

THE WILD HORSE CRITERIUM 2017

Past instances of the WHC have thrown up some fantastic results across a changing course in a variety of conditions. The 8th running of the event on Easter Sunday (April 17th) proved to be no exception.

50 mile

Not known for large numbers there was a particularly small field in the 50 mile this year. However, there was strong competition as usual.

Andy Churchman, a Run Queensland regular, headed the field along with Pete Lavery, Jake Townsend and a certain Kevin Muller. It promised to be quite a tussle and didn't disappoint.

From the off, Andy Churchman set out his stall and showed clear intent with a blistering pace given the distance and terrain. Maintaining a sub 1 hour pace for each lap it was dubious that he would be able to sustain it and with Pete Lavery tracking him a steady distance behind, along with Jake and Kevin trading places in the early stages, there seemed a chance that he could be giving too much too soon. It turned out not to be the case as Andy showed little or no let up for the duration and was never bested. What it did mean is that the top three, for the first time, all came in under 8 hours. Over the terrain and the distance, quite something and a winning time that would be enviable on the road let alone the trail.

We wish Andy and any others the best of luck at UTA – on this form he looks a good chance of getting a fantastic result.

Not listed is Stewie Grills' run. An avid supporter of RQ events, Stewie smashed his PB on the course by over half an hour to record 9:28:45.

Results

1	Andy Churchman	07:20:15
2	Pete Lavery	07:32:20
3	Jake Townsend	07:51:17

There were no female runners this year. One can't help feeling that what's intimidating about this course is the pace. Being run as it along a bi-directional loop, there's nowhere to hide and no place to rest. Despite the 'flatness' of the course, there is an ever changing surface underfoot and it's not to be underestimated.

55 km

The 55 km is a popular step up into ultra distance and as usual, there was a good field.

Starting three hours after the 50 mile at 3:00 am, the 55 km runners looked to get their hard yards in during the cooler hours before the inevitable heat as the sun came up. Having done so, there were some solid times turned in by both male and female runners - no doubt lifting those in the 50 mile as they so them repeatedly out on the course.

Again, we had RQ regulars in the field with a few newcomers also doing themselves credit. In the men's race, Howard McCann showed from the start that he's in solid form and by the closing stages, had established a solid lead over Gordon Sutherland and Andrew Dower who had fought it out for 2nd place – Gordon finally getting the edge by less than two minutes.

Men

1	Howard McCann	05:00:03
2	Gordon Sutherland	05:16:54
3	Andrew Dower	05:18:52

The ladies race was another matter with a clear winner from start to finish. Chrissy Redwood turned in a superb performance to split the men's podium, coming second overall and first female. There was really nobody close to her but there were solid performances through the field. Carmen Atkinson ran steadily for her 2nd place with Cheryl Kiernan narrowly missing out on a sub six hour run, though still a creditable performance.

Ladies

1	Chrissy Redwood	05:09:13
2	Carmen Atkinson	05:44:45
3	Cheryl Kiernan	06:01:10

33 km

Make no mistake, the WHC course travels a tough route to run sustained five minute kilometres over distance. The results in the 33 km this year were really something else with overseas runner Satoshi Ashida leading the way.

There was only going to be one winner in the men's race from the start with Satoshi making himself a hard target. Setting an unassailable lead from the first lap, he sustained his pace (4:17/km average!) to finish well ahead of an ever impressive Tom James who himself had a tussle with Bryan Benshoof before claiming second.

Men

1	Satoshi Ashida	02:21:35
2	Tom James	02:40:06
3	Bryan Benshoof	02:46:31

In the ladies event, it was a different stories with two local runners who have made a name for themselves taking out the honours. Narelle Cabassi took the win, just getting home in under three hours with Kathryn Austen not too far behind in a possibly predictable finish. There was a race on between the two in the early stages but Narelle established a lead that Kathryn couldn't bridge in the end. With a great run but just out of reach of the front two was Wendy Fitzpatrick.

Ladies

1	Narelle Cabassi	02:59:25
2	Kathryn Austin	03:08:32
3	Wendy Fitzpatrick	03:25:32

22 km

The two 'shorter' events are where the pace literally starts to hot up and this year was no coincidence. Jack Brownlee took the course apart (his first lap split would have contested the 11 km win) and set a new course record. He didn't have much of a choice with Corey Brough breathing down his neck and coming in only 2½ minutes later with Bluey Hodgson completing one of the fastest podiums we've seen at WHC.

Men

1	Jack Brownlee	01:31:36 CR
2	Corey Brough	01:34:07
3	Bluey Hodgson	01:39:53

The ladies also put on something of a show. Kristen Vautin did to the field pretty much what Jack Brownlee had done in the men's race, though she managed to establish a more secure lead over Jill Ellis and Erin Reid who displayed real camaraderie at the finish to tie for second..

Ladies

1	Kristen Vautin	02:05:34
T2	Jill Ellis	02:12:06

T2	Erin Reid	02:12:06
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11 km

The 11 km event always impresses and there was quite a tussle at the front of both the men's and ladies events. The men spread a little by the end to put a cushion between Matt Klibbe and 2nd placed Ethan Bensted, leaving the latter to have to push hard toward the end to keep ahead of Gavin Rodrigues. Ethan's run has to have been the run of the day as far as RQ are concerned as he's still only 14 years old. Clearly no future on the track for him then!

Men

1	Matt Klibbe	00:45:12
2	Ethan Bensted	00:47:57
3	Gavin Rodrigues	00:48:36

Ladies

The ladies race was a different affair altogether. With the whole podium cracking the 1 hour mark, Melissa Bensted (mother of Ethan) taking the win after a fantastic race with Nicky Staff (2nd) and Kelly Arndt (3rd). Fantastic to witness out on the course and, if Ethan Bensted gave us the run of the day, then the ladies 11 km had to be the race of the day.

1	Melissa Bensted	00:55:19
2	Nicky Staff	00:55:38
3	Kelly Arndt	00:56:31

Summary

The eighth running of The Wild Horse Criterium drew, once again, a large crowd of participants and spectators alike. All events were strongly contested and, though we love to see everyone simply taking part and enjoying the morning, it's great to see runners really putting it on the line as they did this year.

We saw a course record in the 22km, one of the most contested runs on the race card and saw the huge potential of 14 year old Ethan Bensted in the 11km.

We have massive support from our volunteers and our patrons as well as the ongoing sponsorship of The Athlete's Foot, Caloundra & Maroochydore. With the calendar being so congested it's encouraging to see The WHC continue to draw interest and competitive runners as well as those just out to enjoy the

trail in a managed, safe environment. Not forgetting of course, our four-legged participants who keep coming back (3 of whom got first places with their owners this year – may have to look into that! 😊)

Footnote from Alun Davies -Having been race director and co-race director since the event's inception, it was a thrill to finally get out there and participate in the event this year. Seeing the crowd on the course with many familiar faces along with new ones, it was immensely gratifying to see our longest standing event still capturing the imagination of those taking part and introducing a new wave of runners to the trail.