

History Maker Going Crazy Again

On December 9th, endurance junkies from all ends of the country will be going Crazy for the 29th time as they line up for the Fine Signs Crazyman.

More than 300 participants are expected to toe the line for the annual kayaking, mountain biking and trail running event. Established in 1991, the 54k scenic tour around the iconic outdoor elements of Wellington's Hutt Valley is one of New Zealand's longest-running multisport races.

In 2017 the Fine Signs Crazyman made history when Nelson's teenager, Cameron Jones, became the youngest ever winner of a major multisport event. The 17-year-old overcame a six-minute deficit after the opening 13k kayak, riding through the field on the 28k mountain bike section and then holding off fellow Nelsonians Dan Busch and Patrick Higgins in 3hrs 48min 01secs.

Jones is returning to defend his title on December 9th and race director, Michael Jacques, says: "Being a year stronger and wiser, you'd have to say Cameron is odds-on favourite."

The Nelsonian will have to be on top form, however, as he faces Napier's Thomas Christison, another emerging teenage talent who happens to be the son of 2004 Coast to Coast winner George Christison.

Jacques enjoys seeing these teenage talents come of age at the Fine Signs Crazyman, pointing out. "Before Cameron Jones became the youngest ever winner, he was the youngest ever finisher at age 14."

"I'm 51 and I've been doing this stuff since I was a similar age, so I really get a kick out of seeing others grow up with endurance sports."

Cameron Jones



The race he organises is also coming of age. December 9th will be the 29th running of the Fine Signs Crazyman and Jacques is looking forward to next year's 30th anniversary.

"We think the Crazyman is the second longest running multisport race in New Zealand, behind only the Coast to Coast," he says. And over the years the race has been won by most the sport's greats too, so it has a very real stature on the national scene."

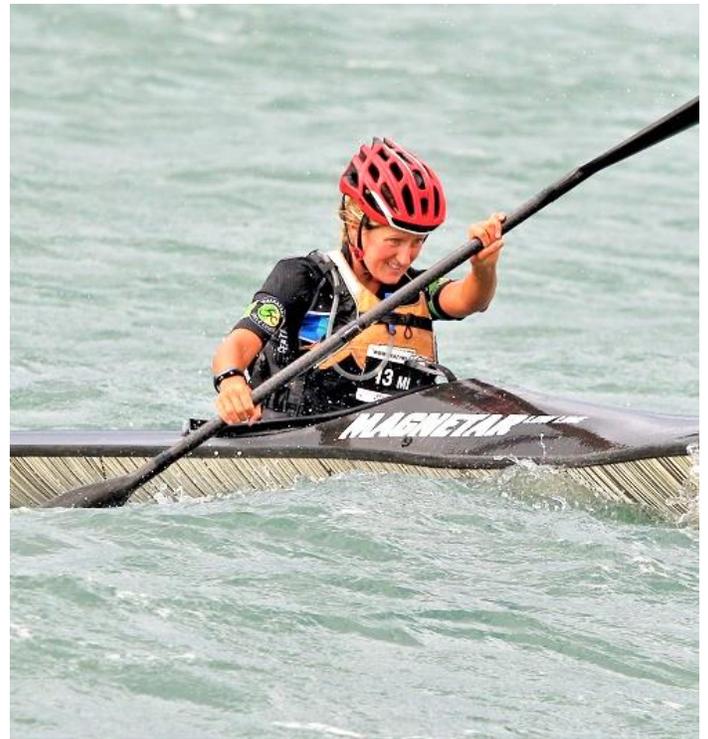
Indeed, past winners of the Fine Signs Crazyman read like a who's-who of multisport history: world champions such as Steve Gurney, Gordon Walker, Emily Miazga, Elina Ussher, Kristina Anglem, Alex Stewart, Jess Simson, Richard and Elina Ussher, and Wellington's own Jill Westenra have all won the annual Lower Hutt event.

Jacques thinks Cameron Jones and women's favourite Corrine O'Donnell will go on to be two of the sport's greats.

O'Donnell, from Whakatane, dominated last year's Fine Signs Crazyman and is lining up again in 2018 after victory in the Motu Challenge in October. The 28-year olds competition will come from Wellington's Kathryn Bunckenberg, who was the Coast to Coast two-day champion in 2017.

Multisport, however, is really a "people's sport" aimed at getting anyone of any age and ability into New Zealand's great outdoors.

Corrinne O'Donnell



“I call this stuff ‘every mans Everest,’ says Jacques.

“In the scheme of things, not many people can achieve challenges like Mt Everest. But with a bit of inspiration and motivation they can achieve something like racing around their region or across their country. That’s what events like the Crazyman are about; inspiring anyone and everyone to get outdoors and discover what they can achieve.”

And the Fine Signs Crazyman is something worth achieving. On a course that is as spectacular as it is challenging, it kicks off with a 13k kayak from Days Bay in Eastbourne and heads along Wellington Harbour’s eastern coastline to Petone. Paddlers take in the historic Petone Wharf and finish in the lower reaches of the Hutt River at Sladden Park.

At Petone they swap kayaks for mountain bikes for a 28k ride up the Hutt River trail and into Belmont Regional Park. The route takes in a hidden tunnel and creek crossings, then peaks out for staggering views from the volcanic rock strewn Boulder Hill, before passing historic WWII ammunition bunkers to finish on dedicated mountain bike trails at the historic Stratton Street Woolshed.

Bikes are then swapped for running shoes for the 13k trail run over the edge of Belmont Hill and down the bush-clad Korokoro Stream. Following a trail that was first used by Maori in pre-European times, this run is as historic as it is spectacular and eventually finishes on Petone Foreshore.

Make no mistake, with over 700m of vertical ascent on sometimes challenging terrain, the Fine Signs Crazyman is a challenging event. Some call it the “race from hell.”

“I prefer to say, ‘it’s a hell of race’,” laughs Jacques. “But it is challenging. That’s the attraction of endurance sports; you’re trying to achieve something worth achieving!”

“But each section of the Crazyman is actually quite achievable and all you have to do is string them together, in one day. If that’s a bit beyond your current fitness or experience, you can try one section in a team as a stepping stone to going solo in the future. It’s actually not Crazy at all... is it?”

The 29th Fine Signs Crazyman starts at 8:00am on Sunday 9th December. For further details and online entry visit www.crazyman.kiwi.

