

Three-peat Winners at Porirua Grand Traverse

Repeat winners was the order of the day at the 13th Porirua Grand Traverse as Daniel Jones and Lizzy Bunckenberg took their third titles in Wellington's biggest multisport event.

More than 800 participants from all ends of New Zealand turned out for the epic kayaking, mountain biking and mountain running event around the hills, harbour and coastlines of Porirua City.

The multi-faceted race showcases the districts outdoor wonderland, from hidden coastal tracks to urban trails, the scenic Whitireia Coastal Park, Porirua Harbour and private coastal farmlands, to the new purpose-built mountain bike trails on Rangituhi-Colonial Knob.

Two people who know this race well are Wellington's top multisport exponents, Daniel Jones and Lizzy Bunckenberg. Both were looking for their third win at the Porirua Grand Traverse. Jones won in 2016 and 2017. Bunckenberg in 2015 and 2016, as well as the team title in 2017. They were tipped to take their third titles in 2018, but both utterly dominated the 58k kayak, mountain bike and mountain run.

Jones didn't have it entirely his own way. But after shrugging of a lack lustre start in the boat, he moved from third to first early in the mountain bike to eventually win by a massive 56min in 4hrs 46secs. Behind Jones, the battle for minor placings saw Lachie Brownlie hold out Gary Jarvis by just for seconds, with Jarvis taking consolation in the veteran title.

The women's race was even clearer cut, although despite leading from start to finish Lizzy Bunckenberg had to beat off a painful foot injury to add 2018 to her 2015 and 2016 wins. Bunckenberg clocked 5hrs 29min 29secs, with teenage multisport rookie Victoria Freiberg in second.

The Duathlon option was dominated by Wellington's Stefaan Janssens, who finished 10min clear of Upper Hutt's Stephen Mair in 3hrs 49min 40secs. The women's Duathlon saw local age group triathlon standout, Keren Crumpton, winning by 18min in 4hrs 32min 39secs.

In other events, Porirua's Ryan Corke illustrated an all-round talent. In 2017 he was first overall in the 30k mountain bike race. In 2018 he was first junior in the 18k mountain run. Corke clocked 1hr 49min 11secs for seventh overall. Up front, Wellington's Joe Fowler played a patient game to work through from fourth to first, winning in 1hr 34min 42secs and also taking honours among veterans. The women's race followed a similar pattern, with Wellington's Heather Walker taking overall and veteran honours a minute clear of Sarah Riceman (Wgtn).

The mountain bike race this year was a tight tussle between Wellingtonians Jono Brown and Terry Moes, with Brown first through by just 11secs in 1hr 28min 07secs. In third place Upper Hutt's former 24-hour world champion, Kim Hurst, took out the women's race by 22min.

A big part of the Porirua Grand Traverse in recent years has been the Arena Fitness Fun Run/Walk. From modest beginnings of less than 100 starters, this year saw more than 400 people adding to the festival atmosphere. The first to finish the tour of Titahi Bay's Whitireia Park coastline was Wellington's Callum Forest in 37min 38secs. Pheobe Butler-Munroe took women's honours in 43min 13secs.

Fastest and keenest in the Arena Fitness Fun Run/Walk proved to be Tawa Intermediate, who took out the team race and the Schools Challenge with 54 pupils taking on the 9k trail run.

In 2019 the 14th annual Porirua Grand Traverse is scheduled for Sunday 7th April.