

A TALE OF TWO RACES

While trail running may be the preferred option for most ultradistance runners, there is still a place for the traditional track based ultra. Australia boasts two of the longest standing of these events. In fact, they are Australia's two longest running ultradistance races.

Australian Sri Chinmoy 24 Hour Track Championship

The Sri Chinmoy 24 Hour race has been staged variously at Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney for the past 38 years, and has many times been awarded the prestigious title of National Championship. It was cancelled in 1998 and 2001, so has been held on 36 occasions.

Like all Sri Chinmoy events, it is renowned for the level of care and service provided to runners, and the family atmosphere amongst helpers and athletes (most of the organising team are or have been ultra runners).

It is the oldest ultra distance event in Australia.

In 2010, the overall winner was Bernadette Benson with 200.884km. This is the only occasion on which a woman has been the first to finish in this event.

The race records are held by Yiannos Kouros who ran a world record distance of 303.506km in 1997 and by Merideth Quinlan who ran 214.795km in 2014.

Year	Venue	Starters	M	Winner	Distance	F	Winner	Distance
1982	Adelaide Harriers	14	12	Bob Bruner	199.768	2	Kay Haarsma	161.612
1983	Adelaide Harriers	31	28	Bob Bruner	205.315	3	Helen O'Connor	154.862
1984	Adelaide Harriers	39	35	Gerry Riley	204.051	4	Helen O'Connor	170.096
1985	Adelaide Harriers	39	35	Cliff Young	235.969	4	Eleanor Robinson (ENG)	167.000
1986	Adelaide Harriers	37	31	David Standeven	228.556	6	Cynthia Cameron	200.615
1987	Adelaide Harriers	35	32	David Standeven	234.313	3	Susan Worley	155.336
1988	Adelaide Harriers	24	21	Owen Tolliday	253.063	3	Cheryl Standeven	168.584
1989	Adelaide Harriers	25	21	Mike March	257.767	4	Helen O'Connor	155.317
1990	Adelaide Harriers	26	21	Peter Gray	202.014	5	Susan Worley	141.036
1991	Kensington	33	25	David Standeven	237.436	8	Helen Stanger	207.969
1992	Adelaide Harriers	25	21	Rudolf Kinshofer	216.856	4	Susan Worley	136.812
1993	Adelaide Harriers	23	19	David Standeven	209.218	3	Sandra Barwick (NZ)	174.490
1994	Adelaide Harriers	21	18	Joe Skrobalak	198.423	3	Lorraine Lee-McGough	172.791
1995	Adelaide Harriers	20	17	David Standeven	211.797	2	Helen O'Connor	136.000
1996	Adelaide Harriers	16	13	David Standeven	219.037	2	Anubha Baird	142.161
1997	Kensington	13	10	Yiannis Kouros (WR)	303.506	2	Helen O'Connor	142.119
1998	Not held							
1999	Adelaide Harriers	19	14	Mick Francis	224.521	5	Anubha Baird	171.722
2000	Adelaide Harriers	16	11	John Twartz	185.805	5	Anubha Baird	183.240
2001	Not held							
2002	Adelaide Harriers	16	14	David Standeven	200.448	2	Carol Baird	179.811
2003	SANTOS Stadium	15	13	Mick Francis	211.459	2	Carol Baird	180.919
2004	SANTOS Stadium	16	14	Mick Francis	221.323	2	Felicity Joyce	171.543
2005	SANTOS Stadium	16	14	Anyce Melham	197.779	2	Carol Baird	194.945
2006	SANTOS Stadium	20	17	Mick Francis	227.928	3	Carol Baird	192.436
2007	SANTOS Stadium	20	18	Mick Francis	226.241	2	Rebecca Oliver	138.634
2008	SANTOS Stadium	20	19	Michael Lovric	209.424	1	Erin Kreiss	140.434
2009	St Lucia Brisbane	19	18	Jonathan Blake	224.229	1	Meredith Quinlan	201.463
2010	St Lucia Brisbane	23	17	Colin Solomon	190.935	6	Bernadette Benson	200.884
2011	QE2 Brisbane	14	13	Trevor Allen	200.405	1	Sharon Scholz	163.156
2012	Blacktown	35	28	Mike Canty	210.892	7	Allison Lillie	192.168
2013	Blacktown	25	16	Trevor Allen	201,048	9	Larissa Tichon	192,935
2014	Blacktown	34	28	Bryan McCorkindale	223.743	6	Meredith Quinlan	214.795
2015	Campbelltown	31	24	Kevin Muller	220.442	7	Karen Chan	171.941
2016	Campbelltown	34	30	Malcolm Gamble	222.656	4	Sharon Scholz	201.931
2017	Campbelltown	27	21	Stephen Redfern	220.416	6	Cheryl Symons	165.732
2018	Campbelltown	38	23	Stephen Redfern	245.566	15	Sharon Scholz	188.450
2019	Campbelltown	41	27	Daragh O'Loughlin	220.887	14	Donna Urquhart	212.099

