

OACT ANNUAL AWARDS

I Services to Coaching

Mark Gregson

For the last two years Mark has been coaching a group of high school and older primary school students in the Blue Lightning program. In 2019 this involved training on Wednesday afternoons in winter, when Mark developed a series of awesome exercises for the kids. In 2019 Mark attended the Coaching course run by Fredo and Sara, and he then used this knowledge with the 2019 program. In 2020, due to the COVID lockdown, the winter program moved to virtual exercises set for each weekend and again Mark (tag teaming with his fellow BL coaches) prepared a series of fun exercises that could be done without physically meeting.

Mark has a real passion for finding ways to engage the kids, using his years of experience. Mark shows that good coaches are an evolution of the good coaching they themselves have received. He often reflects on the ways he was coached and uses that in the way he coaches now, meaning that in the future the kids he coaches now will do the same when it is their turn.

Mark can talk with the expert kids and the novices as well. The expert kids know he has the knowledge and experience they need to improve, but the novice kids never feel overwhelmed when he trains them. Mark is always approachable and the kids know that he is working for their development but also their fun and enjoyment.

II Jim Sawkins Award for Event Management

Tate Needham

The ACT Sprint series, which more than 90 of us regularly enjoy, is the initiative of Tate Needham and was brought to OACT late in 2019. It was deceptively simple idea: a number of short and sharp Sunday morning sprints, bridging the main Twilight and Classic series; a one for all course, over and done with in just an hour or two, over ten weeks! How attractive a proposition that was.

But something so simple, of course, comes only with a huge amount of careful planning. Each event features:

- *Probably a new, or rarely-used map – lots of school campuses, local bushlands, and business precincts*
- *Only one course suitable for all ages and abilities; 30 minutes to an hour start window, and a queuing start; pre-enter with no mucking around at Rego.*
- *Blind starts; pick up your map and go*
- *Small control flags – to make them a little less easily spotted*
- *Creative and clever course-setting; often two variations, butterfly loops, mini-maps within a map; two-sided maps; changes of scale, even an occasional maze or two!*
- *Live results available as each runner finishes*
- *And, not the least... SI Air options – perfect for these COVID times. In fact much of the model seemed made for the unexpected year that we have had. The Sprint Series' streamlined minimal contact format became almost a baseline prototype for the COVID-safe Return to Play plan that OACT has introduced in the past few months.*

The success of that first series is well evident, with Series 2 now nearing its end and Series 3 ready to start in the New Year.

Thank you, Tate, for instigating and promoting this initiative; it seems destined to become a permanent fixture on the annual OACT calendar.