

Issue 34 - July 1992

- [Paddy Pallin Report](#) - Six hours on Mangrove Mountain
- [Warwick's Wisdom](#) - The Future of Rogaining in NSW

SIX HOURS ON MANGROVE MOUNTAIN

The Paddy Pallin Rogaine, Sunday 14th June 1992

If any other members of the NSWRA have in-laws with properties in areas as delightful and accessible as Rodger Austen and Eric Metzkes' we'd love to hear from you! Driving into this year's Paddy Pallin event, past neglected orchards and rubbish dumps before opening out into some nice paddocks, it wasn't obvious that only a few hundred metres to the south or the west there was relatively open Sydney sandstone country with wonderful views and varied vegetation. And within easy reach of most teams were the beautiful Mangrove Creek and Narre Warren which had previously been a thriving farming community but which now contained only the relics of that past time including some quaint ruins and a well kept cemetery. The creeks themselves with their sandy beaches and river she-oaks provided easy going for the most part with some teams actually walking in the creeks.

But it's what you do with such an area that makes a rogaine and Rodger and Eric (with a little help from Peter Watterson, John Roberts and Julian Ledger) came up with a superb course. When I first saw the spread of points I had my doubts but after talking to many teams and going through the results it's obvious that the variety and accessible big points were appreciated. The route taken by the top team is shown on the enclosed map but all checkpoints seemed to have had plenty of visitors.

Every rogaine (and every rogainer) has their 'little stories' and this one was no different. The closeness of many of the scores and finish times suggests that there were a few friendly wagers won and lost on the day. I won a bottle of port from Pete Watto thanks to Ian and Blair getting over 1200 points (though I think the stewards are being called in!). And there was a report of an engagement ring being removed as a couple discussed route choice. Hopefully it's back in place. A women's team of three in line along the edge of a cliff were given the title of the Three Sisters by another competitor. All in all a great event!

At the presentation I ran through the list of credits: John and Phyl Makinson for the use of their property (and the tea and scones that were freely available to the course setters at all times); 1st Waitara Scouts for the catering (the three soups were so popular that there were 200 sausages left over and Robert Pallin failed to cook a single sausage!), the Paddy Pallin organisation for publicity and prizes, Robert and Nancy Pallin (Robert has apparently only missed one event in 29 years), Julian and a few more at YHA for the registration (in particular Jun Shirakawa who did a great job with the parking and results) and Eric, Rodger, John and Peter for the course. We also had a couple of Victorians who dropped in for the day: Karen (Squelch) Staudte, well known to orienteers, who helped out at the registration, and Kate Blood who ran off a few rolls of film to provide some slides for publicity and articles on rogaining. She said that she found rogainers a bit more difficult to photograph than plants!

It was disappointing to have to turn down more than fifty people particularly when almost that number failed to show on the day, although that was probably due to rampant viruses. Next year I'm determined that all comers will be catered for! I was particularly pleased with the number of families and female teams although we were hoping for more scouts. I've included veterans' categories (both men's and mixed) in the results. Next year we promise prizes for these categories!

Well, so much for the 29th Paddy Pallin. Let's do it all again next year!

Warwick Marsden

For a competitor's viewpoint ...

The Paddy Pallin was a very good event. I say the best yet. The day was pleasant, the throng friendly, and the course a highlight. Most PPs have been limited to bush and, because of the proximity to Sydney, thick bush at that. This course had its fair share of Hawkesbury sandstone bush but it also had some farming country along Mangrove Creek. They even had a control in some stockyards - one of MY favourite sites. In the results, Ian McKenzie and Blair Trewin blitzed the field " 1340 points ... then the bunch below 1150. I was with my neighbour, Michael J Fox, and we got a respectable 770 points; came about 15th. You had to run to get much more than that, and we weren't going to do that! It's interesting, the viewpoints that different people have. Mick works for a pathology company. We crossed a swampy section in the valley with very thick, red, stagnant water in it. 'It looks just like the inside of an ovarian cyst', says he. A later swamp that had some flow looked like 'blood in the urine'.

One disappointment was the three separate, recently-laid chocolate wrappers that I picked up from the course. The latest VRA newsletter told of a gate left unclosed at the Alexandria 12-hour and the bull that got where he shouldn't have. We have to harass, harangue and hammer home the rules and etiquette. I fear the people who we try to remind won't listen.

