



## 'Welcome to Tasmania'

The 'Two Heads' Tasmanian Disc Golf Open  
Poimena Reserve, Austin's Ferry Tasmania January 16-17 2010

As far putts go, this one was this was fairly simple. I was about six meters out, level with the basket and no wind. But we all know that there is simple, and then there's tournament-simple right?

It was my first putt in the Two Heads Disc Golf open in Tasmania and instead of the usual smooth flick I gave it a tense little stiff-armed jab. The disc flew high and straight into that 'chastity belt' of steel that rings the top of some baskets, hit the ground and rolled around on its rim like a coin on a table. Then end-over-end it flipped, gradually gathering momentum to run in a straight line - like a hub cap coming off a Ford on the freeway. Forty metres down the hill. Before coming to rest against the base of a tree.

I stood there and stared at it for a few seconds; still in denial about the extra two shots I'd need to complete the hole.

A dry voice cackled from somewhere behind me "Welcome to Tasmania mate, ha ha ha".

The Perth boys who had played Poimena reserve before had been telling me nasty bed-time stories all week so I knew that I was in for something different in my first interstate tournament;

and as the plane descended past the steep green slopes Mt Wellington into Hobart Airport on Thursday afternoon. I grasped straight away that disc golf in Tassie

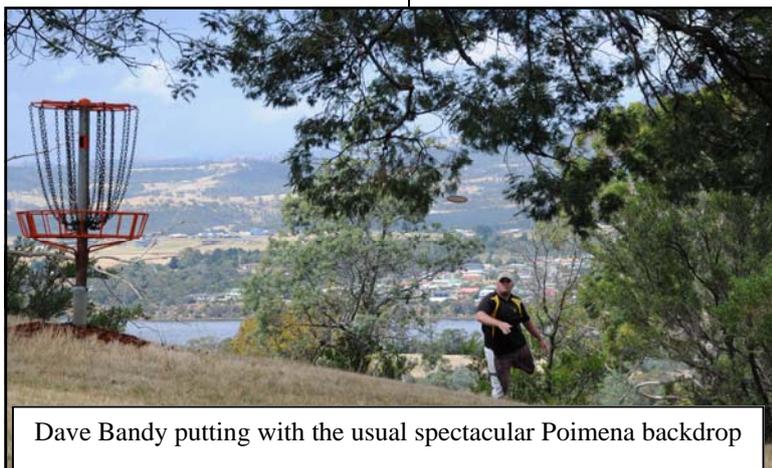
was going to include another dimension - the third one. Up and down that is.

Compared to our sandy soil suburbs in Perth, the place is very, very hilly. It's one of the things I love about our sport - it's played in a huge range of conditions and terrain and in places that would have most ball golfers giving up and driving their buggies back to the clubhouse.

Four of us flew over from Perth: the Bandy brothers - Dave and Corey, Chris Finn and myself. Arriving two days before the tournament is the way to go if your schedule allows it because it gives time to recover from the stiffness of sitting in a plane for five hours, a chance to catch up on some sleep and to practice on the course.

Dave Bandy had caught the plane straight off night shift so he wasn't fully awake when we decided to play catch with a mid-range around the car park while we waited for Chris's plane to land. He snapped the jaws shut on a crocodile-catch a tiny bit late and my 178g mako slammed straight into his crown jewels. I had thrown from behind a hire car and was slightly obscured and hadn't seen it happen. When I couldn't see

Dave's head anymore I walked around to see him doubled over and looking sick. Being hit hard in the goolies is a potentially serious injury after all, but something about the pure slapstick of it get's no



Dave Bandy putting with the usual spectacular Poimena backdrop



Corey putting, looking as much at the top of the basket than the chains

sympathy from your mates. The big fella just crouched there, bent over like a coat hanger, trying to breathe while we couldn't stop laughing. 'The weekend has barely started and I've got my first highlight' I thought.

