



Wednesday 24th January 2018

2018 SOUTHERN 80 SKI RACE – THE COMPETITORS

The Southern 80 is a water ski race on the Murray River, between Torrumbarry and Echuca, a distance of 80km by river – hence the name.

The race first started in 1964 as a marathon race, was run by the Victorian Water Ski Association till 1975, when the Moama Water Sports Club took over the running of the event.

Each competing boat tows two skiers, all starting the mighty race from Torrumbarry Weir. The skiers use skis of up to 2m in length and are towed on ropes up to 90m in length. The teams take off, one minute apart, travelling the 124 or more bends in the Murray of speeds up to 190kmph.

The event caters for competitors across a range of age classes and skiing ability. From our youngest skier at seven years of age, Finlay Cox, who is skiing in his second Southern 80, to our oldest skier John McKenzie, skiing in the 60mph class.

There are a range of speed classes, which are very popular to family teams and teams with smaller budget – these are the 60mph and 70mph classes – with some 25-30 teams in each of these classes racing to win the trophies for the class.

There is also a class for our disabled skiers, which allows them to compete amongst themselves over the 20 km short course. This year there are seven entries with a range of disabilities including: dead arm, deafness, blindness and damage to the legs. Last year Ben Pettingill became the first blind skier in the race's long history. His journey, which changed his life overnight at the age of 16, was showcased on National TV, in the show – Same Time Next Year. Ben's story has encouraged another young blind skier – Luke Johnson to tackle his own Southern 80 challenge. Luke was born with Cone Dystrophy - a degenerative inherited eye condition and nystagmus - and was diagnosed as legally blind last year. With support and motivation from Ben, Luke is working towards his goal of skiing in the Southern 80. Ben, himself will be tackling the whole 80km course this year in the 60mph class.

There are a range of classes to suit a range of boats and money abilities and a number of engine classes, which skiers compete in based on the boats engine capabilities; from the 6 Litre, 8 Litre inboard engine classes. The SMOC (Standard Motor Open Cockpit) and MOC (Modified Open Cockpit) outboard classes, to the supercharged, turbo, **leg** boats of the Superclass class.

The elite class of the event is the Superclass, with the 2018 field of six boats tussling it out for the overall bragging rights – *“to say they won the Southern 80”*. These teams contain members of the victorious Australian team, which took the clean sweep at the World Titles in Seattle in September 2017.

The winding bends of the Murray river in Echuca / Moama, provide a challenge for boat drivers, and skiers alike. For many competitors it is the opportunity to do their best time, which sees them coming back year after to year to tackle the Mighty Murray in the Southern 80.

One thing they all have in common, is that they want to cross the finish line at Victoria Park, Echuca, so that they can say that they competed in the Southern 80. The best place to see all the action is the finish line and tickets can be pre-purchased online at www.southern80.com.au or at the gate on the weekend. Entry is \$35 for a weekend pass or \$25 per day. Children under 15 are free. Plenty of food and drinks are available at the finish line. A Giant screen will be showing all the action of the event at the Finish Line with live crosses to the Start Lines on both Saturday and Sunday.

"IT'S ALL HAPPENING AT THE FINISH LINE"

For further information, please contact:

Julie Golledge Moama Water Sports Clubph: 0418147227 or
webmaster@southern80.com.au



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