

2019 -20 Groynes Community Paddle Race Report

The Inaugural Dolls Point Paddlers 20 Groynes Race was held last Saturday in beautiful conditions.

For those who haven't caught up with what the 20 Groynes was all about, the race was a 6 hour event following a 4 km course from the beach at Dolls Point to the turnaround point at Ramsgate Baths to see how many laps could be completed.

The event was dreamed up at the Club Xmas Party, with much time being spent on what to call the event and even more time spent working out team names.

The event was open to both teams and individuals.

A safety briefing was held by Mark Sundin prior to the race start, covering such topics as sharks (apparently, as long as we didn't swim inside the bathing enclosures, we'd be OK), the ever present jet skis and boats and how to deal with the wash, rescue protocols, and so on.

At 8 am Bob started the race and we were off. The massed start made for great viewing as the competitors made their way to the first of the turns north.

The club made up a great majority of paddlers which is encouraging and for many of those, it was their first time on open water.

Stepping out from enclosed waters to open waters is a big step, and to see those people moving out of their comfort zone was inspiring. Not only that, but some of those paddlers were new to the club and were encouraged to participate only after the new year. I think this points to one of the reasons we are a successful and inclusive club. Everyone is encouraged to participate and there are so many club members willing to assist wherever possible.

Initially the weather was perfect with flat waters and sunny conditions, but as predicted, the tidal movement and the wind combined to create some challenging conditions for all. Not only that, but the continuous parade of large boats and jet skis added to the fun by creating some special moments of backwash at the Ramsgate turn. Jeff Buchan (from Team Buchaneers) even commented on being able to catch a backwash wave out towards the heads before turning right and heading back to Dolls Point.

From my perspective, the infamous octopus at the Dolls Point turn didn't quite live up to its reputation as most paddlers managed to round the turn without too much difficulty.

On one of my later laps, I was able to paddle with both Nicky and Louise as they made their way around the course. Rumour has it that Nicky will be the new club remount coach as she was able to even impress Rob Mercer with her remount ability.

Thanks once again to Robbo, safety boatman extraordinaire who was able to shadow the paddlers in the safety boat and provide a welcome sight as the day became less easy on the water. Robbo spent the entire race patrolling the course and was accompanied at times by other club members.

On the beach, event organisers were once again assisted by Bob, Kaye, Annette and Venice.

Without the volunteers who work tirelessly these events would not exist, so thank you to both the event organisers and the volunteers.