



MONTY'S REVENGE

BY JIM ROBINSON

How time flies. This June, the Whakatane Great Outdoors Monty's Revenge celebrates ten years – already. Past winners are a who's who of multisport, from Sophie Hart and Rachel Cashin to Gordon Walker and Ben Fouhy. Last year over 500 turned out. This year, race director Mike Van der Boom reckons, entries are tracking the same way.

The guy who sparked it all off in 1992 was Monty McGougan, who had the idea of creating a multisport race as a waka ama club fundraiser. The original Monty's Course known as the Ohope Enduro was longer and in a different order. Lasting only 2 years the event died only to be reborn in 2000 and renamed in honour of the mighty Monty.

Ten years on, "keeping it fresh" is a bit of a philosophy for Van der Boom, who runs events for the local council, to promote Whakatane as an adventure destination. In 2009, you can tackle the 55km (thereabouts) of glorious trail running, mountain biking and kayaking as an individual, as a pair, or as part of a team, doing one stage each.

Or, you can scuttle the boat and tackle the second Monty's duathlon, which proved a smash hit last year, with 70 starters. The duathlon's a great option for landlubbers. And be sure, with a 12km riverside run to replace the paddle – it's certainly no walk in the park.

The Monty's Revenge mountain bike course continues to morph, thanks largely to the

expanding opportunities of the Rawhiti forest. New trails are being developed all the time by the keen folk in Whakatane mountain bike club (www.whakatane.mtbclub.org.nz). Still, regardless of route specifics, the ride is a gut-buster, taking in a 450m grunt to the ridgeline above town, before plunging down to the Whakatane river. While it's hard work, the trails and 4WD tracks are never fearsomely technical; and if your nerves fail, the tricky spots are short enough to walk without losing much time. The descent, Van der Boom asserts, is technically easier than last year.

The opening 14km run around the Pacific coastline from Whakatane to Ohope is unchanged from previous years (panoramic views for pleasure and hundreds of steps for pain). So too, the third stage paddle down the Whakatane. Even if the river is high – and it has certainly been so in a couple of past Monty's races – the flow is not fast. Definitely no rapids! In fact, over the last 10km you're achingly liable to face an incoming tide.

"We're planning to make this Monty's a bit special," says Van der Boom. He's keen to see competitors get kitted out in "retro" gear. Mountain bikes with rim brakes, anyone?

10 YEARS OF MONTY'S REPORTS

- 2000: "Ben Fouhy recorded the second fastest paddle of the day and won by a three-minute margin. First of the females

was Kate Callaghan, while the NZ Vet Champ Evan McRae provided his usual great performance."

- 2001: "Evan McRae proved age is no barrier, by taking out the overall win."
- 2002: "A deluge of over 250mm of rain had flooded the Whakatane river and sunk the local rescue craft the day prior."
- 2003: "Havelock North policeman, George Christison, took the race by the scruff of the neck from the start."
- 2004: "The open women's section was won by Sophie Hart for the second year in a row."
- 2005: "One month after the second 100-year flood to hit the Eastern Bay of Plenty in 10 months ... a huge section of last year's MTB course no longer exists."
- 2006: "Sophie Hart had a buffer of seven minutes for the 20km of paddling ... [she] finished the full Monty's in 2hrs 46min ahead of Rachel Cashin."
- 2007: "The breeze was almost as cool and sharp as Auckland's Stuart Lynch and Taumarunui's Rachel Cashin."
- 2008: Teunis Schoneveld and Neil Gellatly needed 3 hours and 30 minutes to sort out who was going to take line honours... Schoneveld sprinted to the line first.

Monty's Revenge will be held on Saturday 20 June. For more information or to enter visit www.whakatane.com or call 07 3072050