

# Staff unwind at Annual Big Brook Relay

Story and photos by  
Penny Walsh

THE sun shone brightly on the Big Brook Relay for 98, and the competition was fast and furious. Fifteen teams battled it out in sweltering conditions (well, kind of sweltering) for the coveted Karri Country All Sports trophy.

After a two-minute silence in memory of Big Brook Relay stalwart Peter Rado, who passed away recently, competitors launched themselves into the event.

Some of the teams to grace the field included the Marine Marauders, the Sons of Simmo, Comotose, the Woodvale Wanderers, Albany Whalers, Cape Crusaders, Dwellingup Desperadoes and The Dark Side.

Tireless event organisers, Rod Annear and Dave Meehan from Pemberton, once again did a sterling job of drumming up support from CALM staff near and far.

"A few teams pulled out at the last minute but the turnout was pretty good and we certainly had the best weather on record—it usually pours with rain," Rod said.

Apart from a noticeable shortening of the swim leg, the testing course varied little from previous years. Word quickly got around that the swim was lopped by Rod, who wasn't feeling the best, and happened to be the designated swimmer for his team. He was quick to own up:

"I was nominated to do the swim about five minutes before I set the course. I wasn't feeling great, and we've had complaints about the swim leg being too long in the past, so I decided to cut it from about one kilometre to 400 metres. I won't be making that mistake again!"

In fact, since Pemberton is

going to gain the services of swimming supremo Natasha Oke next year (after she transfers from Manjimup to Pemberton), Rod is seriously thinking of making the swim leg much, much longer.

First off the blocks were the crosscutters, and it was quickly clear who the novices were, but even the beginners eventually managed to work their way through five rings of Dwellingup's finest regrowth jarrah (salvaged from a roading operation).

From the crosscut it was on to the cycle, and a 12-kilometre loop around the dam. The standout performance came from Brent Johnson of the Woodvale Wanderers.

Brent's bicycle had a mind of its own and kept slipping up a gear, especially on inclines, making progress arduous and very time-consuming (at least, that's Brent's story).

From the cycle it was on to the winding seven-kilometre run through the forest. Competitors were really feeling the heat by now (literally, as well as figuratively).

There were plenty of red faces by the end of the leg, not to mention one or two rolled ankles.

The prize for commitment above and beyond the call of duty went to John Lloyd from Mundaring who decided to run anyway, even though he didn't officially have a team. Some people are gluttons for punishment.

The paddlers were next, and never has a more skilful bunch of canoeists graced the water. Last minute advice about which end of the canoe was the



Sawdust flies as the Big Brook Relay competitors for 1998 put their back into the crosscut. Foreground: Ian Moore and David Anderson (partly obscured) from FMB coached by John Webb. Rear: Arvid Hogstrom and Dean Irving of the Comotose team.

front and which was the back, paid off handsomely for one novice team.

Controversy raged, however, when one crew was left up a brook without a canoe (so to speak). It seems that in their haste, one of the teams ahead of them had jumped in the wrong canoe and headed for the open seas. The canoeless team was less than impressed.

But who could fail to be impressed by the two strapping lads from Woodvale who donned grass skirts and warpaint for their sojourn on the water. Dorian Moro and Paul Van Heurck made quite a splash in their tribal get-up.

Last but not least, the infamous 'sprint' swim, made even more infamous by a couple of scuba-equipped 'sharks' (complete with fins) who looked uncannily like Ian Gale and George Watson from Marine and Coastal District.

While the endurance swimmers muttered under their breath, the sprinters hit the water kicking and were soon headed for the finish line.

The team that came out on top, Forest Management Branch from Manjimup, must surely rank up there with the best to have tackled the Big Brook Relay.

This is the second year FMB has emerged triumphant, but team spokesperson Alan Seymour has tasted Big Brook success four times.

He insists that FMB wasn't expecting to win in 1998 and half way through the event you would have believed it—the team was running ninth!



Jim Cocking accepts the Derriere Award in the traditional way, on behalf of his team of tail-enders (left to right) Janine Liddelow, Alanna Chant, Jo Wallace, Deanne Pember and Kathy Himbek. Tim Brett was presumably hiding when this photo was taken.

Seasoned competitors Greg Strelein, Mike Buckton and Richard Ford from Bunbury, David Anderson, Natasha Oke and Alan from Manjimup, were joined by Ian Moore, also from Manjimup, in the winning team.

The prize for persistence goes to Alan Sands, who was in the second-placed 'Destroyers' from Perth District/Regional Parks. Alan has come second or third in every one of the 11 Big Brook Relays he has attended.

Despite the headache, he plans to be back again next year. And he reports that the cross-cut gets easier the second time around (especially with a good saw, and someone who is fit on the other end of it).

Coming in third were the

Cape Crusaders from Margaret River and Busselton. Team spokesperson Glenn Willmott admitted that the Crusaders did train a bit before the event.

They even organised a canoe a month in advance, rather than the night before, which is usually the case.

The Cape Crusaders said they'd be back for Big Brook 99, and they called on everyone in CALM to support the event:

"The folks down in Pemberton do a great job of organising the day, and it would be nice to see them getting more support. What about a team from the AWU?" said Glenn.

Of course, there's a special place in the hearts of all who attend Big Brook for

the team that brings up the rear. This year it was a crew of animal researchers, dieback interpreters, and a district officer hailing from Manjimup, Bunbury and Dwellingup.

But perhaps they could be forgiven for feeling a little hard-done by, since theirs was the mysterious vanishing canoe! Team spokesperson Deanne Pember says they'll be back next year—for revenge.

Thanks go to Rod Annear, Dave Meehan and the Pemberton staff and crews for all the work they put into organising the day and preparing the course.

Next year they're hoping for an even bigger turnout. "Especially from Walpole and Blackwood Districts!" said Rod.



Brent Johnson of the Woodvale Wanderers holding the 'yellow jersey' (cow) awarded for his efforts in the cycle leg.











All way out  
of focus



