

Runner kills the Crazyman

by Michael Jacques

Call it pride, but whether triathlete, duathlete or multisporter, there's nothing more infuriating to the greater multisport fraternity than being beaten by an athlete from one of the individual disciplines. But when one dominates quality competition to the extent that Olympic 5000m runner, Jonathon Wyatt, did during Wellington's Crazyman event ... well suffice to say, the multisporters he beat couldn't help but give credit where credit was due.

And indeed it was due, for while the 13:27 5000m runner dominated as expected during the two day race's run legs, he proved also to be a force on the bike, both mountain and road; leaving him having only to stay upright during the kayak legs for the win. Starting on Wellington's Eastern Bay's, this race takes competitors first on an extremely, some would say ridiculously, hilly off road run over the surrounding ranges to Wainuiomata, and leading from the gun, other than the odd team, Wyatt had only past national duathlon champion, Jeremy Boyd, and Michael Jacques for company; dropping first Jacques and then Boyd as the run headed up, up and up above the Eastbourne start line.

With the race turning next to mountain bikes, the noted cycling ability of Jeremy Boyd was expected to come to the fore. Indeed, the mountain bike is usually the make or break of this race that many site as tougher than the Coast to Coast, and as expected Boyd was impressive. However, what was not expected was that when Wyatt exchanged running shoes for mountain bike, that he would continue to pull away, rigid forks and all, while the 34km of endless climbing and descending played havoc on those behind.

It's a tough transition, the Crazyman's hilly run to hilly mountain bike, the twenty minute climb straight out of transition leaving even these leading contenders battling cramp for the remainder of the first day. Behind Wyatt and Boyd, Michael Jacques had been next through transition; a relative novice on the mountain bike he was overtaken first by specialist Andrew Chung and then Masterton's Al Cross. No sooner said than done, however, and Cross found himself standing at track side stretching out what was to become the first of a yo-yoing battle of the cramps as first he passed Jacques and then Jacques re-passed him, only to battle cramps of his own, leaving the pair to climb into kayaks just seconds apart.

Incredibly, however, Jonathon Wyatt had climbed into his kayak a good quarter of an hour earlier and out on the water, despite his novice status in things kayaking, was holding his own which was more than could be said of Boyd, cramps getting to him too, and at times on the windy Hutt River leaving him floating backwards.

And windy it was, with wind, white caps and a vicious current seeing more than a few negotiating tricky turns

upside down. The multisporters, though, were making inroads on the runner, Jacques and Cross passing first Chung and then Boyd, only to have Glen Muirhead pass them all and finish the day in second, but still some eight minutes down on Wyatt. It was impressive stuff from the Olympian, for the field assembled was the best ever in the Crazyman's six year history, with Wyatt, Boyd the nationally ranked triathlete and duathlete, no less than three top 20 finishers from February's Coast to Coast and a smattering of top locals having lined up for this 'tour de capital'. Indeed, the racing had been furious with just five minutes separating places 2nd through 7th after the first day; defending champion, John Cussins, being the 7th in this year's tough line up.

In contrast to the men, however, the remainder of competition had been a one person race, with Coast to Coast Champion, Alexandra Stewart, having the women's race all her own way, as did the aptly named "Dream Team", last years third placegetter, Murray Doughty, teaming up with mountain biker Ross Heald to eventually win the team's race by a staggering 20 minutes. Interestingly, Stewart might well have had some competition in the form of dark horse Megan McKenna and up and coming Auckland, Annabel Radford, who with no mountain bike experience to speak of, chose the mixed team race. It's McKenna, though, who provided the talking point, the unknown competing the 'second day only' option less than a minute behind Stewart who's eventual 9:34:45 was a course record.

Day two dawned as exceedingly still as day one had been windy, and as the long line of runners headed along Petone foreshore, Jonathon Wyatt could again be seen matching strides with the top team runners, only Michael Jacques amongst individuals bothering to give chase. By run's end, however, Jacques was left wondering why he bothered, as not only could he not keep the Olympian in sight, but taking a wrong turn with less than a kilometre remaining, he lost two minutes and what had been a handy advantage in the race for 2nd.

The race for 1st of course, being well and truly over, as once on the road bike Wyatt was able to match all but Jeremy Boyd who rode from 6th back into 2nd position. Indeed, the race for second was fast shaping up as the race within this race, as Al Cross and Andrew Chung dropped from contention while defending champion, John Cussins, came through the field to challenge Boyd, Jacques and Muirhead; that race finally coming to a head midway through the final kayak and mountain bike sections, as Boyd tried unsuccessfully to hold off Muirhead and Jacques, while Cussins passed them all. At race end, just four minutes separated these three, with the defending champion's late challenge proving not quite enough to deprive Muirhead and Jacques of 2nd and 3rd though in being beaten some 15 minutes earlier by the world class running of Jonathon Wyatt, all four multisport specialists couldn't help but feel deprived of something - not a little of which was pride.