

## METRO LEAGUE 3 REPORT

Redgum's huge 1983 hit "I was only 19" was actually titled "A walk in the light green", and paid homage to the Aussie soldiers in Vietnam who did not benefit from the thicker foliage afforded to US troops. The light green showed areas of forest that offered the 'enemy' a shot at our diggers.

At Cattai National Park on Sunday, competitors in Metro League 3 were often reduced to a walk in the light green as they confronted vegetation that had grown substantially since our last visit there. The good hosts at WHO had warned us about this and, while winning times were pretty much spot on, most runners spent longer on the course than they would have anticipated.

After the 'sprint' nature of Round 2 at Callan Park, we were well and truly back in bush territory. Overgrown tracks and thicker pockets of bush demanded concentration, but such was the nature of the map and the wonderful courses set by Adrian White that if you navigated carefully then you were never really more than 100-200m from the target at any time.

Yes, finding the tracks was sometimes difficult, but we cannot let this report pass without noting some amazing 'finds' on the day.

New Garingal member Kim Welinski, already contending with the difficulty of his first Metro League event, somehow spotted a mobile phone on the course and brought it back to base. Apparently one of the Junior Leaguers had lost it, so its return was greatly appreciated.

But for sheer needle-in-a-haystack luck, we dip our lids to Bennelong's David McGhee whose SI stick slipped off his finger en route to control 6 in Division 3. Realising the calamity that had befallen him, he turned back, retraced his steps and – he didn't say how long later – found the stick. Alas, by the time he was the last person accounted for on the day, he had been out on course for almost two hours and had to take an mp. And for David, who had the fastest time in Division 4 at Callan Park, it was another reminder that an orienteering run is as unpredictable as a round of golf.

Now, onto the racing.

Just two seconds separated the two fastest runners in Division 1. Big Foot's Patrik Gunnarsson flew home in 35m46s, pipping Andrew Barnett from the combined Universities team. Andrew lost a minute on the first leg but managed to steal the lead back by #6. But he dropped another minute at #8 and the reliable Swede held on for the 10 points. The Feet got up 32-23 to maintain their perfect record, as did the Garingal Monitors who thrashed clubmates the Goannas 38-17. Aidan Dawson's 10-pointer in that match was a welcome return to form.

In Division 2 UR-CC downed WHO 32-23, despite Dmitry Stukov taking the 10 for the hosts. Dmitry was only 10 seconds off Mel Cox's division-fastest time of 43m32s as Bennelong also made it 3/3 for the season by pipping Big Foot 29-26. In the final match, Sydney Summer Series guru Ross Barr starred as the Garingal Frill Necks whipped the hapless GO Dragons 38-16.

SHOO stayed unbeaten as Division 3 started to take shape, beating Bennelong 34-20 as Doug Jay pocketed his third straight 10-pointer and fastest time in 36m23s. UR-CC Kites, anchored by mother and daughter Maggie and Georgia Jones, knocked over the IKON Magnetrons 28-24 as both sides had a runner mp. Garingal's Molochs and Skinks tied 27-all after a bewildered Dan Redfern returned

an mp, sure that he had punched the first control. The result leaves both GO outfits still in the mix on 3 points.

Division 4 is packed tighter than a Melbourne Cup field with Big Foot, Bennelong and IKON on 4 points; and Garingal, WHO and UR-CC on 2. Bennelong inflicted Big Foot's first defeat, thanks to Rachel Povah's cracking pace of 43m12s. The pink shirts were down a runner even after calling on ML co-ordinator Ian Jessup (GO) to lug his hockey injuries around the paddocks. WHO picked up their first win while IKON borrowed Rod Parkin from Bennelong (who bagged 10 points) and thrashed the Geckos 36-19.

The Division 5 table is a carbon copy as far as points are concerned. GO Legless, featuring four runner aged 15 or under, are on top after beating stablemates the Blue Tongues 30-24. Also on four are Bennelong, 36-19 winners over SHOO, and UR-CC who uncovered another import in Ondrej Pavlu who flew around in 26m40s – more than 10 minutes faster than the next best time in the division.

If your lasting memory of the day is the thick bush, just remember that not all lantana is bad. In returning to the theme of terrific Aussie artistic output – I urge you to hit the video shop and watch Lantana, a cinematic classic from 2001. It was filmed on Sydney's northern beaches, home of our next round when Bennelong send us around the Manly Dam bush on June 23.