

Up and Comers Claim Crazyman

A year after a covid cancellation, the 31st Fine Signs Crazyman finally got underway in Lower Hutt today. And under blue skies, two up and coming North Islanders put paid to the adage of experience over youth.

There was plenty of experience on show during the 13k kayak, 28k mountain bike and 13k trail run. Wellingtonians Dean Ford and Matt Penny had both been past placegetters, as had Nelson's Dan Busch. And it was Busch who led off the kayak section, following the top team participant Paul Moreno off the water, 4min clear of another former Crazyman placegetter, Glenn Muirhead (Wgtn), while Ford led in youngsters Calum Sutherland (New Plym) and Ryan Tait (Porirua).

Busch held on to his lead during the mountain on the Hutt River Trail and over the historic Belmont Regional Park. But it was Sutherland who was closing, before striking midway through the final run down Korokoro Stream to claim victory in what is New Zealand's second oldest multisport event.

Sutherland crossed the line in 3hrs 54min 17secs, with Busch 2min down. Third placed Dean Ford was only 2min further adrift in a competitive race that saw the first seven men within 6min. Busch took consolation in winning the 40-49 year veteran category while Glenn Muirhead led the 50-59 years. Only 15min further back, Palmerston North's Peter O'Sullivan returned to the Crazyman for the first time since winning overall in 1995 to claim the 60-plus category.

Callum Sutherland & Dean Ford



The women's race was a similar affair, with Porirua stars Debra Lynch and Lizzy Bunckenberg expected to dominate. Both had been previous placegetters and even won the women's team race together, so their match-up was much anticipated. But there some nervous moments in the early kilometres as kayaking specialist Baillie Stratton led them by several minutes. Lynch though confirmed herself as the classiest up and comer on the scene right now to romp through to the front by the end of the mountain bike, and continuing to extend her lead during the run to win 23min clear of Bunckenberg and top 40-49 athlete Katie Smith (Wgtn). Her time of 4hrs 19min 35secs was just 3min down on the course record held by four-time Coast to Coast champion Elina Ussher.

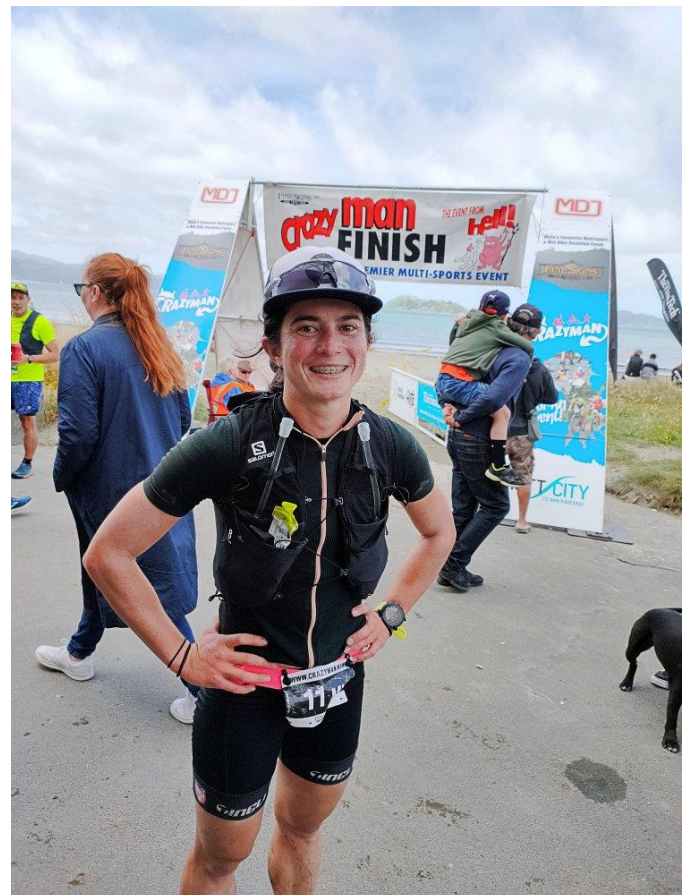
The Fine Signs Crazyman is New Zealand's second longest-running multisport race, after only the Coast to Coast. And victories by two up and comers continued a long Crazyman tradition of being a breeding ground for future Coast to Coast champions. Past winners such as Steve Gurney, Gordon

Walker, Emily Miazga, Elina Ussher, Kristina Anglem, Alex Stewart, Jess Simson, Richard and Elina Ussher, Dougal Allen and Wellington's own Jill Westenra have all won both the Crazyman and Coast to Coast.

In other racing, Wellington's Patrick McKenna dominated the duathlon option, winning by 20min in 2hrs 47min 15secs ahead of Lower Hutt's Steven Grenside and Wellington's Reece Geursen. The women's duathlon was much more tightly fought, with Lower Hutt's Emily Ryan prevailing by 3min ahead of Wellingtonians Anna Dickinson and Rosi Zieske.

There were continued highlights among both young and not so young. In her very first race, Porirua's Erin Anderson claimed the junior women's duathlon and race record in 4hrs 16min 44secs, while 13-year-olds Sophia Weston and Juju Moorehead claimed the duathlon school team categories despite being the youngest in the entire event. At the other end of the spectrum, local multisport stalwart Les Morris continued his reign as the only person to have participated in all 31 editions of the Fine Signs Crazyman, while the original 1991 Crazyman organiser, Dave Rudge returned to the Crazyman to claim third in the 60-plus multisport race.

For full results visit: www.crazyman.co.nz/history.



Deb Lynch