



~OPEN WATER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS ~ BRIGHTON BEACH S.A. ~ 25TH TO 27TH JANUARY 2020~

Four (4) NACSC Open Water National Representatives received many best of luck and good fortune messages as they tackled the surf at Brighton Beach in Adelaide SA over the Australia Day long weekend.



The team of **Lucas Bentley; Michael Payne; Kiani Slaughter & Monique Wilson** all arrived safely by air and road with their family support crew to meet up on Friday, 24th January at the registration tent to collect their valuable accreditation passes.

NACSC were represented in the following age events:-

Michael Payne 17 years 7.5klm & 5 klm ;

Monique Wilson 17 years 7.5klm ;

Lucas Bentley 17 years 5klm ;

Kiani Slaughter 14 years 5klm .

Team Members all spruced up well wearing their '20' national jackets, singlets, caps & backpacks that were presented to them on their last preparation regatta training session.

Thank you to Steve Payne for registering to assist as the team feeding handler for Michael and Monique with the trusty original NACSC design feeding pole. Also thanks to Alan Bentley for transporting a marquee to provide shade for the athletes and supporters.

After exchanging travel stories and acknowledging rival teams, the group proceeded to the sand to sunscreen up and check out the jetty and proposed feeding area as well as prominent fixtures to assist with sighting in the events to follow.

The sea was looking unkindly with plenty of awful seaweed in the shallows. Joined by Alan Bentley and Sam Bonus, the group headed off in an anticlockwise direction to swim a lap of the intended racing course as a light training session before the competition was due to commence on the following day.

Whilst swimming towards the 2nd turning buoy, the team were greeted by a playful dolphin who thought it very cheeky to show his dorsal fin before allowing the group to see the whole of his silhouette. Luckily, the team had been alerted to the dolphin's presence on the course before they headed off by one of the accompanying safety paddleboard riders from the local surf club or we may not have had anyone willing to return for the next few days of competition.

On the next morning, the open 10klm male and female events were held in calm low tide waters where spectators watched Nick Sloman and Kareena Lee both of the Noosa Swim Club take out the respective male and female 10klm titles whilst our crew were able to enjoy a sleep in and casual breakfast. There was an international flavour with representatives from Canada, Netherlands, Japan sporting their country's gear in many events and snapping photos at the end with local up and coming legends.

Scheduled shortly afterwards were the 7.5klm 16&17 years age events that were swum together. This is where Michael sporting the No.20 and Monique No.63 were first entered. The team met and our two (2) warriors were suited up and strapped with transponders on each wrist. The tide was going out over the course of the event which always adds to testing the directional skill of the athlete. The feeding pontoon was a treat in the shade of the jetty and extremely close to the fourth (4) turning buoy – many a swimmer was seen to duck and weave under a long pole so as not to lose their head. It certainly added to the spectacle of the event and Steve had a Birdseye view from his prime position on the point. Both events were hotly contested but saw a clear winner over the line in each.

Our two (2) representatives were glad to touch the finish gate and float in for a well-earned shower and rest. Michael completed his first national championship event in a time of 1hour 53minutes 33seconds that placed him 16th in his age. He sighted well and kept a constant line around the buoys. He needed to prepare mentally for his next challenge which was to be the 5klm 17years age event that was scheduled on the following day.... He had never backed up two championship events before but first on the agenda for recovery was ice-cream from the local Copanhagan!

Monique had also completed her first national championship event and was ecstatic having held a good line. Although very tired and sore, Monique was ready to celebrate her successful swim of 2hours 7 minutes and 40 seconds which was also 16th position in her age group with an afternoon of shopping and fun in Glenelg.

Up early to watch the sun rise and hitting the water for the first time at a national open water championship, the 14-year-old boys then girls took to the sea for their 5km events, 3 minutes apart. This led to some battles when the front girls caught up to the tail-enders of the boys and then when the boys swam through the females to charge on towards the finish. Our youngest team member, Kiani wearing No.100 which just fit across her back, arms & hands, was expectedly nervous and a little worried about the things that live in the ocean. After a phone call home and a kiss from Dad, Nan & Pop, she put that all out of her head and pulled on the competitors cap, then waved goodbye to the shore and waded into the now clear high tidal water. She travelled the distance mostly solo which is generally more difficult to do but gave her support crew a clear view of her as she travelled over her four (4) laps. Her rating did not waver from beginning to end. Relieved to finish her first ever ocean 5klm event, Kiani touched in 23rd place in a time of 1 hour 23 minutes 53 seconds.

The schedule of events was slightly altered and following the open 5klm events, it was Lucas Bentley and Michael Payne that were called to be ready to head off in the male 17 year old 5klm event. Like the earlier age 5klm event, the male and female competitors

Lucas wearing No. 6 completed the course in a small pack of swimmers where he was conscious of entering each buoy closely with a narrow escape and as a result of his training was able to record very even splits. His end result was an age placing of 17th in a time of 1 hour 8 minutes and 56 seconds. Michael had carefully removed his tattoos of the previous day and replaced them with No. 38. His splits were also relatively even however, the earlier swim obviously paid a toll when the wind increased to stir up the waves on the 3rd and 4th lap and toss athletes around. Lots of power was needed to stay on track. Michael swam the event in the company of a female athlete who kept him honest in racing to the line to record a finish time of 1 hour 14 minutes and 38 seconds which placed him 21st in his age. There is apparently no truth to the rumour that Michael asked for her phone number during the final stages of the race.

True to reflect the toughness of the event, there were a couple of disqualifications and some non-finishers in events over the weekend plus there were a couple of athletes transported to hospital by ambulance to aid in their recovery. Luckily our team were not party to any of these issues and have bounced back smiling after Australia Day celebrations with family and friends where they jumped from the jetty and watched as fireworks lit up the sky.

We did not have any NACSC representatives in the 2.5klm JX event this year which was a shame as we have traditionally seen this as a stepping stone towards qualifying for nationals in the longer events. Nor did we enter a 4 x 1.250 mixed relay team again this year, - mainly due to personal commitments of the athletes who needed to leave Brighton prior to the last day.

Hopefully, more athletes will be encouraged to participate in this tough sport of open water swimming and NACSC will have a bigger team with relay entries next year. The date and venue for the 2021 championships has not yet been released but has been rumored to be changed.



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