

Record Racing in Wellington

With record entries, near perfect weather and a collection of international record breakers the Armstrong Motor Group Wellington Marathon confirmed its place among New Zealand's favourite marathon events.

A record 4721 runners and walkers from 16 countries enjoyed good weather and fast running for the annual marathon, half marathon, 10k and Kids' Magic Mile.

Racing was dominated by runners from Kenya, Canada and Australia. The men's Half Marathon failed to surprise, with 21 year old Kenyan Kip Kemei continuing his unbeaten streak on New Zealand soil, this time in a race record 1hr 06min 40secs.

Behind Kemei, Wellington's own Tim Hodge managed to hold out Bunnythorpe's Chris Sanson to claim second place by 37secs in 1hr 09min 16secs.

Canadian Anne-Marie Madden was an easy winner among female Half Marathoners. The final year Otago medical student scored her first major Kiwi win before heading back to Canada to begin a medical residency. In Wellington she stopped the clock in 1hr 21min 36secs, just over two minutes ahead of local standouts Jackie Mexted, Genevieve Stark and Angela Leck.

The performances of the day, however, came from women's Full Marathon where Australian police woman Sara Burgess led a string of race records across all age groups.

While the win among women was always expected to go to Burgess, Auckland's Lesley Turner-Hall or Christchurch's Lisa Brignull, such a one-sided win from the Australian was not. Burgess totally dominated to win by 13 minutes. Crossing the line in 2hrs 48min 40secs, she broke the course record by almost 12 minutes. Behind her Auckland's Lesley Turner-Hall set a new veteran woman record of 3hrs 01min 54secs, while Brignull held on for third in 3hrs 11min 50secs.

The near-perfect weather conditions saw several age group records across all races. Along with Burgess and Turner-Hall, Oamaru's Wendy Fallon and Palmerston North's Marian Hilder set new marks for women 50 to 59 years (3:27.51) and 60-plus years (4:05.20).

In the half marathon Wellington's Lizzy Bunckenburg broke her own junior women's mark with 1hr 28min 08secs, while Judith Bradshaw came all the way from Whangarei to set a new record for women 60-69 years of 1hr 43min 18secs.

The 10k also produced records, with Wellington's Yared Kebede setting a new junior men's mark of 33min 54secs on his way to fourth overall behind Cameron Goldsmid (32:25). Similarly, Wellington's Gabrielle O'Rourke broke her own record for women 40-49 years with 36min 46secs that nabbed her second overall behind Sarah Drought (35:56). Porirua's Tineke Hooft claimed the women's 50 to 59 year record with 41min 56secs, while Wellington's Richard Brent was impressive with a new mark for men 60 to 69 years of 37min 48secs.

While the overall winners of the half marathons and women's full marathon were expected, Nelson's Graeme

Taylor wasn't a name mentioned in pre-race dispatches. The feature 42.2k among men had been billed as a return match between five-time winner Grant McLean (Wgtn) and the man who ended his reign in 2010, Daniel Clendon (Wgtn). But in a furious four-way battle it was Taylor who came up trumps.

McLean, Clendon, Taylor and Palmerston North's Peter Familton were locked in battle for 32k of the classic 42.2k distance. Clendon appeared to be the first to fall away, after which Taylor made a move for the win. The Nelsonian crossed the line in 2hrs 33min 58secs to claim overall honours and a new course record for veteran men.

But Taylor had to fight hard for a two minute advantage over second placed Daniel Clendon, who found a second wind to sweep past McLean and then Familton in the final 1500m to claim second place.

Walkers made up 16 percent of the field and some standout performances, none more so than Palmerston North's Peter Zwart. The 61 year old impressed with first overall, stopping the clock in 4hrs 26min 34secs, which was the fastest ever marathon walk this event has ever seen. Among half marathon walkers Terri Grimmett and Dave Humfrey broke their own age group records in for women 40 to 44 years and men 70-plus years, while Daphne Jones also bettered her own mark for women 70-plus in the 10k walk.

Hidden in the mid-pack were several standout performers. Wellington's 60 year old Mike Stewart clocked up his 498th marathon; while Wellington's eight year old James Shadbolt shrugged off a broken leg just a month ago to finish the Kids' Magic Mile.

Kip Kemei

