

Blind Athlete Attempting Another First

Wellington's Fine Signs Crazyman has been the regions premier multisport race since 1991. But after almost three decades it will feature another first this year as ground breaking endurance athlete, Neelusha Jennings, attempts to be the first blind person to finish the gruelling 53k event.

More than 300 endurance junkies will line up in Lower Hutt on Sunday 7th May for the 27th running of Fine Signs Crazyman. Established in 1991, the kayak, mountain bike and run is one of New Zealand's longest running multisport events. Past winners read like a who's-who of multisport: world champions such as Richard Ussher, Jill Westenra, Gordon Walker, Emily Miazga, Elina Ussher, Kristina Anglem, Alex Stewart, Steve Gurney and Jesse Simson have all won the Crazyman.

Jennings will attempt to be the first legally blind finisher of the iconic Lower Hutt event. The Wellingtonian lost 70% of her sight at age 16 after waking up from a brain injury that had put her into a coma. But she has not let that limit her life and has finished other iconic events such as the Coast to Coast.

The 32-year-old takes on such challenges to highlight that with support, people with physical challenges can set big goals for themselves. At the Fine Signs Crazyman she will race in the adventure category, where two people race the full distance together in two-person kayaks, tandem mountain bikes and then run together. To ensure she is fully supported Jennings will race with former Crazyman winner James Coubrough in the kayak, Peter Colvin in the mountain bike tandem and Will bell on the run. To finish the race she must beat the 5pm cut-off time at the Petone Beach finish line.

Jennings has trained on sections of the Crazyman course, including doing most of the run section with defending champion Daniel Jones as her guide. But stringing the entire 53k together in one day remains an unknown and she thinks it will be the final 13k trail run that will be toughest for her.

"I am pretty sure this is achievable with the awesome team I have supporting me," she says. "Even though I have to do things a bit differently due to my disability, I am able to take part with everyone else! I really think I am limitless with support!"

The 27th Hutt City Crazyman starts at 8:00am on Sunday 7th May at Days Bays in Eastbourne. For further details visit www.crazyman.kiwi or Ph: 0275 244 821.