

We run off with crown

Bradley Green

GEELONG can boast claims to having the best distance runners in the state after claiming this year's Athletics Victoria Division One men's premiership.

The Geelong Region Cross Country team stormed home in the last four rounds to snatch the trophy from reigning premiers Glenhuntly, sealing its win by taking out the final event of the season the Tan Relay around the Kings Domain in Melbourne on Saturday.

Geelong topped the ladder on 119 points, five clear of Glenhuntly to win its second AV XCR premiership.

The Geelong team of Scott Rantall, Brenton Rowe, Jason Woolhouse, Mark Fountain, Mark Tucker and David Carver won the event by a combined total of three minutes and 19 seconds and recorded the fastest ever time of 67 minutes and 41 seconds in the race's six-year history, breaking the previous best by 41 seconds.

It was fitting that Carver - who celebrated his birthday recently by winning his first half-marathon at Burnley - anchored the relay

team. Carver, who ran 11.46 for the 3.82km in his leg of Saturday's relay, was the only Geelong runner in the team to score points in all 10 races of the season.

Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Mark Fountain ran the day's fastest time of 10.53 in another encouraging sign for his comeback from a chronic achilles injury since the 2006 Games in Melbourne.

Nine teams competed for Geelong on Saturday with its Open Women team recording its best ever finish in the series - runners up to Glenhuntly - to end the season in fifth place overall.

It was the team's second podium finish of the season with Cathryn Hoare called in as a late replacement for the injured Georgie Clarke to join Kristen Wyatt, Coreena Cleland and Eliza Curnow.

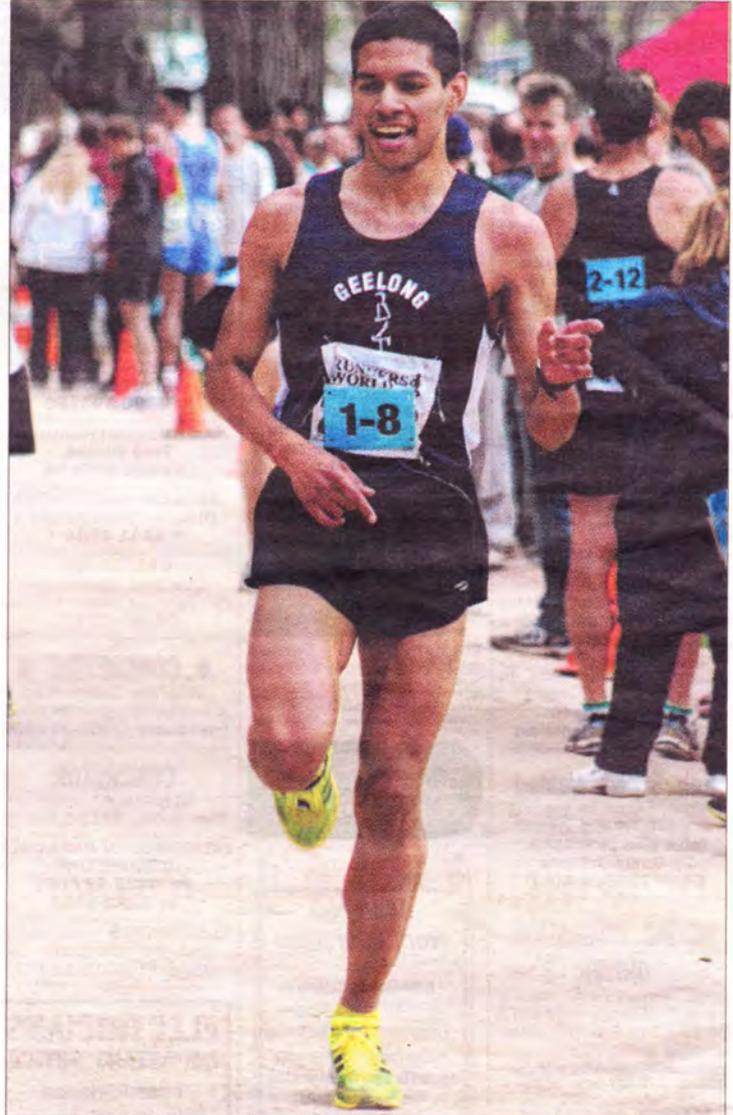
In other divisions, Geelong's under 14 boy's were also crowned premiers and the under 16 girl's team finished runners up overall after scoring a podium finish on Saturday.

The over 40 men's side ended its season in style by winning a bronze medal.



CHAMPIONS: The triumphant 2010 Geelong region team.

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RUNNING MAN: Geelong runner David Carver crosses the finish line.