

Let it Flow, Let it Flow, Let it Flow!

This years' contingent of intrepid LCRKers trekking down to the RPM (Riverland Paddling Marathon) included:-

- Naomi Johnson (Single Bettong K1) – RPM 200 (Landcrew Tony and Wade)
- Chris Johnson (Single – Rocket - Unlimited) – RPM 200 (Landcrew Tony and Wade)
- Tom Simmat (Single – Ski – sort of altered of course) – RPM 200 (Landcrew Christine)
- Anjie Lees and Dave Hammond (Double SLR2) – RPM 200 (Landcrew Clay)
- Team Pablo – (Double Ski – Epic V10s) RPM 200 double RELAY– Rich Yates, Duncan Johnstone, Tony D'Andreti (Keg) and last minute replacement Kim Navara (Ghengis – well known to LCRKers). (Landcrew themselves)
- Tony Hystek and myself (Single Unlimited – Sonic and Vampire) – RPM 200 single RELAY (Landcrew ourselves)
- Alanna and Carly – cameo appearances at a few checkpoints but otherwise enjoying the local tourist attractions

As we all know there has been months of rain across the eastern states of Australia. The Darling and Murrumbidgee Rivers are full and flowing which all ends up flowing down the Murray River. There was much anticipation as to how much assistance the river would offer the paddlers at this years RPM.

This report focusses on Tony and my race as a single Relay. Each day there are 4 legs and the chance to changeover at checkpoints (just by overlapping boats on the water). We did alternate legs on Day 1 and 2 but on day 3 I did the first leg and the last leg, Tony did the middle 2 as the share of kms is more equal.

Tony and I had less than ideal preparation. Tonys' paddling had been greatly restricted for months in the lead up with a health concern, and me having had Covid 4 weeks out from the RPM. I set my expectations with that in mind.

DAY 1 Berri to Moorook 76km – start time 7:05am



Day 1 – First out of the lock Duncan and Rich were a bit shaky (not for long) but Tony powered out

I took the first leg of 12km to the lock. The first leg on each day finishes at a lock. I got off to a good start and settled into a wash ride behind our friends Richard Fox and Mary Parker from BGCC and Namoi latched on to their side wash. We were hitting 12, 13 sometimes 14km/hr, YES! The river gods were providing! I dropped off the wash with a couple kms to go and ended up about a minute behind.

Once all paddlers were gathered in the lock the water level only needed to drop about a metre before the gates at the other end were open. Normally it is about 2.5-3.0m drop. Tony burst out in front handling the bumps and eddies with ease. He did an amazing 27km leg and came in only a few metres behind leaders Team Pablo with Duncan and Rich in the boat.

I took over for the leg 3 (26km) and jumped on the back of Lisa and Andy Singletons SLR2 (strong husband and wife combo from VIC with excellent track record in the Mighty Murray) and wash rode for most of the leg but lost them with just a couple of kms to go on a long headwind section. I was about 50m behind them when Tony took over for the last 11km leg. Tony said 'no worries I will catch them' and he did exactly that. Tony came across the finish line at Moorook 11kms later just in front.

That was a great first day for us and was well beyond my expectations. Absolutely wrapped!

DAY 2 Moorook to Waikerie 69km – start time 7:10am



Day 2 – Tony launching for the start at Moorook

Our reward (more like punishment) for a great first day was to be placed on the last start time with 3 doubles. Team Pablo, Richard and Mary, and the Singos. Fortunately we had decided early on that Tony would start the day and paddle the 20km leg to the lock. Showing no fatigue from the previous day he stayed with the Singos for the full distance to the lock.

I took the next leg of 23km. I was happy with my exit from the lock, given it was only the second time I had done it (last year I only did it once). Unfortunately, I just missed a wash ride on a double (Naomi did well and stayed with Richard and Mary then then a ski paddler from SA). I had a gruelling leg on my own with lots of really tough long sections into a strong breeze. Chris passed me early on and was looking strong but I managed to sneak ahead in one of the windy sections. By the changeover Naomi was about 300 metres ahead.

Tony took over for the third 14km leg and he said it took him ages to catch up. Another really strong paddle in difficult conditions. By the changeover he was about 50m ahead of Naomi. I cruised until Naomi had caught up and had some sustenance then we powered through the 12km leg together with more windy sections to the finish.

The strong headwind sections were the talk of the day and a number of paddlers had to pull out including Tom Simmat who was tipped in by the wind and was headed down the hypothermia path when he was picked up by the safety boat.

Day 3 Waikerie to Morgan (69km) – start time 6:50am

I got to start with Chris, Naomi and some single skis on this last day. The doubles had a better day than us on Day 2 and were in the later start. The pace was on for the whole 20kms to the lock. I was in a group wash riding a very fast C2 with Naomi and A.C. a relay ski paddler from Adelaide who were just behind Tony and I in the overall time. Chris kept away from the group and paddled a sensational leg drawing ahead of us by a couple hundred metres by the lock.



Day 3 – Panoramic of paddlers leaving the lock (Photo Carly Rowston)

There is a break for all paddlers at the lock each day while waiting for all 200 event paddlers to arrive. Usually it is about 15-20 mins. Paddlers get out of their boats, keep warm and refuel. On this occasion though when called to enter the lock a 2 person outrigger managed to get themselves jammed by the river flow against the floating barrier during their warm up. There was no way for them to paddle themselves off the barrier. The first rescue boat was unsuccessful and it was up to the lock keeper in a tinny to get a rope to them and tow them off the barrier. It was quite a tense situation and added 30 minutes delay before entering the lock. Three cheers for the lock keeper!

It was no surprise that Team Pablo with Rich and Keg paddling was first out of the lock flanked by Tony and Naomi. Positioning in the lock is strategic. This was a 31km double leg for Tony and incredibly he managed to wash ride Rich and Keg most of the way. He was only a few minutes behind at the last checkpoint when I took over for the last 12kms of the race. The Singos caught me and I stayed with them for only about 1km. They were powering to the finish line and I could not hang on. From there I gave it my best because I knew there was the other double of Richard & Mary not far behind with Naomi cranked up to normal marathon paddling pace rather than ultra-marathon pace to stay with them and chasing the record.



Day 3 - Ready at last checkpoint at Cadell (notice the 20m cliffs on the far side of the river)

Crossing the finish line I was stoked at Tony and my race given our preparation. In the post finish debrief and presentation LCRK excelled. Both Naomi and Chris being fastest womens and mens 200 singles, Team Pablo being fastest outright (love your work Rich, Keg, Duncan and Ghengis), and Tony and I being fastest single relay.

Chris was the surprise packet as it was his first ultra-paddling event and first ultra-event since his ultra-trail running days more than 20 years ago. Naomi was sensational setting the fastest ever K1 200 time outright (yes both mens and womens time!). Congratulations to Anjie and Dave for cranking out another gruelling RPM 200 always relaxed and in good humour.

As usual the organisation of the RPM was absolutely top shelf and a credit to all involved. We can't thank Martin and the team enough for making us feel so welcome. See you next year.

I would like to encourage anyone in LCRK to give it a go at least once. The river and road scenery is spectacular and unexpected. You need to allow a week for enough time to travel either side of the 3 days of paddling. The race days start early but finish mid afternoon with lots of socialising at the pub in the evenings. Pencil it in for next year?



Tony and Wade being Presented with the coveted Orange RPM cap (with Martin RD)