

SWANBOURNE RISES AGAIN

Article by Tony Morgan, photos by Peter Taylor¹

How sad it was when at the completion of the February, 2004 Swanbourne Free Beach Olympics, it seemed that the 22nd running of this great event would be the last. Bruce Grieve, the “Elder Statesman” of the games had gone into semi-retirement after the 21st Olympiad, and the issue of public liability meant that the organising committee was at risk should anything go wrong. Some on the beach even said “It’s just an excuse for the Nudist Clubs to come to the beach to attract new members.” So that was that.

The original “Beach Olympics” was dead, Rest In Peace! The body was buried and only a few mourners attended, musing over the enthusiasm and fun we all enjoyed since 1983. The equipment was taken up to Sunseekers and stored away in a dark locked room, possibly never again to see the light of day.

Three long years went by, and still no sign of life. One or two thought “Wouldn’t it be nice...” and the Committee at Phoenix Nudist Club even said they would give it a go ... in 2009. And then, in early December 2007, a phone call from Bruce. “It’s on again! I’ve found two ladies to run it. Can we have a meeting?” And so it was that Jen, Teresa, Bob, Bruce & Tony sat down on a warm December evening to enjoy a glass of wine and, like Frankenstein, work out how to revive the corpse.

Where was all the gear? Was it still useable? What about Public Liability Insurance? Did we need to have registration for working with children? Could we find a reliable generator that wouldn’t die on us like the last time in 2004? And a thousand other questions. The enthusiasm from the two new recruits (Jen & Teresa) was infectious, with lots of “new” ideas. “Nope, we tried that and it was too heavy to carry on to the beach ” or “Yes we did that and it was so much work we never did it again” was the reply to some of the proposals from Guru Bruce. So we applied the KISS principle, agreed on a running order, and handed out the homework.

We found the gear, the bins needed to be replaced but otherwise all was in order. The FBA came to the rescue with public liability insurance cover (and \$200 sponsorship – thank you), and no we didn’t need to be registered for a one-day event where children were involved. The generator would work this time, guaranteed! Only two problems - Cookie, our resident nude MC & DJ, was going to be in Adelaide, so Bruce volunteered to take over the microphone for the day. The second problem turned out to be a blessing in disguise, but we didn’t know it at the time.

Someone at the meeting (who shall remain anonymous as long as I receive the case of wine, Bruce) gave us the bad news “Nedlands Council now controls North Swanbourne beach.” No problem, but Nedlands requires organisers of any public event to apply for permission 3 months before the date of the event. A first for the Olympics as previously it was State land with no regulation. After some discussion it was agreed that an application would be made under the auspices of the FBA, and the North Swanbourne Beach Users Association, and we would just have to hope that Nedlands would process it quickly. We frantically filled out the form, got the supporting documentation, signed it and e-mailed it to the council.

Weeks went by, and we heard nothing. Telephone calls and e-mails went unanswered. Was everyone still on Christmas leave? Was the application sitting gathering dust in some forgotten in-tray? Should we go ahead anyway? What would Council do if we did?

And then a Miracle! No we still hadn’t received notification from Council, and months later we still have not heard anything. But wait, what is it that stands in the sand at the southern end of the beach? A proud new Nedlands sign that says “**Clothing Option Beach!**” Yahoooooo! People rang and said there was a sign on the beach, but we didn’t believe it. We had to see it with our own eyes. We took cameras down to record it, just in case it disappeared the next day!



The Sign!

Of course Bruce got it all wrong. Nedlands does not control North Swanbourne beach, however it does control Swanbourne Beach to the south. North Swanbourne remains State land, although the State Government would be very happy to hand responsibility over to Council. So we didn't need to make an application anyway, bugger! All that work and worry and e-mails and telephone calls ... were all worth it! Nedlands has at last acknowledged what has been happening since before the Second World War, people have been skinny dipping at North Swanbourne.

And so, on the fourth (yes fourth, not the traditional third) Sunday in February 2008, the 23rd North Swanbourne Free Beach Olympics arose from the waves, a bit frazzled around the edges, but she lives again!

The arrival of the torchbearers, swathed in their white togas and holding aloft a lighted torch, marked the opening of the games. Jonathon and Belinda were the chosen couple, representing the next generation of beach goers and smiling broadly as they came running across the sand.



Jon & Blinda Open the Event

There are ten events on the programme, with an emphasis on fun not fitness or physique, and everyone is encouraged to join in. The first is a simple game of catch between two members of a team, starts easy as they are a metre apart but then they step back further and further until we have a winner. The winner being the one without egg on their face, or any other body part, yep, they throw eggs, and it's the gentle art of catching without crushing that earns the medals. And medals there are in plenty as each event has a gold, silver and bronze, provided again this year by Leo Enright. There were also prizes of Crumpler bags.



A Big Wave

The most arduous event comes next, the "Swim around the Buoy", adults only this time as it's a fair distance out in open water and there's not a lifeboat in sight! We did see a helicopter overhead though, Heliwest, one of the sponsors.

"Tutti Frutti" leaves no one guessing the main ingredient, supplied by Town and Country Fruit and Veg, which gets the creative juices flowing for the sand sculpting challenge which came next.

Another avenue for the creative souls is the body painting competition which took place over the lunch break. The Swanny Reef Café bike arrived just in time with hot dogs, pies, sandwiches and drinks to feed the hungry hordes.



"Best Bums"

The event that tempted most entrants was the "best bum contest", also attracting a large crowd of enthusiastic judges. Entrants stood in line under the banner covering their backs so only bums and legs are on display. The numbers written on the banner give the audience the chance to shout out their chosen favourites but the judges were not easily swayed. It took three heats to find the winners!!



"Paintings"

The final event of the day was the Tug of War, rippling muscles and grim determination saw the north side victorious.

So that was that for another year, just remains to say a huge thankyou to all the sponsors, the good sports, winners and grinners for another great day. Remember to make a note for next year, third Sunday in February, Swanbourne, Western Australia.....the 24th Olympiad.



Some of the Competitors

1. Parts of this report appeared in an article in *The Australian Naturist* (TAN #39) under the title "Swanbourne Reborn" by Amanda Taylor, May 2008.