

2014 Australian Cross Country Champs New Zealand Report

A group of twenty athletes selected from the New Zealand Secondary School Cross Country Champs in Palmerston North were given the opportunity to represent New Zealand in the Athletics Australia and All Schools National Cross Country Champs in Albany, Western Australia at the end of August.

Selection was based on finishing in the top 12 individuals in both the senior boys and senior girls grades. Representing New Zealand and competing against selected Australian athletes representing their state provides an incentive for athletes to be recognized for their hard work within our sport but also to allow many their first experience of international competition.

This years event was in Albany, Western Australia, possibly the most furthest distance you could travel to in Australia from New Zealand. New Zealand athletes were selected from every corner of the country including Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, Wanganui, New Plymouth, Tauranga, Hamilton and Auckland. On arrival in Auckland the athletes met as a group and were introduced to each other and the team managers and began the journey to Perth via Melbourne.



Photo: *The NZSS cross-country team proudly wearing the silver fern about to depart for Perth.*

On arrival in Perth the team spent one night before driving south to the seaside town of Albany located on Australia's Southern coastline. The unchanged scenery on this drive reinforced Australia's expanse and vastness. Once in Albany the team was based at Middleton's beach for four nights to allow both body clocks to adjust to the four-hour time difference as well as the warmer 20 – 25 degree temperatures.



Photo: *The New Zealand team at the opening ceremony proudly representing their country.*

Participation in the Australian Champs differs from our NZ school champs as athletes are selected to represent their state not their school. While this makes for smaller fields the quality is of the highest standard with most states having a similar population to that of New Zealand's entire population.

Our athletes compete in either the U18 event (Y11, Y12 and young Y13's) or the U20 event (Y13 and first year out of High School) as the Australian school champs also include their open championships.

The U18 girls' team consisted of Deborah Paine (Y13, Otumoetai College), Hanna English (Y12, Columba College), Kelsey Forman (Y12, Wellington East Girls' HS), Jessica Anderson (Y11, Villa Maria College), Grace Wood (Y12, St Kentigern College), Sophie Rees (Y12, St Cuthbert's College) and Alice Bird (Y11, Wanganui Collegiate). The girls competed over a very flat four-kilometer course with Deborah Paine finishing as the first New Zealander home and all girls finishing in the top half of the field. The four-person team of Deborah, Hanna, Kelsey and Jessica finished in third position.

U18 Girls, 3rd four-person team.

Deborah Paine	Otumoetai College	11 th
Hanna English	Columba College	17 th
Kelsey Forman	Wellington East Girls' HS	18 th
Jessica Anderson	Villa Maria College	23 rd
Grace Wood	St Kentigern College	24 th
Sophie Rees	St Cuthbert's School	26 th
Alice Bird	Wanganui Collegiate	35 th



Photo: The New Zealand U20 and U18 girls representatives. Gold in the U20 relay and bronze in the U18 relay.

The U18 boys' team was exceptionally strong and was confident of a solid performance. The team of Conal Wilson (Y12, Auckland Grammar School), Sean Eustace (Y13 Burnside High School), Cameron Avery (Y12, Cashmere High School), Harry Ewing (Y12, St Peters School Cambridge), Matthew Prest (Y13, Burnside High School) and James Preston (Y12, Scot's College) raced over the same flat course completing three x two-kilometer laps. Right from the gun the strong New Zealand contingent was present in the lead group of athletes. As the race progressed the New Zealand team maintained it's dominant position with our athletes all finishing strongly in the final 1000 meters. Conal Wilson produced his season best performance by beating his NZ teammates for the first time to finish second overall. Sean was close behind in fourth while Cameron was 6th and Harry's 8th place saw four Zealanders finish in the top ten. This performance comfortably won the four person team event.

U18 Boys, 1st four-person team.

Conal Wilson	Auckland Grammar School	2 nd
Sean Eustice	Burnside High School	4 th
Cameron Avery	Cashmere High School	6 th
Harry Ewing	St Peters School Cambridge	8 th
Matthew Prest	Burnside High School	16 th
James Preston	Scot's College	32 nd



Photo: The victorious U18 boy's team. Conal Wilson (#537) finished second with teammates Sean Eustice (#524), Cameron Avery (#520) and Harry Ewing (#525) all finishing in the top ten and convincingly winning the U18 team event.

