



ROTARY CLUB OF WAITAKERE

Making a difference in our world

P O Box 104-017 Lincoln North, Auckland 0654

www.soapboxderby.co.nz

2013 Soapbox Derby Newsletter #5

17th March 2013

Dear Schools and Sponsors

So much for the Drought - it broke two days too soon...

The 10th annual West Auckland Soapbox Derby and the unthinkable happened... it rained. And not just typical patchy Auckland showers with dry spots between them, but rain with wet roads in the less-wet moments.

- Friday: Starting to cloud over but our Breakfast TV event well – and weather forecasts that far out (2 days) were proved to be completely wrong last year (for all the races).
- Saturday: The drought finally started to break. Not the best weather but we could have raced with a slightly reduced program. Will tomorrow be the same?
- 4am Sunday: The forecast wasn't great but the rain radar showed the high over Auckland holding with the oncoming rain diverted down the coast.
- A full day of racing looked unlikely – but even an hour's racing would at least get all drivers down the track once and we could work it from there.
- We send out the message "racing is ON" – and hope the high will hold the rain at bay
- 6am: We arrive on site in the dark to find two schools are there before us setting up their gazebos. Everyone is in a positive mood. We all remember yesterday's weather and expect (hope?) that it will be similar. With the Drought we've all forgotten that this wet stuff called rain exists.
- Schools, Rotarians and Helpers arrive, the barriers are installed and setup gets underway. If the roads dry they will be greasy after the dry weather so we reduce the track length for safety (slower speeds and longer run off before the hay bales) and hope for the best.
- 8am: The barriers and timing cable are in place, tents are up and all is ready for the final touches. It is still looking good. Not great, but with luck passable.
- Light rain starts so we hold off on the final touches – hay bales and the like – just in case...
- Our 2010 NZ Champion Henry Dyer borrows a spare car and tries the track out in the light rain. He was OK – but how about our less experienced drivers? Perhaps not. We do like our children to race safely and come back with positive tales.
- I check the atmosphere in the tents. No obvious tensions or unhappiness and plenty of good cheer and chat. Everyone, including the children, appeared to be coping remarkably well.





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- 9am: Our Race Director Kerry is having doubts. Should we cancel? We check the forecast on the Internet and think, "Well maybe it will clear... eventually. Or then again maybe it won't. Cancel ... or not?"
- All Team Leaders are called for a briefing and asked for their input. The general conclusion is "Well we are here and ready. We'd hate to go home and find we could have raced after all."
- To give the weather gods a chance to behave and for the track to dry enough to race we call a delay till 11am with a final decision then
- Everyone is given the option – wait around on site or entertain yourself elsewhere till 11am. Some stay happily talking in their tents, others wander off to check the local shops, buy food from the intrepid school food stalls or head for the mall to sit in the dry with coffee.
- 10:45am: The rain sets in with a vengeance. Time to bail. We start the dismantling and all go home for hot showers and an afternoon snooze.

Where to from here?

Deferring our races to another day on Westgate Drive is not an option.

- Road closure consent was for today only and the barriers will be relocated to the North Shore before the end of the week.
- Holding the Event, whether it is rained off or not, costs serious money and we don't have the funds to duplicate it.
- Our "Rain Date" on our plan was to join the Northcote Derby next Saturday (who ever expects to use a proposed rain date anyway?)
- I have spoken to the Northcote Rotary Race Director and we have agreed that joining together for the day is probably the best option.
- If we slot the two races together – Northcote drivers "A" followed by Waitakere drivers "A" etc we can keep things flowing. With a longer time before each car is needed again things can really fly.
- We shall, of course, each keep our own times by running two computers and race scoring systems.
- And we will both do the maths, and possibly readjust our races (see our race timing schedule back up plans), to ensure it doesn't turn into a Very Long Day. Northcote have had major interest from local schools in the Super Kids cars so don't want to cancel these.
- More on this later in the week once we've both discussed it with our teams

Other Experiences

Racing may have hit a snag but there are other parts to the Derby.

