts and 1 second (if we were eligible to qualify) we would have won all four on placings....No medals this time. Just as well....all that extra luggage weight!

The athletes were a credit to themselves, their families, their coaches, their schools and essentially to our Country as representatives of NZSSAA Organization. Proud moments for all. Thanks to the parents who crossed the ditch to support our athletes.

Bring on the Relays tomorrow.....

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