Records

1997 Kensington Yiannis Kouros (WR) 303.506 2014 Blacktown Meredith Quinlan 214.795

One runner stands out in terms of quantity and quality in this event, namely **Anyce Melham**. Anyce has competed in 32 of the 36 stagings of the Sri Chinmoy 24 Hour Championship, starting with his first run in 1984. Since then he has only missed the event twice, both because of injury. He normally runs in excess of 100 miles on each occasion, 2019 being no exception.



Anyce in 1984 (left) and in the 2014 Sri Chinmoy 24H Championship (right)

Victorian 24 Hour Track Championship / Coburg 24 Hour Carnival

In 1983, Cliff Young, a 63 year old potato farmer from The Otways in country Victoria, covered 850+ km in 5 days 15 hours and 4 minutes to win the inaugural 'Sydney to Melbourne'. This marked a great surge of interest in ultra running.

In 1984 Dot Browne organized a 24 hour race for Geoff Molloy who wanted to test himself before the next Sydney to Melbourne ultra race. Thrown together in a hurry at the Box Hill track, the event saw Geoff set a new Australian record of 216 km, and then go on to win the Sydney to Melbourne race. The 24 hour event was so successful that it became thereafter an annual event. In 1985 30 runners lined up, with Geoff Molloy breaking his record with 232 km and Margaret Smith achieving a women's record of 177 km. In 1986 the race became an official trial for the Sydney to Melbourne ultra run, with 44 entrants trying to achieve the 200km qualifying mark. Brian Bloomer set a new men's Australian Record of 242 km and Cynthia Cameron broke the women's record with 191 km.

The race left the Box Hill track and came to Coburg, another Melbourne suburb, in 1988. The Sydney to Melbourne race was enjoying huge publicity and popularity. The 1989 24 hour run had over 70 entries and had to be culled to an eventual start list of 50!

The Coburg 24 Hour Carnival has proudly hosted the Victorian 24 Hour Track Championship each year since 1988. As of writing, the Victorian 24 Hour Championship has been held on 36 consecutive occasions, matching the 36 stagings of the iconic Australian Sri Chinmoy 24 Hour Championship.

In 1998 and 2004, women runners actually won the championship, illustrating that this is an event in which both sexes can compete in their own right. The men's championship record is held by Yiannis Kouros who ran a World Record of 294.504km in 1996. He subsequently increased that world record to an astonishing 303.506km in Adelaide in 1997. The women's championship record was set in 2014 by Bernadette Benson with 238.261km.

