

## Young Guns Dominate Grand Traverse

### Young up and coming Wellingtonians dominated the 11<sup>th</sup> Porirua Grand Traverse.

After more than a decade on the multisport calendar, the Porirua Grand Traverse gets bigger and better with more than 850 participants from all ends of New Zealand taking part in the 11th year of 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.

Daniel Jones and Lizzy Bunckenburg have been standout runners during their teens. Bunckenburg in Wellington and Jones in his hometown of Whakatane where he grew up as the son of 1996 Coast to Coast winner Neil Jones. But both illustrated their future may lay with multisport.

Bunckenburg returned as defending champion for the 2016 Porirua Grand Traverse. Belonging to the Titahi Bay Surf Club and Mana Kayaking Racing Club, and having recently graduated as a nurse from Whitireia Polytechnic where the race is based, the 23-year-old was a popular winner last year and race favourite for 2016. But she didn't have it easy.

Despite leading from start to finish, Bunckenburg had several athletes biting at her heels. Wellington veteran Kirstin Jarvis was just 20 seconds behind after the 10k kayak across Porirua Harbour and Puatahanui Inlet. But during new 24k mountain bike around Rangituhi/Colonial Knob mountain bike park, Upper Hutt's Annabel Ramsey and New Plymouth's Andrea Pebbles emerged as the mostly likely to challenge.

Bunckenburg, however, managed to match their times on the mountain bike and then proved too strong on the 18 mountain run to win in 4hrs 49min 19secs.

"The kayak was really tough. Just so windy," said the winner. "The mountain bike went ok and knowing the course helped. The run I was just surviving really."

Normally the 18k mountain run over Colonial Knob and along Wellington's rugged western coastline would have been Bunckenburg's strongest discipline. But a broken foot over three years ago has since restricted her to maintenance running and she admitted to struggling on this scenic but savage section.

"I pushed really hard on the bike," she said, "so my legs were just dead on the run and my foot was pretty sore. I spent the whole race waiting for someone to pass me."

But no one did, and Bunckenburg finished 11 minutes clear of second placed Pebbles, with Ramsey third ahead of Jarvis, who finished first among veteran women ahead of Swedish visitor Asa Sund.

The men's multisport race was never in any doubt, and keen observers of the sport might one day say that the first time they saw a world champion was at the Porirua Grand Traverse.

Daniel Jones has been renowned as a standout runner since his teens. His father won the multisport world title at the 1996 Coast to Coast, and if a 35-minute win at the Porirua Grand Traverse is anything to go by, then the son looks likely to follow the father.

Unlike the women's winner, Jones did not lead from start to finish. Former national rep kayaker, Aaron Cox, had four minutes in hand out of the water. The Wanganui paddler was then followed by Whanganui-based German Malte Hagener, with Jones third.

Once on mountain bikes, however, Jones came into his own, riding seven minutes faster than anyone else while Cox was joined by Wellington's Andrew Crowley and Porirua's own Angus Hulme-Moir. When Jones traded mountain bike for running shoes he had 11 minutes in hand and could have jogged to the win. But he didn't, instead he added another 24 minutes to his margin to win by 35 minutes in 3hrs 44min 59secs.

“That was great fun, I really enjoyed it,” said Jones on the finish line. Based in Wellington now, the newly qualified accountant enjoyed his first taste of the Porirua’s spectacular surrounds.

“The mountain bike course was really cool. It’s not often you get to ride bush single track in multisport races. Usually they’re on 4WD tracks. And that run was really stunning.”

Behind the winner, Crowley proved most consistent of the challengers to head off Angus Hulme-Moir, who was once again the first Porirua finisher and also first veteran, just one and half minutes clear of Aaron Cox.

The Duathlon was won by Wellingtonians Patrick McKenna in 3hrs 20min 31secs and Lower Hutt’s Marissa Graham in 4hrs 16min 53secs.

The mountain run only option saw race records among both men and women. Wellingtons James Richardson clocked 1hr 22min 22secs to finish eight minutes clear of Sam Hansby and defending champion Ben Clendon. Fellow Wellingtonian, Jackie Hollie, recorded 1hr 43min 56secs to finish 11 minutes clear of Wellington’s Amanda Rowe and Plimmerton’s Emma Hercus.

The mountain bike only option saw former national rep Anne Hunn once again win the open and veteran titles, finishing 10min clear of Porirua’s Jo Neeson and Wellington’s Jo Handcock. The men’s race went to teenager Ryan Corke in 1hr 21min 10secs, with defending champion Mansour Youssef almost two minutes back in second.

A big part of the Porirua Grand Traverse in recent years has been the Arena Fitness 7.5k fun run/walk. From modest beginnings of less than 100 starters, this year saw more than 400 people adding to the festival atmosphere.

The highlight was local Titahi Bay mother and daughter, Katie and Millie Jenkins, winning the women’s and school girls titles. But even more impressively, the 10-year-old Millie was the first finisher overall in a women’s record of 33min 58secs. Fastest team proved to be Raroa Intermediate, while Tawa Intermediate put in the biggest group entry with over 40 students participating.