

Sydney, 19 Sep 2007

What a course.

18 brave people took the first step in their recovery by walking through the door of the YWCA on the evening of the 19th of September. You could see the fear and anxiety in their faces as you approached them and introduced yourself.

The first day videos, like always, were the most difficult event of the evening, but with all that over, Geoff Johnston the RD made everyone at ease by giving them a brief explanation of the course.

On Thursday, the group was separated. The returning grads had to prove to the course instructor, Robert Lucas and 2 able helpers, Justin Vietz and Joe O'Hanlon, that they were capable of sitting on the inside line. They were drilled in the checklist, the laws and the directions.

In the meantime, the new students were being instructed in the basics of the course by Geoff Johnston and Scott Harper. Everyone was together again by 11 o'clock. By 1 o'clock, students were saying their names with confidence.

Friday - more drilling of the check list and laws. That afternoon, the grads took the new students out to show them how to make contacts. Reporting back by the new grads went smoothly with all grads making 100 contacts or more. We had some split sessions - "Letting your Feelings show" taken by Wendy O'Hagan and "Having Fun" taken by Adam West. These are always attended well. Geoff and Robert took 5 experienced grads who wanted to expand their comfort zone even further, by becoming coaches and course instructor interns.

Saturday - the students were a bit apprehensive about the up and coming speeches at Darling Harbour, but after a dose of the Harrison workshops and just letting go, all that apprehension was gone. Public speaking at Darling Harbour - what a beautiful backdrop with all the boats and water behind us and the bars and cafes in front of us. With loads of people listening, we could do no wrong and it was proved with the eagerness of all the students getting up and delivering great speeches. The returning grads had a turn after the students. As always, you have to give them a time limit. Sometimes I think we have created talking monsters.

The grads reported back on the students. Everything was positive with stories of what the students had achieved. Things they never thought they would ever do in a life time. They were all on cloud nine. The results of the contacts amazed me as one student made a total of 130. In all, a total of 880 contacts were made giving an average of 72 each.

Back to the hard work, drilling with good technique. We had some more split sessions - one taken by Geoff Johnston and the others taken by Ricky Nelson and Justin Vietz.

Sunday - more drilling, reading out loud and of course the final speeches. Lots of the relatives and friends attend these to hear their loved ones speaking in front of a large crowd.

This was a great course and like every course, friendships were made and 18 more people joined the ever-expanding McGuire family.

A special thanks to Mark Spiers for coming over from England to challenge his speech. He did a great job on the stairway to eloquence. He made a lot of friends and hopes to return in the near future. He will always be welcome to do so. Thanks to Scott Harper, my partner in crime, and always a special thanks to Geoff Johnston. Without him, the programme would not be the same.

Robert Lucas