

Report on Hereworth SS2 (Wednesday 12 February)

The grounds of Hereworth School provided a physical challenge as well as the usual mental one that our sprints give us.

Rani, as planner, was keen to use the wilder areas on the school's edges as well as the tight little knot of school buildings for this one. In doing this she set up a number of route choice legs as those who compared notes after their run will have discovered.

The 'green' areas of the map are not just from neglect on the school's part but have been deliberately 'cultivated' (in the loosest sense) to give the boys at the school a chance to explore and challenge themselves. This was part of previous principal Ross Scrymgeour's anti 'bubble wrap' policy dating from 2008. If you enjoyed those sections of the course you have him to thank.

In planning her first event Rani performed something of a miracle as the time available for putting it together got squeezed to only about a week. This came about because the sprint map of the school dated back to the Sprint the Bay event of 2014 and much had changed around the grounds since then. I had field-worked the updates needed a week or two before but Dave Fisher wanted to add them to the Arataki sprint map and that meant getting its latest version from the STB organisers after their event. (The STB contract had set a deadline of 20 Feb for handing over the maps)

I don't know whether Dave received the Arataki map or, given the tight time frame, had to do the OCAD update of Hereworth making it now a stand-alone map.

However, Dave delivered . . . and Rani had the map on which to plan her courses on Sunday 2 Feb. Facing Dave's deadline of the following Sunday for his final map preparation to send to the printer, Rani set about it, planning her three loop courses, two loop courses for the first night of the O For Kids Year 7 & 8 Interschool Competition, and a white course . . . and producing loose control descriptions for the loopies.

All of this while using Condes for the first time.

On the Friday Rani and I met in Geoff's office after school to go over the courses.

Saturday Rani made the changes and sent them to me but they still needed work. Not the least of which was the need for creating flip maps for the loop courses as the numbers, course lines and circles did not make for easy reading. Some things are not simple to do by tele-conference, so (change tense to historic present) Sunday morning there are Rani and I at her place working it all out while Andy brings us coffee and sunflowers. Lovely lady. Maps sent to Dave.

Monday morning I give Dave some final map corrections and see what he has done. There was one change of flip point and he was able to give the O For Kids runners as well as the whites a 1:2500 scale. All good, so the maps fly through the ether to the printer.

He has also sent Jane the white and O For Kids maps. Since we have no idea of numbers for these, Jane will take her printer to the event in case we need more maps.

At this point let me thank Kodee in the Hereworth office and Lincoln Doull (Head of Sport) for their help, and our own Tania Potts. The school was most supportive.

It's a hard road setting the perfect course (with apologies to Speights). When it comes to getting courses right in terms of length and difficulty we are dealing with human behaviour after all.

But, if we run that threatening ruler over the results, I think Rani has done rather well. One measure is whether the winners take the 12 to 15 minutes we hope for. Ronan ran 12:22 and Will 12:30 heading the top six in men open air who all ran 15:01 or better; Amber led the women with 14:35 and Tessa women's air with 14:36; Kevin won senior men air with 14:45. Year 7 & 8 winner Josh Massingham ran 14:54; Luke Bickerstaff won the white in 8:57 where 15 of the 22 runners were under 16 minutes.

At the other end of the scale, 19 of 149 on the club courses mispunched or failed to finish (12.7%). That's a bit high but quite an improvement on Napier Boys' the previous week where it was 17.2%. All the white course runners finished at Hereworth.

The Year 7 & 8s were not so good, with 14 of the 50 not recording a time. This may show that many were not ready for a loop course and should perhaps have run the white. It will be interesting to see how this grade plays out at the next event. We had three helpers for the Year 7 & 8s going over what to do and how it worked (thanks guys), but there is a limit to how much children can absorb when they haven't done it before. We hope that these runners return and perform better next time having done it once.

Control 130 was on a west facing wall (the south facing wall 3 metres away on the map didn't exist), and 137 and 126 were placed about 3 metres from circle centre to make them easier to find, punch and go. Had we more time, my usual ground check of the courses would have corrected these. Mea culpa. That's Latin for 'my bad'. I prefer the Latin.

I was not there to receive feedback from runners as I had to leave (and many thanks to Chris and Karen for stepping in to fill in for me). My hope is that it ran like many a stage play I've been involved in: where the cast and crew are aware of everything that went wrong but the audience didn't notice a thing.

Well done cast and crew.

Steve Armon