Trevor Gollan

Out and about with the youngest rogainer

With great excitement and anticipation and after one last breastfeed before the trek, my sister and I piled her 14 week old bub into the baby backpack and off we went. Unknown to us, we tackled a highly overgrown part of the course, but after collecting the first two controls with no trouble, we eagerly set off for a third. Control #93 was not to be found. The baby did not like becoming an instant mountain climber and downheartedly we mounted the cliffs again with many scratches and one twisted knee.

Another feed for the baby and a different feed for us, and let's not forget (by this time) changing one soggy bottom, we enthusiastically set off for #62 which was easily found (thank goodness!!) Who saw the wondrous tall red lilies in the creek near #62? Magnificent weren't they!!

With thoughts of the thick scrub at #93, the complaints of the youngest member being hit in the face with flying debris and treacherous cliffs, not to mention the rivers to cross (try all that with a 14 week old on your back!) we decided against #53 and headed for #41, along the track and then a fast, fast pace back to the hash house. With another feed and change on the way, a slight jog was needed to get in by 2.58 pm.

We were not out for the competition and the points weren't high, but with many remarks along the way from fellow rogainers we feel the effort, the company and the exercise were well worth it!

Anne Francis

Editorial - EGADZ! I'VE BECOME A SPORTS ADMINISTRATOR!

Ian McKenzie's two articles in our March newsletter (on selection of teams for the World Champs and whether there should be a change to the convention whereby only the 24 hour event is given championship status) and Michael Burton's follow up in the last issue (on the selection criteria) have certainly stirred the possum. A number of rogainers have expressed support for the issues raised while others have been dismissive. What I'd like to do is to stimulate the debate further because I feel that rogaining, as we do it in NSW, will be the better for it.

Central to the debate is the way that rogaining has evolved both in Australia and NSW. Those who've heard it all before are free to go to the next paragraph. The sport's roots go back to 1947 when the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club initiated 24 hour walks. An Intervarsity Competition followed in the sixties with a format similar to the rogaines we know today. The VRA was formed in 1976 and WARA several years later. Both States have much larger associations than NSW whose association, the NSWRA was formed in 1983. While there has been a lot of informal contact between the associations, mainly at the annual Australian Championships and orienteering events, there is little in the way of regular contact and exchange of ideas. An Australian Rogaining Association (ARA) exists, as does an IRF (International Rogaining Federation - the Canadians couldn't handle it being called the IRA!), but to date has done little to develop a national identity for rogaining. And so in NSW we have developed our own identity to a large extent. So much for the history lesson ...

The main people responsible for starting the NSWRA in 1983 were Bert and Dianne Van Netten, Ian Dempsey (see the entry form for Bert and Ian's latest challenge in September!) and Peter and Robyn Tuft (Robyn showed at the recent Paddy Pallin that she's still as good a rogainer as ever by taking out the Women's category). For the following few years one or two rogaines were held each year. About this time Trevor Gollan, Peter Wherry, John Keats, myself and a few others became more involved and from 1988, when we took over running the Paddy Pallin, we decided to run four rogaines a year - one 24 hour, two 12 hours and the 6 hour Paddy Pallin with the ACTRA running another two or three - until the NSWRA had grown sufficiently to be able to run more. We felt it was better to run a few events well than to spread our resources too thinly; I think that the success of NSWRA events shows that we made the right decision.

But with the NSWRA turning ten next year perhaps it's time to not only reassess the number of events but also their nature. (To this end the NSWRA will be holding a 'think-tank' later in the year.) In this context I'll now address the issues raised by Ian and Mike.

World Championships

The issue of the number of entrants at an event is a difficult one and one which we've only recently had to address although the VRA and WARA regularly turn people away (the quota is 400). The two main reasons are impact on the environment (and being able to enjoy an event without feeling that you're never alone - as a team!) and catering. The first is very dependent on the area, with many areas being conducive to larger numbers while others may only be suitable for a hundred or so. Catering requires helpers and considerable logistics, both of which are directly proportional to the number of people entered. I see this as the major limitation to increased numbers. We could offer less in the way of catering but I'd be reluctant to promote such a move as it's the catering which provides the basis for that wonderful ambience which is so much a part of rogaining.

