

FRIDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> MAY, 2009

## Collis comes home for Ballarat Lake Lap

Collis Birmingham won't be racing, but the presence of Australia's new distance running king could be enough to inspire some of the state and country's best distance runners to burn at tomorrow's Ballarat Lake Lap. Breaking the Australian record in the 10,000 metres late last month, the Eureka Athletic Club runner has surpassed the likes of Steve Moneghetti, Robert De Casetla, Craig Mottram, and Ron Clarke to top Australia's all-time list. This Saturday afternoon, Steve Moneghetti's six kilometre Lake Wendouree lap record will be put on the line, as Birmingham watches his rivals attempt to light up the lake.

World class athletes, including XCR '09s form athlete Clint Perrett (Sandringham), and Ben Toomey (Knox), are set to challenge for line honours in the men's race. As will former World Junior Cross Country Championships representatives Duer Yoa (Eureka - Ballarat) and Ashley Watson (Wendouree - Ballarat). 19 year-old Yoa – a club mate of Birmingham - claimed the individual Victorian Cross-Country title at Lardner Park, Warragul two weekends ago.

Adding further interest and depth to the field will be Ballarat locals Shane Nankervis (Ballarat YCW), Alex Howard (Ballarat YCW), Paul Fenn (Ballarat YCW), Tyson Popplestone (Eureka), Sam Ellis (Eureka – Ballarat), Nathan Hartigan (Ballarat Harriers), and recently announced 2010 Commonwealth Games Australian Team Chef-de-Mission Steve Moneghetti (YCW).

The women's race will also be hotly contested, with Melbourne University's Swiss star Renate Wyss, and Knox pair Emma Jackowski and Carly Griffith looking hard to beat.

Last year's winner, local Rachel Gibney (Ballarat Harriers) will be looking to defend her title, while Kelly Ruddick (Ballarat Harriers), Kelli Baird (Ballarat YCW) and Michelle Hawkes (Wendouree) should not be discounted. Exciting junior Rachel Tallent (Ballarat YCW) – sister of Beijing Olympic medallist walker Jared Tallent - could be a chance of an upset victory.

Junior racing commences at 2:00pm at St Patrick's Point on Lake Wendouree. With the open women's race set for 2:15pm, and the open men's race at 3:00pm,

All media enquiries to Rod Griffin at the Ballarat Regional Athletic Centre on 0417 145 902. Ends.