

Ultra Legends

Ultramarathon history over the decades



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Telecom Tasmania Run - 1994



TELECOM TASMANIA 1994 RUN. AUGUST 6th to 12th 1994

by Malcolm Campbell

Reprinted from IAU Newsletter September '94

After the demise of the Westfields Sydney to Melbourne Race in 1991, Alan Rider who is an experienced ultradistance runner, considered staging another major international ultradistance race in Australia. He gave considerable thought to the options available and after discussions with the Tasmania Department of Tourism, Sport & Recreation it was decided that the new event would be a seven day stage race with average daily distances of 88kms. Major sponsorship was secured and the Telecom Tasmania Run started on August 6th 1994.

Long before race day there was considerable media interest in the event. The 27 entries from 11 countries included some extremely talented ultradistance runners- in particular Yiannis Kouros (GRE) and Eleanor Robinson (GBR).

Kouros, now 38 years old, was returning to major international competition after an absence of almost four years. He has won the Sydney to Melbourne Race five times and is currently world ranked number one for 24 hours track and road and 1000 miles road but he would need all of his skills to resist the challenge of some outstanding competitors especially suited to this new challenge.

Eleanor Robinson enjoys the same high reputation as Kouros and has also won the women's division of the Sydney to Melbourne on a number of occasions. She was the Women's 100km World Champion in 1990 and 1991 and is world ranked number one for 24 hours on the track. Out to beat Robinson was world ranked number one for 24 hours on the road, Sigrid Lomsy(GER) and the Russian National

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100km Champion, twenty year old Irina Petrova. Robinson had selected this high profile event to mark the end of her international career. The field also included two experienced Australians - Helen Stanger and Georgina Mc Connell.

Some of the outstanding competitors hoping to beat Kouros were: Sydney to Melbourne winners, Bryan Smith(AUS) and Dusan Mravlje(SLO); Pat Farmer (AUS) who was second in the 1993 Trans America Race; Konstantin Santalov (RUS), World 100km Champion in 1992 and 1993; Roland Vuilleminot (FRA), World 100km Champion in 1990 and second in 1991; Don Wallace (AUS), the Australasian 100km Champion; Janos Bogar(HUN), 1994 European 24 Hour Champion and Anatoly Kruglikov (RUS), National 24 Hour Indoor Champion. Other outstanding competitors with good 100km performances to their credit were Lucien Taelman (BEL), Erik Seedhouse (GBR) and Charl Mattheus(RSA).

Every competitor had a support vehicle and crew and there were numerous official cars. In addition an increasing number of media vehicles followed the race as a series of dramatic incidents occurred. Towards the final days of the race there must have been nearly 50 vehicles in this Tour of Tasmania.

The first stage started and finished in Hobart and there was great excitement when the stage winner was the Australian, Don Wallace. He had completed the 88kms in 5.56.53 ahead of Yiannis Kouros with 5.58.14. Although the margin was small one has to appreciate that Kouros had, in the past, been considered unbeatable in Australia.

In the women's race there was similar excitement. Robinson dictated the pace throughout and with 5kms to the finish had a lead of 4 minutes over Petrova but the young Russian found the pace necessary to take the lead and win by a mere 35 seconds. After this stage Robinson looked exhausted. Those that knew her realised she would

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be ready for battle the next day. Unfortunately the medical authorities had other ideas and she was sent to hospital for an intravenous drip. At the hospital the drip was considered unnecessary but the hospital doctor suggested that she needed to rest for 24 hours. Whilst both medical experts were "sucking their thumbs" Robinson made their minds up for them, declaring that she would have her 24 hours rest after August 12th when the race was over. One news report the following day suggested that the English runner had come close to death which probably explains the coverage by BBC Television shortly afterwards- like Rudyard Kipling's fighting man- "she's generally shammin' when she's dead."

The drama of the second stage began shortly after the start when Santalov retired. The drama continued a few hours later when weather conditions became so severe there was a danger that roads might have to be closed to runners and traffic. Fierce blizzards and icy conditions placed unexpected demands upon runners and helpers. It became difficult to identify competitors as they became enclosed in white blankets of snow. When conditions improved

Brisbane)

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the leaders were recognised as Wallace, Bogar, Kruglikov and Kouros. Once more Wallace edged ahead although with only 200 metres to the finish Bogar drew level. After 92kms of extremely exhausting conditions the two runners sprinted to the finish with Wallace finishing one second ahead - his time was 6.54.35 and once more Australia had a stage winner. Kruglikov finished one minute later closely followed by Kouros. There was great delight expressed in the Australian Press - however that sprint finish would probably be the cause of problems for Wallace and Bogar later in the race. In the women's race Petrova finished well ahead of Robinson with both runners looking comfortable.