Harvey Yarnall wasn't just kind enough to put us up in his beautiful New Town house all weekend; he also took the Friday off work to give us all a practice round. It was on this Friday afternoon that the other aspect of playing on a hilly course became apparent – fitness. Its one thing to throw a straight drive but quite another to throw one with legs that are still quivering from the steep climb you've just done to get to the tee-pad. After a few hours of playing the 18 hole course and retrieving three or four practise discs on each hole the WA boys all looked at each other with an expression that said 'we are in for a long weekend'. 'We'll be going home with thousand yard stares' Corey said.

I'm still a newcomer to the sport so for me disc golf is mostly about the sheer aesthetic pleasure of watching the disc fly. At Poimena you get these beautiful moments in spades. On holes 1, 5

and 12, launch your disc off the side of the hill watch it hang in space for a while then descend over the town of Austin's Ferry and the deep blue Derwent River before falling back to earth. On holes six and seven, throw an anhyzer than follows the curve of the hill around, and then pray that it doesn't fade too far down the slope, then wish you had a better forehand. On 11, 10, 17 and 18 you shoot across a deep valley, again with the challenge of trying to hit a point in three dimensional space, without the reference of the ground to tell you if the shot has been too low or high. It's a course that tests everything you've got: range of shots, disc selection, mental strength and physical fitness. I loved it.

### Day 1

The big talking point was wether Leigh Bird would attend. New ADG president Chris Finn had rung him from Harvey's place the night before and failed to persuade him to turn up. But Leigh's wife had overheard the conversation and pulled rank, instructing him to get down to Hobart. When we piled out into the car park on Saturday morning it was like a new gunslinger had rode into town.

'Is that Leigh's car?'

'I dunno, yeah I think so, maybe he's turned up after all'

I think a few people mentally put themselves one spot further down in the rankings when they realised it was him.

Otherwise a small but keen crew had made it to the tournament. Apart from the four 'sand diggers' as Harvey calls us (it's sandgroppers mate),



Leigh Bird lets a drive go on hole 5

Greg Bowers, 'Kiwi' Steve Cunningham, Ben Ayres and Dave Barklay had made the trip down from Victoria. So yeah, WA, Victoria and Tasmania, the only states in Australia that actually matter, were all represented.



The crew, outside Australia's first disc golf club house

whippy action reminds me of a teenager, not someone in their early fifties, but that disc goes out with a fearsome crack and he's got just as much distance as anyone – all

Before play got under way there was a small ceremony to celebrate the opening of Australia's first disc golf clubhouse. Harvey and Richard had enquired with the local council about the use of an abandoned shed on the reserve and been given the green light to inhabit it. Harvey had put us WA boys to work on the Friday afternoon, cleaning the area around the shed and building a table, making the most of Chris Finn's renovation and carpentry experience. It was a heart warming example of how our little community pulls together.

The standard of play was high right from the start. Leigh shot 56 to share the lead with Dave Bandy and Harvey one stroke behind after the first round of eighteen on the long tees. A few other contenders like Chris Finn and Corey Bandy had slower starts in the morning but soon got their rhythm by the afternoon round on the short tees, sharing equal best scores with Leigh who had a 52.

I have thought, right from first day I played, that this sport is one you learn in layers like a martial art. Building a foundation movement and then adding to it over time. If that's the case then Leigh Bird must be one of our grand masters. Unlike the six-footer with big shoulders that seems to be coming off the assembly line in Perth at the moment, he's built more like a jockey; and rather than lug around a bag with 20 plus discs he totes a small shoulder bag that looks hand stitched and mustn't hold more than a half-dozen battered and scratched-up discs. His bouncy,

achieved through a perfect summation of forces rather than brute power. His unique nose-diving putting style, designed to prevent the sort of nightmares I faced on my first hole, was slightly off in the first round and he missed some sitters, as did Dave Bandy and Chris Finn; but it was his almost impeccable approach game that gave him the edge on the field.

At the end of Day 1 Leigh was on 108, with a three stroke lead over the quartet of Richard, Dave, Chris and Harvey on 111 and Corey one stroke back on 112. Greg Bowers had a four stroke lead on Ben Ayres with his 122 in the advanced and yours truly was leading the masters on 114 from Kiwi on 126.

