

2012 KINLOCH NATIONAL SPRINT CHAMPIONSHIPS WEEKEND

Every year in early February the idyllic lakeside settlement of Kinloch, beautifully situated on a wooded bay at the northernmost point of Lake Taupo, is invaded by triathletes and triathlon fans. 2012 was no exception, in fact numbers were even higher than usual with the twin attractions of Auckland world championship spots being available, and the appearance of arguably the world's greatest triathlete, multiple Kona victor and former ITU world champion Chris "Macca" McCormack. The fields for the various races were larger than ever with their popularity being so high that waiting lists were required for nearly all events, despite the organisers increasing the spaces available.

And as usual, Wellingtonians turned up in force, temporarily shifting Wellington triathlon's centre of gravity from Freyburg to this little town in the middle of nowhere. And as always, the sun shone, and the racing was intense and spectacular.

Onto the races, and first up was the Erin Baker (named after the great New Zealand triathlete) standard distance race, over the Olympic distance of 1500m swim, 40km bike and 10km run. This is no easy course, with the bike leg being two times an out and back loop, with most of the outward leg being steady uphill, with a couple of steeper sections. The run is four laps of a 2.5km undulating course, with some off-road sections and even a steep (and "rhythm-busting") humpback bridge over the marina near the finish. The race kicked off fairly early, at 6.50am, and the dawn quiet of the lakeside village was rudely interrupted by the non-stop chatter of the commentator! The races were won, as expected, by Ironman legends Cameron Brown and Jo Lawn, in the final stages of their preparation for Taupo. The handful of Wellingtonians did us all proud, with podium performances by Natalie Gaskin (a highly impressive 7th overall despite being in the middle of a huge Ironman training block), Mark Burke, Rosi Zeiske, a breakthrough performance by Mike Lynch (obviously inspired by his over-achieving children!), and most impressively Nicole Walker who topped the 25-29 age group for 6th overall with the 4th quickest (41.40) run.

Next up were the age group national sprint championship races, with the fields so large that for the first time wave starts were used to separate the different age groups. The course was the same (but obviously half the distance) as that used for the Erin Baker race and the race guaranteed the first 10 eligible finishers a spot in the Auckland world championship team. The capital's triathletes were to the fore, with dominant gold medal winning performances by Natalie Hardaker (F30-34), Tristine Emery (F35-39, on the day before her birthday), Matt Harrop (M25-29, and 3rd overall behind TriNZ high performance coaching staff Rob Creasy and Stephen Sheldrake), and John Skinnon (M65-69, winning by 10 minutes with his running back in full swing). Also right up in the mix were Tony "Angry Bull" Buckingham with an

excellent 7th overall and silver behind Creasy in the highly-competitive 30-34 age group, and Joanne Saxton just behind Natalie in the women's 30-34 age group. Others producing impressive top 10 efforts included Aaron Lynch (18-19), sister Susannah (16-17), Bronte Tennant (20-24), Cory de Koort (20-24), Pete Dyer (30-34), an injured TK Robb (30-34), Emma Cachemaile (30-34), Rebecca Spiers (35-39), and Sally Kemp (35-39). Jeremy Boyd, Jamie Te Hiwi (getting better and better as a runner to back up his strong swim), Tony Keith and Lee Cartmell were in the top 10 in the 35-39 age group, and Kevin Nicholson just missed the podium in the highly competitive 40-44 age group. The 45-49 age group is well served by Wellingtonians, and even with star turns Steve and Sue Mellsop and David Craig not competing, the likes of Mandy Hancock, Jane Loughnan, Nick Vaughan (despite a nasty calf injury), James Turner and Luwane Schuster all just missed the podium. In the wiser age groups Ian Marshall (60-64) and Richard Sweetman (65-69) picked up excellent 4th places. A number of other excellent performances by the likes of Jodie Stewart, Jane Heather-Sclater, Gene McNaught, Nathan Milner and Phil Hawtry gained them world championship places. Many other Wellingtonians produced great performances across the age ranges and in the other races, some of whom had already qualified for World Championship places with their performances at the Auckland event in November 2011.

The 3-9-3 races saw excellent performances by Christian Davey, Becky Hawthorne and Callum Hancock, the latter backing up his mum's impressive performance and then helping to demolish his Dad's birthday cake! Next up were the elite races, with Wellington's newly-married Kate McIlroy showing her class to win the women's race, and both Cam Goldsmid and Lachlan Davey (with a brilliant bike leg) acquitting themselves well in the men's race, as did ex Wellingtonian Martin Van Barneveld showing a welcome return to form. And what a great experience to line up with (and in Cam's case to out-swim!) the great Macca. Macca made friends all over the place with his friendliness, and a certain Wellington Tri Club President is alleged to have nearly fainted when given the onerous task of body-marking the Aussie legend's leg!

The last races of the day were the children's 1-2-1 races, with both the Gordon and Turner girls taking part and doing a great job.

A number of other Wellington stalwarts were up to support and/or train around the area. The story that some female Wellingtonians only decided to come up to catch a glimpse of Macca's legs are of course just rumour and innuendo! Final mention must be made of the hearty group of volunteers, in particular our technical officials such as Jane Loughnan, Claire Jennings (both having raced earlier), Cathi Davey and Claire Hannan. These fantastic events couldn't take place without these unsung heroes of the sport.

If you've not been to Kinloch, you must do so next year. It's a great little spot (even if it does look a bit like Churton Park in places!), and the races are awesome to compete in and watch.