

## 2019 New Zealand Road Relay Championship

Rob Dabb, Event Director

- **Wellington Scottish take 5 titles and win Overall Club**
- **Feilding Moa win their first Relays championship medal**
- **128 teams participated**

The New Zealand Road Relays Championships in Feilding this past weekend attracted 128 teams and over 830 competitors from throughout the country. Wellington Scottish Athletics brought 18 teams north and Wellington Harriers had 15 teams.

The **Senior Men** contested a seven leg course covering 67km of mostly undulating rural roads around Feilding and Halcombe. Wellington Scottish were chasing a fifth consecutive victory in the prestigious senior men's race. However after the first leg, it was Connor Melton from University of Canterbury (UCANT) first to Mt Biggs School and the Scottish B team runner Hirotaka Tanimoto next.

Over Legs 2 and 3 UCANT remained in front with a 90 second gap back to second placed Pakuranga aided by a strong run of international triathlete Ryan Sissons on lap 3. Wellington Scottish were over 2 minutes from the lead in third place. A superb run by Kristian Day brought them back into contention within 37 seconds of UCANT, and this was narrowed to just 8 seconds by Team Captain Ben Twyman. But a course record 29 min 11 sec by UCANT's Daniel Balchin for the 9.5km leg pushed their lead out to 2min 11 sec with the final 9.1km mostly downhill lap to come – in most people's books a win looked a sure thing. Rio Olympian in the 1500 metres, Hamish Carso however was not about to give up. He steadily closed down the gap as his team mates cheered him down Makino Rd and into the suburban roads of Feilding. With about 500 metres to go he caught Ben Musson of UCANT to secure the victory for a jubilant Wellington Scottish crowd.

Auckland City Athletics had an equally impressive last lap with Josh Maisey bringing the team from 7<sup>th</sup> place into the bronze medal position, while Pakuranga succumbed to a mid-race injury and unauthorised change of running order resulting in disqualification.

Palmerston North AHC won the B Grade thanks to an impressive final leg by Carlos Lopez-Lozano, moving them from fifth to the lead by 24 seconds over Trentham United. Men's C grade winners were Hamilton City Hawks.

**The Senior Women's** race saw ex-PNAHC athlete Melissa Black take the early lead for Wellington Harriers and this was steadily added to as they finished over 5 minutes clear of North Harbour bays with University of Canterbury third.

**The Masters Men 40** grade again saw Wellington Scottish as defending champions. They trailed Wellington Harriers by 50 seconds after Leg 1 but then took the lead, finishing the seven laps nearly three minutes clear of Wellington harriers with Cambridge Harriers another 3 minutes back.

**The Masters Men's 50 grade** saw yet another win for Wellington Scottish, though mid-race it was by no means a clear call. After leading through the first two legs, they were caught by both Lake City Athletics (Rotorua) and Hamilton City Hawks with strong performances from Tony Broadhead and Chris Smith respectively. Hawks Glenn Sexton put over 4 minutes on Scottish on Leg 4. Then Scottish's Peter Stevens narrowed Hawks lead to 1 minute and Club President Michael Wray turned that into a 3 minutes advantage on the penultimate leg. They finished 2 min 11 sec ahead of Hawks with Lake City in third.

**Masters Women's 35+** was another win for Wellington Scottish with yet another come-from-behind run, this time from Lindsay Barwick. She started the last leg 2min 17 sec behind rivals Wellington Harriers and finished 1 min 34 ahead.

The **Junior Men** (Under-20) contested a six leg 38.4km course. At the first exchange ex-PNAHC athlete Harrison Porritt running for North Harbour Bays held a narrow gap over Henri Beliveau (Wellington Harriers) and Liam Wall (Feilding Moa). Liam Chesney of Wellington Harriers took a healthy lead of over 1 minutes on leg 2 from Luke Scott (Moa). By the start of Leg 4 Wellington still held a 33 second lead after William Leong from Moa had halved their advantage. Benjamin Wall then took Feilding Moa to a 1 min 26 lead over Wellington who had by then been joined by Pakuranga with Zane Powell putting in the fastest time for this 7.147km leg of 23 min 41 sec. Moa runners Andre Pine-Day and Samuel Stichbury stretched out the lead to earn the first championship relay medal in the 80 year history of the club.

The **Junior Women's** race was dominated by Wellington Harriers, taking the Gold and Bronze medals with Auckland City Athletics in third. Sophie Robb (Papakura) established a new leg 6 record of 15 min 40 sec for the 4.295km leg wither team taking ninth place. Feilding Moa were 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Masters Women 50-plus** was a win to Wellington Scottish from Hamilton City Hawks and Wellington harriers. The final leg runner for Scottish was visually impaired athlete Maria Williams who was tethered to guide, Melissa Moon who had run leg 4. Feilding Moa were fourth.

**The Open Masters 60** plus grade had an impressive 14 teams, including three teams with members all 70 years or older. Auckland University Track Club won narrowly from Athletics Nelson with Christchurch Avon in third. The Avon team wore black arm bands in honour of their club mate Anthony Rogal who died suddenly shortly after The NZ Road Champs in Auckland three weeks ago.

**In the unofficial Men's 70-plus** category Wellington Scottish came in 10 minutes ahead of Wellington harriers with Athletics Nelson a further seven minutes back.

**Overall Club Champion** was Wellington Scottish on 56 points from Wellington Harriers 54 and Auckland City Athletics on 44.

**In the Non-Championship** Open Walk Trentham United won, thanks largely to a classy effort from NZ junior champion Daniel Du Toit who took 13 minutes out of Wellington Scottish's Sean Lake on Leg 4. Local club Manawatu Striders took third place just 6 seconds behind Scottish.

**The Composite/Social grade** was a comfortable victory to the Tauranga-based Team TIP, 24 minutes clear of Palmerston North AHC with Takapuna in third.

The 2020 Road Relay Championship will also be held in Feilding, and judging from the feedback received on the day it can be expected to attract an even larger number of teams