Year	Venue	Starters	M	Winner	Distance	F	Winner	Distance
1984	Box Hill	9	8	Geoff Molloy (AR)	216.000	1	Caroline Vaughan	90.000
1985	Box Hill	38	35	Geoff Molloy (AR)	232.400	3	Margaret Smith (AR)	177.600

1986	Box Hill	38	35	Brian Bloomer (AR)	242.598	3	Cynthis Cameron (AR)	191.216
1987	Box Hill	37	35	Barry Brooks	227.574	2	Cynthia Cameron	141.057
1988	Coburg	41	39	Nick Reed	208.859	2	Sue Andrews (AR)	202.890
1989	Coburg	50	48	Mike March (AR)	260.099	2	Kim Talbot	168.493
1990	Coburg	45	43	Bryan Smith	249.881	2	Sandra Kerr	165.009
1991	Coburg	35	34	Bryan Smith	250.729	1	Merrilyn Tail	145.242
1992	Coburg	29	25	David Standeven	217.051	4	Helen Stranger	196.213
1993	Coburg	8	7	Neville Mercer (NZ)	229.755	1	Elvira Janosi (Yugoslavia)	141.126
1994	Coburg	8	7	Igor Streltson(RUS)	221.200	1	Sandra Kerr	154.600
1995	Coburg	11	10	Yiannis Kouros (AR)	282.981	1	Dawn Parris	134.160
1996	Coburg	9	7	Yiannis Kouros (WR)	294.504	2	Helen Stanger	211.126
1997	Coburg	16	13	Yiannis Kouros	266.180	3	Helen Stanger	206.860
1998	Coburg	12	10	Helen Stanger	228.680	2	Helen Stanger (AR)	228.680
1999	Coburg	14	12	Yiannis Kouros	251.229	2	Shayne Walthers	60.800
2000	Coburg	14	11	Bryan Smith	200.703	3	Shirley Young	176.810
2001	Coburg	16	15	Vlastik Skvaril	193.487	1	Shayne Dean	99.062
2002	Coburg	13	12	Mick Francis	216.298	1	Mikela Ward	104.414
2003	Coburg	26	25	Ian Valentine	175.887	1	Carol Baird	167.290
2004	Coburg	26	22	Carol Baird	189.692	4	Carol Baird	189.600
2005	Coburg	27	21	Rudi Kinsofer	192.909	6	Jill Green	165.986
2006	Coburg	27	24	Garry Wise	185.818	3	Michelle Thompson	166.053
2007	Coburg	30	26	Martin Fryer	228.686	4	Catherine Cox	149.021
2008	Coburg	34	30	Mick Francis	231.258	4	Sharon Scholz	184.517
2009	Coburg	37	27	Jo Blake	243.651	10	Susannah Harvey-Jamieson	209.458
2010	Coburg	35	31	Barry Loveday	232.602	4	Michelle Thompson	172.906
2011	Coburg	39	28	Rick Cooke	216.428	11	Kerrie Bremner	203.020
2012	Coburg	45	35	Ewan Horsburgh	234.870	10	Sabina Hamaty	184.908
2013	Coburg	44	32	Barry Loveday	243.777	12	Kerrie Williamson	192.410
2014	Coburg	48	34	Barry Loveday	265.000	14	Bernadette Benson (AR)	238.261
2015	Coburg	51	39	Paul Hopwood	229.873	12	Nikki Wynd	221.113
2016	Coburg	48	39	Kevin Muller	242.240	9	Sharon Scholz	192.000
2017	Coburg	35	27	John Yoon	225.611	8	Donna Urquhart	203.600
2018	Coburg	20	17	Daragh O'Loughlin	217.260	3	Nikki Wynd	201.290
2019	Coburg	46	33	Kevin Muller	251.605	13	Nicole Vaughan	191.628

Records

1997 Coburg Yiannis Kouros (WR) 294.504 2014 Coburg Bernadette Benson (AR) 238.261

If Anyce Melham is the public face of the Sri Chinmoy race, then **Peter Gray** fulfils that same role with regard to the Victorian 24 Hour Championship. He has competed every year since 1988, a continuous run of 32 participations.



Peter Gray in the 1990 Sydney to Melbourne Classic (left) and at the 2008 Coburg 24 Hour Championship (right)

Both events look set to continue for the foreseeable future, and both Anyce and Peter are keen to keep their 'run' going. The next Coburg 24 Hour Carnival will be held in Coburg (Melbourne) on the weekend of 13-14 April 2019 while the next Sri Chinmoy 24 Hour Championship is expected to be held in Campbelltown (Sydney) in June 2019.

Tim Erickson
3 July 2019