



OCEAN 6

By PETER GARDINER

Coolum Beach arguably could have been the safest place on the planet on November 10 not only with local surf lifesavers like Paul and Jo-anne Hampson down by the flags, but the elite Ocean6 surf sports guns all on the beach and out on the water. Once again Coolum lived up to its awesome reputation as not only a surf break to bring out the best in ironmen, ironwomen, board paddlers gung-ho ski competitors and surf racers, but a venue like no other.

It is one of six eastern Australian beaches judged to be the best of the best, alongside other series round venues such as Currumbin and Surfers Paradise that have that x-factor to keep entrants on their toes and the crowds pumped.



Coolum Beach Nippers with the Ocean 6 competitors

And while this Friday and Saturday round at Coolum did not have quite the mongrel our sandbanks can throw up, the conditions were tricky enough to make for enthralling racing and set up to make for the perfect action viewing platform.

The competitors love it and the officials lap up the renowned Coolum Beach SLSC hospitality. Sunshine Coast Councillor Jason O'Pray, the head of SCC's Tourism, Sport and Major Events, and himself a former world, national and Queensland champion lifesaver, never doubted Coolum would deliver the good.

"Coolum is one of the most incredible beaches for surf lifesaving events for both athletes racing and spectators alike with the exposed beach attracting lots of swell and the natural amphitheatre," Cr O'Pray said. The series television commentator Josh Minogue live-streamed the event for three hours giving Coolum enormous commercial exposure with Point

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Ken Mills



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Perry and the clubhouse two of the star attractions.

Josh summed up the challenge succinctly – windy conditions, 26-27 degrees on the beach, a good southerly swell and challenging waves.

"We're in for a very, very tough day of racing," were his opening remarks for the ironman and ironwomen pursuit format.

"You have to get out in front, if you do you have an advantage for sure with the inside gutter and a little wind chop."

For Paul Hampson, decked out in red and yellow with rescue tube in hand, this large event, which pushed their flagged area further up to a northern sandbank, delivered a mass influx of people and increased, at times intense, water activity which brought its own set of challenges.

"While that was going on down there, it was all happening up here," Paul said.

"Plenty of people came to watch and have a swim afterwards. It was a good day all up."

"The (television) camera loves the Coolum set up. The crowds were excellent – it was quiet when we first came on (afternoon) patrol, and then it just got busier and busier.

"By the time it (competition) finished, our busiest time of the day was 5 o'clock.

"There was a choppy wave ... it was good, really good. There was a swell and then there was a break. It was easy conditions for them to get out and then a plenty of waves out there for them to get on to."

Paul has no doubt the Ocean6 and elite Nutri-Grain ironmen and ironwomen loved what they experienced at Round 2 and will be back for more next year and Coolum's sets will be waiting.

Coolum SLSC officials and acting club captain Mick Sell were

grateful for the members' support and delighted with the way the club pulled together as the famous carnival "crash crew" teams pulled out all stops to see everything run smoothly. But here is the real pay-off as captured on the club's online blog: "Coolum Nippers had an awesome time at Ocean6 over the weekend with a permanent sign at the finish line where they acted as the personal cheer squad for (Coolum) coach Rhys Burrows and local fav (ironwoman) Jordan Mercer. "Many of the kids had the honour of holding the finishing tape and meeting the amazing athletes who were very generous with their time and their autograph signing duties. "Big thanks to (elite surf sports competitors) Max Brooks, Lana Rogers, and Harriet Brown who came to Nippers on Sunday to pass on some great advice, techniques, and strategies."

2019 CENTENARY PREPARATIONS ON TRACK



University of the Sunshine Coast marketing expert and Coolum Beach SLSC master blaster competitor Emma Rahui has run her practised eye over the four-pronged approach to the club's Centenary Celebrations in 2019 and likes what she sees. Emma has been a timely addition to the Centenary Celebrations organising committee and her experience in handling USC's major events is set to prove invaluable.

She has endorsed the approach to build on already established tried and tested events the club runs, plus the inclusion of the community to make this a memorable experience for not just members, but Coolum locals in general. Emma thinks leveraging off what the club knows works is smart thinking. The launch will be held at the club over Easter 2019 to mark almost 100 years to the day when the pioneering lifesavers like Jack Morgan were presented with a surf rescue reel by the Royal Life Saving Society Queensland.

