

# Penrith's Bridge-to-Bridge attracts 178 competitors



THE spirit was high and the cheers loud when the 30th annual Bridge-to-Bridge swim ploughed through the waters of the Sydney International Regatta Centre on Sunday.

A total of 178 competitors, aged 10 to 66, competed in the classic 3km open-water event.

Scott Jackson, 19, was the first swimmer to pass through the finish gate in an impressive time of 36:29:03. It was the third time the Sans Souci Sea Devils representative had competed in the race but his first race as overall champion. "It felt pretty good to win," he said. "Finishing first was a goal set by my coach and myself before the race so I'm very happy." The win wasn't too difficult for the Cronulla teenager who usually competes in 5km and 10km events. He said the Bridge-to-Bridge was good race preparation for his next competition, the Australian Open Open Water Championships, in Melbourne next month.

Alyce Chenery, 19, was the first female to finish, in a time of 41:05:80. Despite the accolade, the Ripples St Marys representative was pleased for a different reason. "I've had some tough races lately because I've been battling a few injuries so I was just happy to finish," she said. "My coach, Jenny Pilgrim, has been training us hard so it's great to get some good results." Alyce Chenery, too, will be in Melbourne next month to go stroke for stroke against Australia's best open-water swimmers.

Commemorating the event's 30th anniversary meant the day wasn't just about celebrating its young competitors. Bridge-to-Bridge veteran Alan Bentley, 42, of Nepean Swim Club, swam the race for his 30th consecutive year. Having never missed the event since its inauguration in the Nepean River in 1980, he received a special mention and a rousing cheer from the crowd.

Donna Fletcher, 38, of Penrith Swim Club, celebrated her 25th Bridge-to-Bridge race as the event's longest-serving female competitor. In addition to the 3km event, competitors were given the opportunity to continue on and complete a 3.8km or 5km course.

Helen Rubin, 57, was the oldest swimmer to conquer the 5km challenge.

It was also announced that the Bridge-to-Bridge organiser Lynette Crossley would retire from her duties after 24 years' service to the race. To mark the event's 30th anniversary, all placegetters received special commemorative trophies and each competitor went home with a ribbon and a certificate.

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