New Zealand had three entrants in the U20 Girls event, Audrey Grogan (Y13, St Cuthbert's College), Anneke Grogan (Y13, Sacred Heart New Plymouth) and Charlotte Cahill (Y13, Columba College). This age group raced over the increased distance of six kilometers. Both Audrey and Anneke positioned themselves at the front of the field for the early stages of the race and went on to finish strongly in fourth and seventh place respectively. This would be the final opportunity for these athletes to represent NZ at a school level which for Anneke has included competing at the 2012, 2013 and 2014 Australian Champs as well as the 2012 World cross country Champs in Malta.

U20 Girls

Audrey Grogan	St Cuthbert's School	4 th
Anneke Grogan	Sacred Heart New Plymouth	7 th
Charlotte Cahill	Columba College	17 th

The U20 boys race included our National senior boys champion George Beamish (Y13, Wanganui Collegiate School), Jacob Priddey (Y13, Hamilton Boys High School), Sam Pendreigh (Y13, St Peters College Auckland) and Andrew Stewart (Y13, Auckland Grammar School). Racing against an older year group and over the increased distance of eight kilometers had previously been a tough challenge for our athletes. A standout performance from George saw him gain an overall placing of 3rd but also the first secondary school athlete to cross the line. Jacob Priddey's 6th

overall placing was also too strong for the Australian schoolboy athletes and positioned him in second place in the schools grade. This performance was the third time Jacob had been selected to represent NZ at the Australian Champs, the first being in Y11 where he travelled to Adelaide in 2012.

U20 Boys

George Beamish	Wanganui Collegiate	3 rd
Jacob Priddey	Hamilton Boys' HS	6 th
Samuel Pendreigh	St Peters College Auckland	12 th
Andrew Stewart	Auckland Grammar School	28 th

The day after the individual competition was an opportunity for the group to have some sightseeing time around the Albany region. This included visiting 'The Gap' a spectacular rock formation similar to New Zealand Punakaiki pancake rocks on the South Islands West Coast.

The final event was a five-person team relay raced over 2 kilometers for girls and 3 kilometers for boys. The flat course proved successful for all four New Zealand teams with wins in the U20 girls and U18 boys. Silver in the U20 boys and bronze in the U18 girls grades. At the completion of the racing the New Zealand team apparel was in extremely high demand amongst the Australian athletes. All athletes had been provided with an additional shirt to 'trade' resulting in a frenzy of swapping shirts, singlets and pins.



Photo: At the completion of the running 'trading' is a big part of the event. The New Zealand team uniform was in very high demand. Members of our team can be seen wearing uniforms from Victoria, Queensland, N.S.W., and Western Australia.

NZSSAA Results from 2014 Australian All Schools Relay, Albany W.A.

U18 Girls – 3rd

Deborah Paine
Hanna English
Kelsey Forman
Jessica Anderson
Grace Wood

U18 Boys – 1st

Conal Wilson
Sean Eustace
Cameron Avery
Harry Ewing
Matthew Prest

U20 Girls – 1st

Audrey Gregan
Anneke Grogan
Charlotte Cahill
Sophie Rees
Alice Bird

U20 Boys – 2nd

George Beamish (ran twice)
Jacob Priddey
Samuel Pendreigh
James Preston

After an extremely successful performance in both the individual and relay events the group returned to Perth. In Perth a days sightseeing enabled the group to visit Fremantle by ferry as well as having time for shopping and to collect souvenirs. A late night flight back to New Zealand concluded a very enjoyable tour with a great group of athletes and managers. A special thanks to the athletes for representing their country with the pride and respect it deserves, to the parents of the athletes for their support and encouragement. To the managers for their hard work, much of which was done behind the scenes leading up to the event, and finally the NZSSAA Executive for their support in giving athletes the opportunity to represent New Zealand and compete at such events.