

Crazy New Talent Shines at Crazyman

Since 1991, the Hutt City Crazyman has been a bloody ground for many of the sports stars. Past Crazyman winners such as Richard Ussher, Emily Miazga, Gordon Walker, Elina Ussher, Nathan Fa'avae, Kristina Anglem, Steve Gurney and Jill Westenra all went on to win world titles. This year's winner illustrated the potential to do the same.

Since his teens, Daniel Jones has shown an affinity for adventure. From a precociously talented sporting family (his father won the Coast to Coast in 1996 and a brother has won national mountain bike titles) Daniel was winning mountain running races outright when still at high school. But since moving to Wellington he's taken more to multisport and adventure racing with wins in the region's two biggest races.

A month ago he won the Porirua Grand Traverse and this weekend he claimed Wellington's longest running race, the Hutt City Crazyman. In between he was racing in China.

Jones illustrated his talent, but also determination today to overcome a series of punctures. He trailed Wanganui's Aaron Cox out of the 13k kayak from Days Bay across Wellington harbour to Petone, but took the lead on the 28k mountain bike section through Belmont Regional Park, only to lose it after a run of punctures.

The new leader going into the final 13k trail run down Korokoro Stream was another up and coming athlete in Nelson's Cameron Jones (no relation). But namesake Daniel proved too fleet of foot to romp back through the field for the win in 3hrs 41min 17secs.

The other Jones finished five minutes later, clearly pleased to make the open podium among more experienced campaigners. Aaron Cox held on for third and also the veteran honours.

In fine, mild conditions, more than 300 participants from as far afield as Dunedin and Auckland turned out for the 26th Hutt City Crazyman.

Finnish-born multisport star, Elina Ussher, has become a Crazyman regular. Racing on her birthday, the three-time Coast to Coast champion celebrated her 40th with her sixth Crazyman titles in 11 years. Although it was anything but a gift.

Ussher has several up and comers snapping at her heels throughout the opening kayak, with 23-year-old local Lizzy Bunckenberg a few seconds ahead and Alexandra's Fiona Dowling and Wellington's Kris Jarvis a few seconds behind.

Ussher wasted no time in hitting the front on the mountain bike. Bunckenberg stayed within 30secs for the first 10k only to have the favourite pull away on the steep 5k climb up to Boulder Hill. Behind her Dowling caught Bunckenberg to set the stage for an intriguing battle for the minor placings. Bunckenberg caught Dowling in the first few kilometres only to have Dowling pass her on some of the technical downhill sections.

At the finish less than two minutes separated them, with Dowling holding on. But Ussher by this time had been finished for eight minutes.

In other racing, the multisport teams section was won by a threesome of semi-retired veterans who have experienced past success in events all over the country. Dave Hicks, Trevor Woodward and Angus Wood dusted themselves off for an easy win in 3hrs 52min.13 secs to also win the veteran category.

Locals Lawrence Pidcock and Mansour Youseff won the duathlon teams, despite Pidcock taking a "long-cut" on the run after accidentally taking a wrong turn.

But among the loudest applause went out to 55-year-old Les Morris, who continued his run of being the only person to participate in every Hutt City Crazyman. And while second place multisporter Cameron Jones was the youngest participant at age 15, at the other end of the spectrum Dick Dinsdale was celebrated as the eldest at the ripe young age of 61.

The Hutt City Crazyman is one of New Zealand's longest-running multisport races. Race Day in 2017 is scheduled for Sunday 7th May. Visit www.crazyman.kiwi.