

## at the races

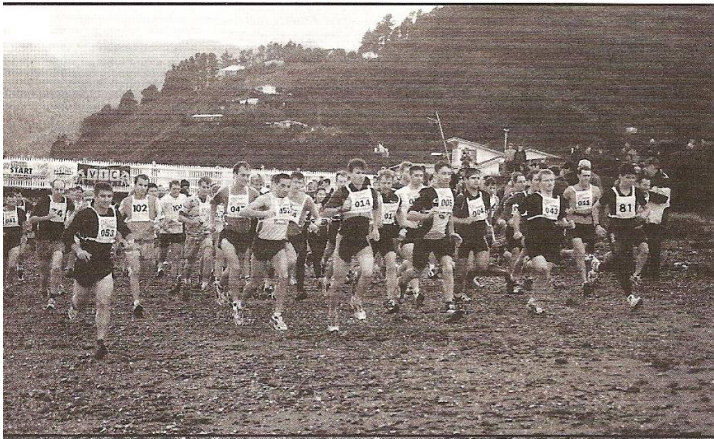


Photo: Ross Capill

Wgtn's Crazyman got underway in Crazy weather.

### Crazy Man!

by Allan Marke

For nine years the Wellington Crazyman has been the capital city's premier multisport race. Never though have conditions or the competitors in this two-day race lived up to the title quite so literally. Torrential rain made for challenging terrain in the run and mountain bike sections, while the gale-force nor-wester that ripped down the North Island during May ensured that Wellington Harbour was pumping for the paddle.

It wasn't just Wellington Harbour that was pumping though; for once again the competition for this popular event was first rate. Favourites were locals Glen Muirhead, sixth in this year's Coast to Coast one-day, and Al Cross, who had given Steve Gurney reason for concern in Palmerston North's Track and Gorge event the previous month. Coast to Coast runner-up, Penny Edwards, also a local, was an obvious favourite amongst women, though those in the know were tipping multisport rookie, but former NZ rep mountain runner and triathlete, Jill Westenra to surprise. On race day however, all that surprised was the difficulty of conditions that made the event that many consider tougher than the Coast to Coast two-day, even tougher still.

Take day one's mountain bike leg. Al Cross and last year's

*Former NZ tri rep Jill Westenra went one for one in her first multisport race.*

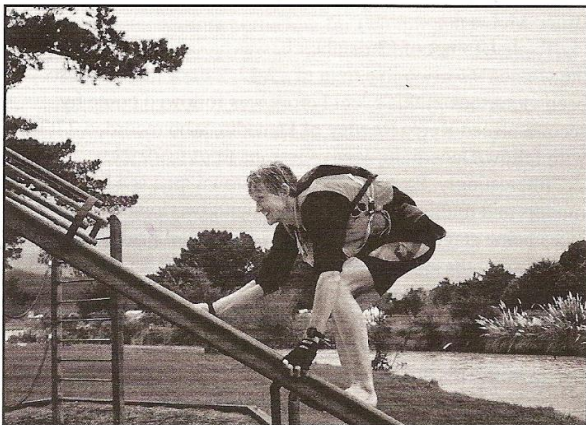


Photo: Ross Capill

third placegetter, Michael Jacques, came off the extremely hilly opening run leg within seconds of each other. But losing his food in an early wipe out on the mountain bike would eventually see a glycogen depleted, cramp ridden Jacques some 25 minutes and four places off the pace at the end of day one.

Cross though, was undeniable. At the end of day one, he was some 10 minutes clear of his training partner and former Crazyman winner John Cussins. On day two he finished second to Jacques' effort to atone for his disastrous day one. But such was class of competition that the end result remained unchanged, Al Cross emerging as a top 10 contender for Coast to Coast, ahead of Cussins, Muirhead and Jacques – just a few minutes separating the three.

In such atrocious conditions, it was the kayak legs that decided most grades. On both days the course had to be altered at the last minute. This didn't affect Coast to Coast team winners for the last two years Rob Harrow and Tom Ehlen, who teamed up with mountain biker Julian Pike to decimate the field. But it did affect the team minor placings when on day two, several kayakers refused to complete the wild, woolly and arguably out of hand conditions. Organisers took their concerns and the unique situation into consideration to allow them to finish the race with a time penalty. Of course, this didn't keep everyone happy, but as organisers pointed out, even with the time penalties the end results were not affected.

The race that was affected by the kayaking conditions was the women's. On day one, a flooding Hutt River turned a usually simple section underneath a rail bridge into a swirl of white water and back eddies. Penny Edwards, an experienced white-water paddler, capsized but still won the day, despite she and Westenra starting the kayak stage just a minute apart.

On day two, they hammered each other again during the opening run and road cycle sections. But again, Edwards came unstuck in the kayak; this time capsizing in the high winds and one metre swell out on Porirua Harbour. Ironically, it was Westenra who came to the rescue, towing her rival to shore, where Edwards withdrew, leaving the race to Westenra and Paula Stricksen, who would go on to win the veteran women's race. This anti-climatic result though, should not be taken lightly. Rumour has it that Westenra is considering an attack on the Coast to Coast, and as a world class mountain runner, triathlete and national class mountain biker, along with Edwards and Al Cross, Wellington could have three contenders for the one-day.

### Air NZ Raratonga International Triathlon

by Ray Preston

Rarotonga used to be called the Pearl of the Pacific. White coral sand beaches, clear water, craggy mountains, waving coconut palms, laid back lifestyle ..... hula girls! But things get serious, when International competitors gather for the annual Air New Zealand Rarotonga International Triathlon.

New Zealanders, Scott Balance, Bryan Rhodes, Shanelle Barrett and William Smith, have all raced and won here, and returned again this year. On race day, there was not much of a breeze and it was humid. But that's what triathlon is about. It challenges the fortitude and victory is not necessarily being in the prize money. It's knowing that you had the mental and physical toughness to complete it, whatever the conditions or circumstances. This writer applauds those who did; especially the local women, Leanne Corvette, Pauline Atera and Serena Francis, who were doing the full Olympic distance for the first time.