

The Bridge to Bridge turns 30



By **Greg Yanda**

THE 30th Bridge to Bridge 3000 metre swim classic will be held at the Sydney International Regatta Centre on Sunday January 24.

The Penrith Swimming Club's prestigious open water event was originally held in the Nepean River but moved to the Regatta Centre because of the weeds in the river.

The record for the most swimmers in the event stands at 416, a figure which towers over the 25 who competed in the first ever Bridge to Bridge in 1980.

Alan Bentley was one of those 25 swimmers in the first Bridge to Bridge and the 42 year old has been back every year since.

Although Alan hasn't crossed the finish line first, he has come very close on several occasions.

"I've come second three times, third three times and fourth three times; I think I've finished every spot in the top ten except for first," Alan said.

"The closest I came was when I came second. I thought I had come third, there was a sprint finish down at the river and I

was on this guy's hip and he just out sprinted me. I thought that's alright I've come third; then I've got out and realised I'd actually come second and I could have won it if I got past him."

Penrith Swimming Club Bridge to Bridge

Committee Secretary, Lynette Crossley, thanked the community for its support during the last three decades.

"Over the years Panthers has assisted the Club in the running of the event, particularly in the years when the event was held on the

River and PC's were not common. They provided their computer and operators to process the results and certificates. This year Panthers are sponsoring the event and the club sincerely appreciates this sponsorship," Lynette said.

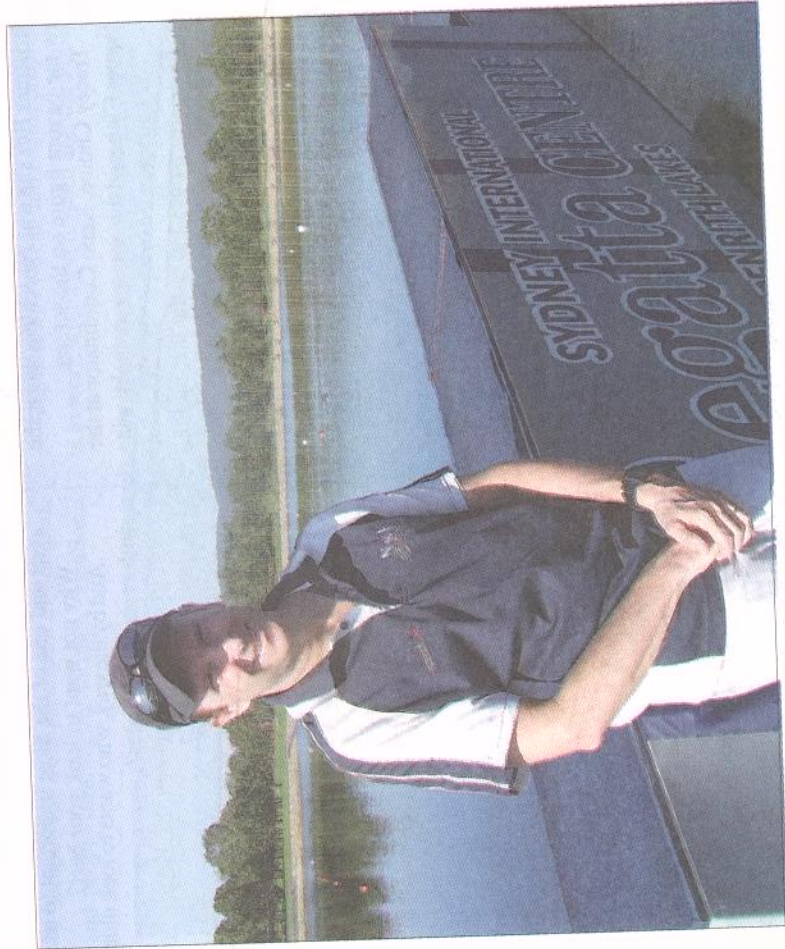
"Nepean Rescue Squad and the Penrith Red Cross VAD have always provided the Water Safety and First Aid assistance for our open water events and is now assisting in most open water events being held at the Regatta Centre including state championships."

Alan still plans to come back next year and maintain his title for the most swimmers in the event and admits his passion has come with sacrifices.

"In 1999 my wife and I went to America to have a white Christmas, the only thing was the Bridge to Bridge was on the second of January and midnight in New York's Time Square was 4pm January 1, so we came home early so I could go in the race, much to my wife's disgust." Alan recalls with a smile.

"While ever I've still got a pulse I'll be swimming it"

Information and entry details can be found on the Penrith Swimming Club's website. Penrithswim.com.au



Alan Bentley hasn't missed a Bridge to Bridge since he started 30 years ago