The weather improved for the third stage but after a few hours Wallace had severe leg problems. He was obliged to stop for treatment and bravely completed the stage to finish in 18th position and the race had a new stage leader in Janos Bogar. The Hungarian is a strong runner and with a few kilometers to the finish of this stage he left Kruglikov with another sprint which gave him a lead of 35 seconds with Kouros less than one minute behind.

After three days of racing Kouros was the overall race leader but he was only 1 minute and 53 seconds ahead of Bogar. Kruglikov was 19 minutes 35 seconds behind the leader. Petrova finished well ahead of Robinson and her overall lead was 1 hour 41 mins 28 secs.

On day four Kruglikov set off in a determined fashion and won the 92km stage with a time of 6.41.15. He was about 8 minutes ahead of Bogar and 14 minutes ahead of Kouros. The race now had another new leader-Bogar. Petrova added further to her lead over Robinson to finish with 7.51.43. Robinson's time was 8.36.00

Day five was probably the most significant stage of the race. Kruglikov produced an inspired performance to complete the 85kms with 7.30.34. finishing nearly 24 minutes ahead of Valery Klements (GER) and 37 minutes ahead of Kouros in third place. Bogar retired with leg injuries similar to those experienced by Wallace and Kruglikov was now the clear overall race leader. It was now time for Robinson to stamp her authority on the women's race and she ran comfortably to pass Petrova and win the stage by 13 minutes-her message to the Russian who was more than twenty five year's younger was quite clear- "I am still in this race and if you wish to beat me there is no easy way".

It is difficult to evaluate the psychological pressure on Petrova but on day six she retired with an ankle injury and this effectively handed the race to Robinson who won the stage comfortably. After two days of hard effort by Kruglikov he was unable to match the pace and strength of the Australian, Pat Farmer who established a commanding lead during the early stages and although Kruglikov and Kouros closed the distance they were nearly a minute behind at the finish. Once more, Australia had a stage winner and it seems probable that ultradistance runners from that country will now start to emerge from the long shadow cast by Kouros.

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The final stage from Port Arthur to Hobart was, in many respects, a lap of honour for both Kruglikov and Robinson. The Russian won his stage by 13 minutes from Kouros and the Englishwoman finished 2 minutes ahead of Stanger. However all competitors had one more problem to solve before the finish. With 5 kms to the end of the race the runners were obliged to cross the Tasman Bridge which is about 1500 metres long. Gale force winds were blowing and the bridge was visibly swaying. The bridge walkway was exposed to the elements and most of the runners could only cross by holding on to the bridge handrail. The Tasmanian weather had thrown everything at the runners during the seven days of the race- snowstorms on the second day, freezing cold on the fifth and now, five kilometers from the finish, gale force winds.

One more runner deserving special mention is Bryan Smith who won the last Sydney to Melbourne Race in 1991- he finished in third position on the last stage and third overall in the race. Quietly and patiently he had run with confidence knowing full well that he would become stronger as the race progressed.

Alan Rider had successfully organised an event with enormous potential and the indications are that, following the great success of this race, The Telecom Tasmania Run will take place again in 1995-further details will be given in the next newsletter.

RESULTS

Men

1. Anatoly Kruglikov	(RUS)	48hrs	42mins	44secs
2. Yiannis Kouros	(GRE)	49	27	58
3. Bryan Smith	(AUS)	54	39	15
4. Dusan Mravlje	(SLO)	55	23	03
5. Gennady Groshev	(RUS)	56	22	07
6. Erik Seedhouse	(GBR)	56	50	47
7. Pat Farmer	(AUS)	57	17	41
8. Valery Klement	(GER)	58	43	49
9. Georges Jermolajevs	(LAT)	64	43	28
10. Kovalan Moodley	(RSA)	65	11	32
11. Roland Vuilleminot	(FRA)	66	19	32
12. Ross Parker	(AUS)	71	09	25

Retirements.

Day 2.	A. Lucas (AUS),	A. Law (AUS),	K. Santalov (RUS)
Day 3.	H. Clements (AUS),	C. Mattheus (RSA),	
Day 4.	D. Wallace (AUS)		
Day 5.	J. Rooney (AUS),	C. Rochotte (AUS),	J. Bogar (HUN)
Day 7.	L. Taelman (BEL)		

Women.

1. Eleanor Robinson	(GBR)	60hrs	31mins	34secs
2. Helen Stanger	(AUS)	65	37	47
3. Sigrid Lomsky	(GER)	67	53	31
4. Georgina McConnell	(AUS)	76	27	39

Retirements.

Day 6.	I. Petrova (RUS)
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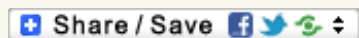
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