The special events for this day are progressively being finalised as we edge closer our Centenary Year. This will be followed by a gala Centenary Annual Dinner, then the Centenary Community Celebration with the clubhouse and the beach centre stage of an event likely to live long in memory of all. This is set to take place on August 31 in the run-up to the new lifesaving season and link in with the highly successful and award-winning art event Horizons Festival that runs throughout the Sunshine Coast. The finale will be a supercharged Back to Coolum Day in October designed to capture the spirit and camaraderie of the club's former "keg in the gear shed" tradition with plenty of nostalgia on display and memorabilia on tap.

"We found from talking with other clubs who have done these celebrations like Maroochydore, that you are better off just doing a select number of key events and do them well," committee and club life member Ian Norman said.

"Otherwise you run the risk of members suffering celebration burn-out by the end of the Centenary Year.

"The start of the celebrations is only four months away, so if current members know any past members, please let them know and make sure they are joined up as in the special Past Member category."

There are plenty of added extras already in the pipeline, like Centenary merchandising, the updated club history book published along with a more pictorial-based coffee table keepsake and the club is asking for donations or loans of club memorabilia as part of a special pop-up museum.

There will also be the burial of Centenary time capsule at the club

to help inform tomorrow's lifesavers over the next 100 years – talk about forward thinking.

The Saturday Centenary Community celebration in August will dove-tail with a fun Friday golf day at Mt Coolum Golf Club, while Sunday will see a recovery breakfast at the clubhouse bistro. As part of its beach gala, the club is looking to stage a 100-year March Past and expressions of interest for a special team of marchers has already gone out.

Of course, the club has already started paying homage to its rich and colourful past with the adoption in 2018-19 of the old sky-blue, red and white cap and the release of its Centenary logo incorporating the famous former shark tower that was for years a Coolum landmark.

Many of the club's old guard from seasons past were excited by the plans, when they were briefed at last October's Back to Coolum Day. And life member Dave Cush stirred up some real interest by floating his idea for a special "beyond the breakers" club memorial to honoured members who have passed on and had their ashes spread out in the ocean that was so much a part of their life.



Past, current and life members reminiscing.

WORKING WITH OUR SPONSORS

There is no better example of the symbiosis that flows from the beach to local commercial sector than the strong bond between Gaye Williams, the outgoing Coolum personality who runs a special local community out of The Shop. Gaye has been helping the club help save others for many years, and when the big lifesaving carnivals hit town, especially if there are surf boats involved, she can guarantee her shelves will be drained – especially of bananas.

She and partner Dave, the cheerful early morning barista who is a dab hand at brewing up great organic coffee, are both proud gold sponsors of Coolum Beach SLSC. Their welcoming plant-filled set up directly across the road from the clubhouse, is a favourite spot for local.

"I started supporting the nippers because they support The Shop and everyone needs the surf club," Gaye said. "Otherwise we'd all be drowning out there".

"With The Shop, because we get such great local support, we've got to give back a bit. And it's really nice feel over there (at the club)."

She recalls a young nipper in Rhys Burrows, son of Coolum's stalwart member Ernie, scurrying about the sand and through the water. Now the popular lifeguard, ironman and board paddling national champion is the club's ocean skills coach.

Gaye is part of a tight-knit gold sponsor dress circle at Coolum SLSC that includes Ken Mills Toyota, Coolum Beach Real Estate, Rip Curl Coolum, Bendigo Bank, Billabong Pool Service & Supply, BRD Group and Coolum Caprice.

The Bendigo Bank last month wrapped filming of a Coolum Beach SLSC Centenary Celebration tribute, that included a frantic Nipper Sunday morning. The video package will help promote this amazing landmark where Bendigo Bank operates best – out in the community. Produced by Sound Images, this will run from late this year in the lead up to 2019 April's Easter celebration launch.

SURF SPORTS RESURGENCE



Coolum's Under 19 surfboat crew

Coolum Beach's competitive spirit has never been stronger – you only have to look at the rows of paddleboards and surf skis filling up the storage in the gear shed to see that.

And all the usual suspects, from acting club captain Mick 'Hard' Sell down, are in the thick of the action. This year the medal haul kicked off on the Gold Coast, with gold, silver and bronze at the toughest "nut" to crack – the Coolangatta Gold.