A highlight for me on day one was watching Richard do his little Benny Hill shuffle to celebrate each birdie (and there were a few of those). As a disc golfer who is yet to develop a birdie celebration that I feel best represents me as a person; I could only but look on in envy.

I was personally involved in another highlight,



Dave Bandy prepares to drive on 5

my disc, on the way to a good landing on hole 17, passed through a fork in the trunk of a gum tree that was only just wide enough to fit the disc. Not that special you say? Just one of those freaky things that happens from time to time? That would be the case except for the fact that Leigh's drive did exactly the same thing about twenty minutes later with a roughly calculated probability of about four million to one.

The player's party on Saturday night was at Richard's place up in the hills behind Hobart. Richard's 'men's retreat' in one of his back sheds, equipped with ping pong table, was the venue and a magnificent feast of wallaby and fresh smoked salmon was laid out for the crew. I enjoyed hearing a few people's back-stories away from disc golf: learning about Chris Finn's travels, Pete Anderson's ceramic art and Eli Marshal's PHD work on a project that will probably revolutionise the gold mining industry. The hour got late and the stories got wilder, but when Corey started dancing to Robbie Williams we knew it was time to call it a night.

## Day Two

Sunday was cooler, with the threat of rain later in the day. We played 12 holes, alternating short and long tees in the morning and then another 18 holes on the short tees after a short lunch. As is normal in two-day tournaments, the elite players start to distance themselves from the pack on the second morning. The Bandy boys shot 36's, Chris Finn and Harvey 37's and Richard a 38. They



Eli Marshal and Steve 'Kiwi' Cunningham

would all have been pleased with their rounds except for the fact that Leigh increased his lead some more, shooting a 35. And someone must have murdered Greg Bowers overnight, assumed his identity and

scorched around in 37 to end the contest in advanced division with one round to go – it was a sharp turnaround in form from his day before.

The highlight of the morning was Harvey's drive on hole 2, which rattled around in the chains, set up camp, had a cup of tea and then almost as an afterthought spat back out onto the ground again. It was one of a couple of near aces for the day. To rub salt into the wound for Harvey, the chains had spat his disc a metre or so away from the basket, as opposed to my approach the day before which had skidded up to the pole. Morally, Harvey deserved the 'nearest to pin' trophy but he'd have prize that commemorative mouse pad of glory from my cold dead hand.

At lunch Harvey and Richard, based on that time honoured maxim that too much disc golf is barely enough, decided to extend the last round to 18 holes, playing off the short tees just to give everyone maximum value for money. In the last round of regular play, Richard and Corey both stepped-up when it mattered, shooting 51 and 49 respectively. Harvey, Dave and Chris all slipped back with 54's and 55's. But again, Leigh won the round, as he had all weekend, with a 48. This, at 191 for the weekend so far, gave him a 6 stroke lead on Corey and 9 and 10 on the rest. The final four was looking like a formality.

Chris Finn and Dave Bandy had finished the



Richard Sampson sorting out the leader board

weekend equal on 202 so they played off for the last place in the final four. Chris's approach landed closer the basket than Dave's, who was more than thirty metres out. Dave quite wisely decided to make Chris putt for the win by going conservative and laying-up at the base of the bas-



Leigh leads the final four march

ket. Chris could have laid-up too and forced another playoff hole. But he decided to go for it. The putt was agonisingly close, but hit the rim of the basket and did the downhill death roll that ended his tournament. He went down like a warrior though – with his last desperate long distance putt also only missing by the width of a finger.

So the final four was Leigh, Corey, Richard and Dave. As they stood on the teepad to play the first of 6 long guerrilla holes, the weather that had been pouring over the rim of Mt Wellington like water out of a bucket all afternoon finally reached us and it rained heavily, then hailed and then, believe it or not, it snowed lightly; Surreal.

We took a short break to let the worse of the weather pass over and continued. It was my first chance to watch Leigh for the weekend and what stood out was his certainty. Aided no-doubt by the familiarity with his home course he seemed to spend very little time deciding what shot to play. Memorable for me was a long backhand roller on the first hole and a huge hyzered drive on the

fourth. Leigh dominated the final round with an 18 so the real interest was in the race for second and to contemplate the alternate reality of who would have won if Leigh's mis-sus hadn't have pulled rank. It was

Richard who stepped up with an excellent 20 with the bandy boys dropping away; Dave's 24 not enough to reel in big brother Corey.

