

Up & Comers & Old Hands Go Crazy

A collection of old hands and new faces look likely to dominate the Fine Signs Crazyman multisport event in Lower Hutt on Sunday.

Almost 300 endurance junkies will line up in Lower Hutt for the 28th running of Fine Signs Crazyman. Established in 1991, the 56k 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.

This, however is the first time the event has been held twice in a year. Organisers are re-positioning the event from May to December and chose to run the event again in 2017 rather than wait until December 2018. Race favourite Dan Jones is certainly keen for the opportunity nab his third consecutive win a year earlier.

Jones first won here in 2016 despite losing 10min to mechanical problems on the tough 28k mountain event over Belmont Regional Park. In May this year he returned to smash the course record, but he'll be pushed harder this weekend by a collection of previous winner and place getters from at home and away.

Lower Hutt athletes James Coubrough (2012 winners) and Blair Simpson (3rd in 2016 & 2nd in May) will keep Jones honest. As will a trio of Nelsonian in Dan Busch (3rd in 2015), Patrick Higgins (2nd in May) and Cameron Jones. Seventeen-year-old Jones surprised with a win in the Coast to Coast two-day race earlier this year and has a shot at being the youngest ever Crazyman winner to go with his record as the youngest ever finisher as a 14-year-old in 2014.

On a course that is as spectacular as it is challenging, competitors from all ends of New Zealand will open with a 13k kayak leg from Days Bay, along Wellington Harbour's eastern coastline to Petone Wharf and up the Hutt River.

Kayaks are swapped for a 28k mountain bike ride up the Hutt River Trail and over Belmont Regional Park, taking in a high point of close to 500m on Boulder Hill and a mixture of historic horse and cart trails and purpose-built mountain bike tracks.

Then it's into running shoes for the final 13k trail run around Belmont Trig and the historic Korokoro Dam to Petone Foreshore, eventually finishing at Petone Wharf.

Among women, the race for line honours is expected to come down to the final 13k trail run. Roxburgh's well-performed vet, Kath Kelly, is up against multisport first timer Deb Lynch (Porirua). Kelly won the Crazyman duathlon way back in 2012 and has more kayaking experience than 25-year-old Lynch. But the rookie has street cred as a NZ triathlon rep and is noted as a strong runner and cyclist.

Deb Lynch wasn't born when Les Morris raced 1991's inaugural Crazyman. The 57-year-old Morris has raced every Crazyman and was made a Crazyman life member in 2016. Which means he's duty bound to line up again for this 28th edition. Morris isn't the eldest campaigner, however. That honour goes to 63-year-old Chris Faye entered in the duathlon category.

Organisers are expecting more than 200 endurance junkies for the 56k tour through the icon outdoor elements of Wellington's Hutt City. The event includes the full kayak, run and mountain bike for teams and individuals, and a run and mountain bike duathlon option for non-kayakers.

The 28th Hutt City Crazyman starts at 8:00am on Sunday morning on Days Bays in Eastbourne. Late entries will be taken between 1:00pm and 4:00pm on Saturday at Avantiplus Cycles, 44 Bloomfield Terrace, Lower Hutt. For further details visit www.crazyman.co.nz or Ph: 0275 244 821.