Car building, Sponsor involvement, Practices, Safety Day, Team Meetings... all are part of racing that the children experience and learn from. Even race cancellation has lessons. Life doesn't always go to plan so live with it and move on.





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The turnout on Friday morning for Breakfast TV was most impressive!

Sam Wallace, the on-site announcer was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of our teams. He said that he expected a couple of cars and a few kids – and there were most of our cars and huge numbers of drivers. And we were organized!



Kerry giving guidance



Some of the many cars that braved the early start to the day



The ramps were well used – both for TV and practices whilst we were there



Rotarians and parents there to help and watch the fun



Racing in the dark
(Perhaps we should try this at OUR races?
I saw stars in reasonably clear skies at 4am)



Novice driver Sam with passenger Claire in one of the Super Kid cars with Rotarian Alan giving steering advice





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Dawn breaking. The sky was an amazing colour



Sam and Claire on their first race down hill against Hannah in the Matipo car.

After this race it was hard to keep the pair of them out of the car!



Poster Boy: Constable Luke with the latest in miniature police cars



Luke with the Swanson DARE car team



Photo opportunities abounded



i-pad photos





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The far side.

Rather than brake cars aimed for the top



Henry listening in to the TV studio audio on Sam's earpiece



"Science experiment" Weight versus speed.

The lightest car and driver won – but aerodynamics may have played a large part



Bouncing the signal to the Waitarua TV mast and from there to the studio



Andrew adjusting Sam's helmet.

It was at this second time down the track that Sam realised Claire's disabilities included being blind.



2 mics and suddenly only one worked. Sam spoke to the one in Henry's Master car on the ramp beside him. If you saw the show on TV it sounds awfully spooky in there.





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James introducing the weather forecast on Live TV with Sam following with the details



Sam with the children



A fantastic experience for all involved



Feedback

Massey High:

Hi Heather and Alan

Many thanks for a well organised event that apart from the weather was still a success. For young people to wait so patiently for so long without tears or trouble is quite rare.

All the students taking part today appeared to be busy and enjoying themselves for the entire time.

Well done for your long hours and hard work and especially for allowing the students to be part of the decision to wait till 11 o'clock.

We still had a good bbq on the footpath. The pit area reminded me of Brands Hatch when I was a kid.

Thank you
Lee





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Matipo Primary:

Dear Heather and team

We feel so bad for you guys in how the day panned out. Lots of hard work and planning to be let down by the weather.

On behalf of the Matipo Soapbox team, thank you very much for what you do. Yes the Soapbox is a lot of hardwork especially given it requires commitments outside normal school hours but some of the experiences that the children have had are priceless.

So while there was no racing today many of them were very excited about what they were going to experience.

Thank you all
Tony

Website:

www.soapboxderby.co.nz

As information becomes available we add it to our website – including copies of the newsletters. Photos, videos etc from past derbies are also on our site.

Emails:

Please keep an eye on your emails as more information will be coming out soon. If you have other people who would like copies - email Heather with their email address and they will be added to the mail out list.

We have very few parents on the email list (we haven't been given addresses for them) so please ensure they get a copy and know about the website.

The Rotary core team for the event and contact details are:

Kerry McMillan Derby Director clanmcmillan@xtra.co.nz Phone 832-3229 or 021-416-777	Lyn Parts Phone: 021 251 5490 The storeroom is located behind Grasslands at 570 Swanson Road. Ring Lyn first to ensure he is there.
Heather Pattison Project Manager heather@details.co.nz Phone 810-9589 or 0274-719-569	Alan Pattison Technical Assistant alan@details.co.nz Phone 810-9589 or 0274-80-88-30
Shawn Dyer Home: 412 9500 Mobile: 027 390 9885 Chief Scrutineer	Are YOU the missing piece?





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Rotary Membership Enquiries Welcome!

Rotary Meetings:

Wednesday 6pm to 8pm

Starling Park Sports Grounds
34 Glen Road
Ranui

Heather Pattison

Please copy this newsletter and distribute to all of the people involved in the event!

