

Hundreds turn out for fun occasion at Ekiden

Even Thor's mighty hammer could not dampen the mood amongst 1200 runners, walkers — and several members of the undead — taking part in the 11th Hi-Tec Rotorua Ekiden last weekend.

Heavy winds and rain met participants on race morning, but brightened to sunshine with occasional showers as team after team, many taking part in the self-appointed "Fancy Dress World Champs" bounded down the finish line on Rotorua Village Green, arm in arm, to receive their specially minted finisher medal.

New race owner, Running Events, was delighted with the 190 teams entered for the annual Ekiden, a six-person relay around Rotorua's famous marathon course, which represents a near 50 per cent increase on 2012.

"It's just a really great day out with your mates," says race director Rob Docherty.

"With the unique atmosphere around the event, the achievable distances and the wonderful camaraderie, we see this great event continuing to build to be one of the biggest team events in the country. We won't rest until it is the Wellington 7s of running."

In the annual arm-wrestle between the secondary schools teams and running clubs, it was once again Wanganui Collegiate Boys who took line honours as the first finishers in a time of 2hr 44min 13sec. Wanganui Collegiate also took line honours in the female teams with the girls coming home in 3:22:32.

The scattered sunshine throughout the afternoon was a contrast to the start of the day.



FUN TIMES: The Dead Sexy team was one of 190 teams who took part in the weekend's Hi-Tec Rotorua Ekiden.

SUPPLIED

The 40 walking teams set off at 8am in squally rain — practically an Indian summer compared to the hailstones which rained down on the 150 running teams an hour later. The walk was eventually won by Team "Mates Through Walking" in 4:30:14 with mixed team "Fast & Furious!" home seven minutes later. It was over 40 minutes before the slightly more relaxed "Taupo Waddlers" won the female walk division.

All of this was a pre-cursor for the main event, however. Running Events has bestowed the self-appointed title of Fancy Dress World Champs for dress-up teams. The first team to finish in full fancy dress were to be crowned 2013 Fancy Dress World

Champions and that honour fell to the SBW's team, home in an extraordinary time of 3:05 and sixth place overall.

The SBW's were no match for the "Average Joes" team, who swept the prize for best fancy dress with their superb ensemble of Peter Pan, Tinkerbell and Friends. In all, 35 of the 190 teams took part in the Fancy Dress World Champs, meaning over 200 people spent their Saturday afternoon running around Lake Rotorua in crazy costumes.

The Hi-Tec Rotorua Ekiden will next be held on October 11, 2014.

■ For more information on the event, see www.ekiden.co.nz or [facebook.com/runningevents](https://www.facebook.com/runningevents).