So Leigh was crowned Two heads champion for 2010. With Richard 2<sup>nd</sup>, Corey 3<sup>rd</sup> and Dave 4<sup>th</sup>. Greg Bowers, after a second day 91 that was on a par with the open players, easily won the advanced after his arch rival and good mate Ben Ayres blew out on the second morning. Heidi Richardson won the ladies from Katie Wright. I had the pleasure of playing with Heidi in the afternoon rounds and she's seriously good. If she ever makes it to the mainland for a tournament she'll be a force to be reckoned with in the ladies division in all tournaments.

Your truly took out the masters from Steve 'Kiwi' Cunningham. I also got to play with Steve in the afternoon and he's a great bloke. Although the 'spirit of the game' prize was given to Greg Bowers for his kind temperament and generosity with his chiropractic skills all weekend. I reckon it could just as easily have gone to Steve for his effort in hauling that bung knee up and down the hills for two days.

So my conclusion after two days of absorbing, taxing disc golf is that there are two kinds of disc golfers out there: those who have played the Two Heads open and those that haven't. It's the Hawaii Ironman of our sport in Australia. Make sure you don't miss it next year.

Words and pictures - Kingsley Flett



Richard and Harvey lining up a shot in the final round

# 2010 Two Heads

## Final Scorecard

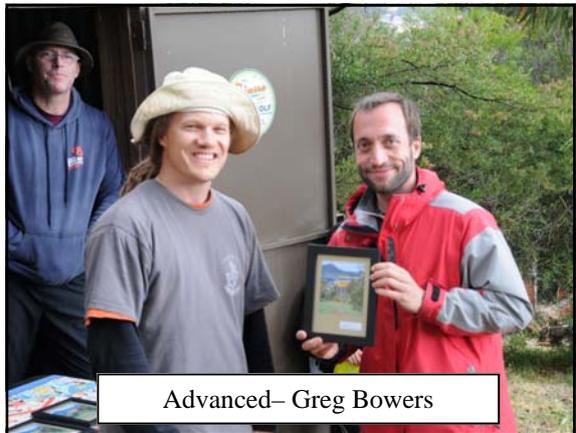
Poimena Reserve  
Austins Ferry, Tasmania, Australia  
16-17 January

					18 Red Tees	18 Blue Tees	12 Even Blue	18 Blue Tees	6 Final		
			PDGA #	Rd 1	Rd 2	RD 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Totals		
MPO	1st	LEIGH	BIRD		56	52	35	48	18	209	\$85.00
MPO	2nd	RICHARD	SAMPSON	8807	58	53	38	51	20	220	\$55.00
MPO	3rd	COREY	BANDY	8535	60	52	36	49	26	223	\$35.00
MPO	4th	DAVE	BANDY	8534	56	55	36	55	24	226	
MPO	5th	CHRIS	FINN	37970	59	52	37	54		202	
MPO	6th	HARVEY	YARNALL	34607	57	54	37	55		203	
MM1	7th	KINGSLEY	FLETT		58	56	40	57		211	
MA1	8th	GREG	BOWERS	37971	65	57	37	54		213	
MM1	9th	STEVE	CUNNINGHAM		64	62	41	62		229	
MA1	10th	BEN	AYRES	8554	70	56	41	63		230	
MA2	11th	DAVE	BARCLAY		71	62	39	61		233	
FW1	12th	HEIDI	RICHARDSON		82	72	51	68		273	
MA2	13th	PETER	ANDERSON		85	79	49	69		282	
MA2	14th	ELI	MARSHALL		97	75	51	75		298	
FW2	15th	RACHEL	ANDERSON		999	999	59	87		DNF	
FW1	16th	KATIE	WRIGHT		87	999	999	999		DNF	

### The winners



Open - Leigh Bird



Advanced- Greg Bowers



Ladies - Heidi Richardson



Masters - some bloke in a funny hat