Our Coolum troops proved that could more than mix it in an event made famous by golden boy Grant Kenny at Australia's premier surf sports endurance events that attracted more than 800 competitors in tough conditions over the 42 kms and 21 kms surf ski, ocean swim, board paddle & beach run course.

Gold went to Tam, Emma Rahui, Jodie Waring and Alice S for the short course teams, silver an ageless Ian Norman (50+ long course individual) and Andy Johnson and Andrew S (short course teams). Bronze was won by Bobby Le Roux, Ric Cornacchia, Mick Sell, Chris Atkinson (long course teams) with a gutsy sixth placing to James B, Anthony W, Jarrod Sweetman and Steve R (short course teams)

The youth challenge was raced by Isaac R, Lachie S, Lochie R, James S, Emily S, Esme J, Tess B.

Ian Norman had set this as an important item on his bucket list, but is still undecided if he will back up for next year.

"It was bloody tough ... six hours in pretty tough conditions. All the way back (on the course) was just a howling southerly.

"I think I had the dubious honour of being the oldest long course male competitor. I do know (about next year), if you'd asked me the day afterwards, I would have rather shot myself than do it again.

"Once I recovered it was okay." Ian said the toughest part about the race was: "I just ran out of energy. I should have eaten more early in the race ... after the last board leg I had a seven kilometre run to go and I thought I'd be okay."

But while the legs were a little shaky, he gutsed it out like the rest of the Coolum crew. In late November the boaties wanted to show what they could do, and the Under 19 boys took out first place at the Round 2 Navy Series in Mooloolaba, the reserve grade men took out third place and the U19 women's crew made the final and were unlucky to place.

It was tough going in very flat conditions and it's hoped the strong showing will help secure state selections for Coolum. The weekend later it was the Coolum 220 years surf boat turn to have a crack at the World Titles in what they reckon was a howling wind-blown Adelaide with huge seas. Once the "breeze" dropped from 82kph there was a chance for Mark "Smiley" Dunning, Dan Rogers, Chris Johnson and John Markwell to be world beaters ... close, but no cigar. They were knocked out in the semi-finals and headed straight for the bar.



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RAISING FUNDS TO KEEP THE BEACH SAFE

New surf sports officer Steve Stockley, who replaces Ernie Burrows, and Paul Norman, were among the strong contingent of members who collected for the SOS Week lifesaver appeal to raise vital funds to keep the beach safe. The high-profile collection is also invaluable PR to highlight the services the club provides to the community.

The duo rattled their tins at the Eumundi Markets. The other major fundraiser is the 200 Club drawn on December 15, now in its third year, which offers \$7000 in cash prizes and for the club the chance to raise the funds needed to buy a new IRB. This has become a great social day out with entertainment, drinks and eats.



Steve and Paul raising awareness at Eumundi Markets

And the surf club is ever mindful of its commitment to help others. The club restaurant last month sold more than 1000 prime steaks bringing the Steaks for Mates to almost 4000 four our drought-hit farmers. With an extra \$760 in donations, the club upstairs dining has raised more than \$8400.

A BIT ABOUT OUR MEMBERS

The club is ever mindful of looking out for its own, creating a new position of Member Officer to be filled by Kate Stockley. She is developing a new member induction program "so they

know a bit more about the committees and how the club functions". This new volunteer position will be focusing on the members and making sure their experience is as good as it can be.



Shauna Wine joins (left) Carla Gilbert (right) in the admin team



Three generations of the Cush family on patrol

To complete its human resources renewal, the club has appointed Shauna Wine to the admin team alongside Carla Gilbert and is looking forward to her settling in after long-time admin officer Shane Urban decided to pursue other work avenues, but still remaining fully committed as a volunteer patrol member and trainer. Welcome aboard Shauna, enjoy the challenge of keeping us all happy little Vegemites.

Speaking of fine wines, a vintage David Cush was chuffed recently to serve as PC with three generations of the Cush family on Patrol 13, who for a change, helped drag the average age of his team to possibly under the 70 mark.

On a blustery cold spring day Life Member Dave was proud to stand by the flags alongside daughter Kate and grandkids Brendon and Avya-Marie. Between them they boast over 75 years of volunteer service, with Cushy making up the lion's share.

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