

## Only one hill in the P2P – Mike Jenkinson, Brand Tasmania



Hobart's Point to Pinnacle run is on again in November. Entries are limited to ensure a quality experience, prize money has been doubled, but the humour is still the same. The Athletics Australia website encourages runners to secure bragging rights for life by completing the event. It says there is only one hill on the 21.4km course and fails to mention that that single uphill extends virtually all the way from the sea level start at Wrest Point to the finish at the summit of Mt Wellington, 1,270 metres up.

The P2P, as they call it, can be a serious challenge for serious athletes, requiring a marathon-style preparation and mental toughness to be competitive at the sharp end. It is also a lot of fun for a lot of not-so-serious entrants and crossing the finishing line (still within sight of the start on a clear day) is an absolutely exhilarating achievement. In one direction, the Wrest Point tower sits like a toy on the distant shore of the Derwent Estuary. In the other, the dark green ridges of the Tasmanian South West World Heritage Area stretch away, seemingly forever.

This year's race, on 23 November, is one of four major events in a very busy sporting week in Tasmania. There will also be V8 motor racing at Symmons Plains, an Australia-Sri Lanka cricket Test at Bellerive Oval and the unique, multi-discipline Webber Challenge featuring Formula One celebrity Mark Webber. This year's 'Webber' will bring contestants on to Mt Wellington shortly after the P2P, but the Webber entrants won't use the Pinnacle Road, they'll bush bash down the mountain to Springs before taking to trail bikes to complete their descent. Then they'll abseil the Wrest Point tower before finishing their final day of competition with a kayak paddle to Sullivan's Cove.

If you intend to be involved in any way in these events, book your accommodation soon.

Despite the multiple sporting distractions, the P2P will be the central event of the day in the lives of 1,200 entrants. Entries have been restricted to 1,000 locals and 200 from outside Tasmania and demand is strong. Organisers have had requests for entry forms from all States, as well as New Zealand.

Race Director, Haydyn Nielsen said the field had been capped for logistic and quality-delivery

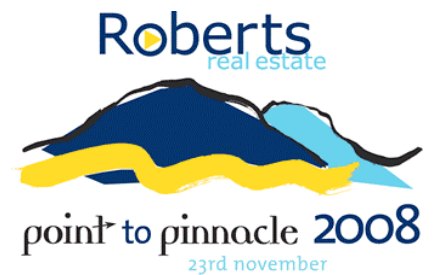
wrest point to mt wellington pinnacle

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reasons and he urged would-be participants to get their entries in quickly to avoid missing a place. The prize money pool has been doubled for this year's event to over \$8,000. The female and male winners will each receive \$1,700, with other place-getters collecting from \$800 for second, down to \$200 for fifth. Each finisher will receive a high quality, ribboned gold medal, as well as other benefits, including eligibility for spot prizes.

Local business, Roberts Real Estate, is naming rights sponsor with Events Tasmania and Wrest Point also chipping in to increase prize-money and other participant benefits. Mr Nielsen said: "We've built a great network of sponsors over the past 14 years, including The Mercury, Southern Cross Television, Hobart Water, Clemenger Tasmania, Metro Tasmania, Brooks (the multinational clothing and sports shoe business), Tasmanian Bakeries and Hobart Sports Centre."

The P2P's roots run deep in Hobart. From early colonial times – and long before the Pinnacle Road was built – locals liked to test their stamina by racing up the mountain, often in challenging weather. Two runners died on the middle slopes when they were caught in a blizzard in September 1903.

Perhaps, the famous Greek ultra-marathoner Yiannis Kouros had this sad episode in mind when he commented during the weather-ravished 650km, multi-stage Telecom Tasmania Run in 1994: "Life and family are much more important than winning races ... I don't want to leave my bones in these hills."

The modern version of the P2P was launched by 60 hardy Tasmanians in 1995. Best-selling Sydney-based author Bryce Courtenay was part of the think-tank that revived the race and remains its patron. Courtenay, a seasoned road runner in earlier years, walked the event in 1999.

For those entrants with serious intent, it will be of interest that the women's record is held by 1998 Commonwealth Games marathon gold medallist Heather Turland at 1hr 39min 39sec. The fastest performance by a Tasmanian is 1hr 41min by former world orienteering champion Hanny Allston. The men's record is held by one-time Australian cross-country champion, Rob O'Donnell in 1hr 24min 39sec. An athletic Launceston couple, Jenny and Kim Gillard, have the unique distinction of having won the women's and men's races on the same day on two occasions. More information at:

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