As for the selection criteria, as the proposer of the original scheme (three 24 hour rogaines and two years membership), I have to admit to making a mistake. A selection criteria should be based on performance! As it's turned out, NSW won't fill its quota. This is due to the fact that our quota (which is pro rated according to state membership) is much higher than originally envisaged because of the rapid growth in our numbers over the past couple of years. While some of this increase in membership could be termed 'highly competitive' or 'elite', the majority would be more accurately termed 'socially competitive' or 'participatory'. I'll come back to this point, which was the main issue raised by Mike, shortly.

8 Hour Championships?

The 24 hour 'Championship' event is one of the aspects of rogaining which we have in common with other states. I believe that there may be a good case for an '8 hour Championship' in the future; some would even say that the 6 hour Paddy Pallin is in effect a short format championship.

This aside, I would like to make several points in answer to Ian. First, the Championship status of the 24 hour event: rogaining is a 'complex' tactical sport, far more so than the sports with which Ian drew comparison (running, swimming, cycling), and even it's close relative, orienteering. An event begins in earnest when the maps are handed out, with the eventual winners of many rogaines being decided in the hours before the start. Out on the course the competition has a number of phases, not the least of which is how to cope with the changes in light and energy levels which come with the night; the greatest challenge often coming after midnight. These elements, which many see as the essence of rogaining, are the reasons for the 24 hour championship status. A shorter championship event would lack some of these elements. I'll resist drawing an analogy between test match and one day cricket but you're welcome to!

Second, I would challenge Ian's premise that there are 'clearly many rogainers who prefer shorter formats'. The majority of people participating in these events are often not in the 'highly competitive' or 'Championship' category. Ian is a clear exception. To give short format events which are run in conjunction with longer events championship status would diminish the status of the shorter championship as the majority of the competitive teams would probably be competing in the longer championship. (It's worth noting that the NSWRA acknowledges that more points may be gained by teams in the shorter event and at this year's NSW championship the women's class was won by Debbie Cox and Judy Micklewright who were only entered in the 16 hour event.)

Ian wrote his article before competing in longer events en route to the World Championships. I would be pleased to hear whether his views have changed. Also as Ian, along with ACT's Blair Trewin, will probably be NSW's most competitive team in the World Championships I'd like to take this opportunity to wish him every success.

Whither rogaining?

Michael Burton sees the forthcoming Rogaining World Championship as heralding a significant change to rogaining in NSW. Having lived with and been part of the changes in rogaining in NSW over the past six years I disagree.

The numbers of people attending rogaines in NSW has increased considerably over the past few years and the majority of this increase has been made up by less competitive rogainers. The Paddy Pallin gives a clear indication of this. In 1991 the event drew some 60 participants most of whom were serious orienteers; in 1991 and 1992, when the numbers reached 400, there was still a very strong core of orienteers but their ratio to those who have discovered rogaining as an enjoyable 'recreational activity, albeit an arduous and adventurous one' has fallen considerably over the years. This same trend is reflected in other rogaines.

I am not opposed to catering for the 'new breed' of rogainer who sees the sport as seriously competitive. My point is that it is important to maintain a balance and not fall into the trap of catering for an unrepresentative minority. In spite of our mistake with the selection criteria NSW appears unlikely to fill its quota for the World Champs - less than 25 (and several of those aren't members) out of a total membership of about 300.

In the NSW context, I see the offer of prize money at the Lake Macquarie rogaine as having more immediate consequences. If rogaining is to cater for a more competitive breed then there are a number of technical changes which will need to be made. Here are three examples:

1. Rogaining uses off-the-shelf maps with minimal corrections; will these be acceptable to the serious competitor? To upgrade them to a higher standard would require considerable time and effort and would bring rogaining much closer to orienteering; bushwalkers would see this as a retrograde move.
2. Policing the rule which requires that teams don't split up for competitive advantage has been shown to be very difficult. To ensure fair competition under more competitive conditions would be even harder.
3. At present there's an acceptance that if a checkpoint is poorly located that it's unfortunate (hopefully such occurrences are becoming rarer). The nature of the sport is such that these checkpoints are more a talking point than something for which the course setter should be taken to task. To set and vet a course to a higher standard would require even more than the several hundred person hours which are taken at present to set a course.

Yes, these changes can all be made but they will require resources well beyond those presently available in NSW. Personally I believe that our limited resources should be used, in the short term at least, to cater for the majority of rogainers and in recognition that growth in our wonderful sport is coming from a less competitive new breed. But let's keep talking about it.

Warwick Marsden