

Senior Men's Report (10th)

Ben McHale, Matt Dalton, Sjors Corporaal, Nick Portas, Adrian Lysaght, Steve O'Callaghan, Aidan Campbell, Jason Steyn-Ross

Having been competitive in the B Grade for the last few years, it was a surprise to find ourselves placed in the A Grade for this year's road relay champs. Nevertheless, we went into the race ready for the challenge.



Ben McHale got us off to a good start on the first leg. After the first few km, he was leading the second bunch, and was in about 7th place overall. Later on in the leg, the Wesley and Wellington Scottish B runners got away from Ben, but he was able to hold his own, and finished the leg in 9th place. That was to be where we would aim to stay for the duration of the race.

Matt Dalton showed some real courage, running the second leg for us with a bulging disc in his back. Matt looked to have found a good rhythm on the flat first four km of his leg, but he found the hills at the end were punishing, particularly the downhill parts. He finished the leg with us in 10th place.

Leg 3 looked to be tailor-made for Sjors Corporaal, with several tough hills in it, and he went out strong. However, Aaron Jackson, who is in great form at the moment, was running that leg for ACA (Auckland City Athletics), and he was able to catch Sjors and put some time on him. ACA were a team placed in the B Grade, but given the calibre of some of their runners, we believed they were misplaced in that division.



For leg 4, Sjors handed the baton over to Nick Portas, who was to produce what we felt was the run of the day for us. Nick attacked the early hill on his leg, and ACA's runner came within sight. From the van, Nick was told to catch him, and he did just that. Unfortunately, we were unable to witness him in action coming down the hill, as that road was closed to traffic, and he gave us a fright as he came running to changeover point sooner than we expected him. Adrian had to sprint to meet him in time.

Adrian ran well on a tough leg which contained several hills and crossed the motorway. Although Adrian lost a placing to James Kuegler from ACA, he appeared to be gaining on New Brighton and the famous Caversham runner, Lyndon Brown, before he got away from him towards the end of the leg.

Steve O'Callaghan ran leg 6 for us, and he had his work cut out for him trying to catch Jono Jackson from ACA. Steve ran solidly on his long leg (10.5km), but felt disheartened as he could see Jono continuing to stretch away from him. Having come back from serious injury this year, this was a good run from Steve, and he was still able to post a respectable time by anyone's standards.

Aidan Campbell from Whakatane, who was filling in for our team, managed to make ground on ACA on leg 7. Coming up the hill, it looked like Aidan would be able to catch that runner, but he managed to hold Aidan off coming down the hill.

Aidan handed the baton over to me for the final leg, and I set off aiming to catch ACA or any team that was within sight. Sadly, no one was, and I was aiming to attack the hills, then trying to let it fly down the hills, but I had no way of knowing if I really was making any ground. I finished the relay for us, having not gained, nor

lost any placings. We finished 10th in the A Grade, with one B Grade team (ACA) beating us. We were satisfied to have finished 3 minutes ahead of the winning Masters Team.



Overall, it was a pleasing result as we finished about where we expected to, and some of the less experienced runners showed a lot of promise. We look forward to next year, where we may have a chance of making a top 5 placing in the A Grade.

By Jason Steyn-Ross