



Aunty on Adventure

The Great Ocean Road and great adventures were all part of the Anaconda Adventure Race International Series held in a favourite Victorian coastal town of Lorne. Former Ironman triathlete, champion adventurer and coach Jan Leverton tells us all about her great times on course.

The beautiful seaside town of Lorne displayed perfect conditions for the Anaconda Adventure race, staged on December 6th, 2009. Small seas, light winds, clear water and filtered sunshine made the day all the more enjoyable. It was a pity I had worn myself out the previous weekend racing the Kona 24-hour mountain bike event – solo! There’s nothing like a good warm-up. I was seriously wondering how I would make it through the challenging adventure. It was definitely a

race of great proportions – 1.9 kilometres swim, 400 metres beach run, 13 kilometres ocean paddle, 14 kilometres trail and coasteer run, 24 kilometres mountain bike and 1500 metres beach run to finish. It was all about pacing yourself for this one. Being a veteran female (over 40) – very veteran, in fact, nearly vintage (over 50) – I am careful with my older-style body these days. So, after riding my mountain bike for 24 hours the previous weekend, I was still recovering from the massive bruising and blisters on my rear

end. I was secretly happy the ride leg fell fourth in the line of activities for the Lorne adventure.

The swim set off from the famous Lorne pier. Once I was around the first buoy, I had made my way back into the field. I usually swim in the pack with all the not-so-fish-like swimmers. We all get there eventually, but take our time, there’s no sense in wearing yourself out in the first hour of a six-hour event.

Finally, I emerged from the sea after 53 minutes in the watery stuff. I had a look around to check if there was anyone left in

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the water – a few more were still to come around the final buoy. I congratulated myself on not being last and headed off on the 400-metre run up the beach in my wetsuit.

The paddling conditions were perfect and soon I was speeding along in my Epic ocean ski, pegging back a lot of the faster swimmers. I was happy to have my own boat to paddle – it was worth the epic drive with our boats from Queensland.

The new paddle course was just perfect and I could see all the paddlers on their way back and enjoyed the social time on top of the water. Before I knew it, I had turned at the buoy and was making my way back. Rounding the final buoy, I caught a little wave into shore and was on my

feet heading to transition for the start of run leg.

All good so far, until half way down the beach I realised I had failed to remove my paddle shorts. Oh dear! I gave them to a bystander, who very kindly handed them to admin for me to pick up at the end of the adventure.

The run course at Lorne is a beautiful and spectacular coasteer along the beach and rocks and then an exciting run up and down St Georges River Gorge. There is a lot to marvel at with lush, green ferny gullies, pretty little rocky creeks to cross, a little rope climb and a backside slide down a single track. That's just the start as there is all this and more! Before you know it you're wading back through the river under the Great Ocean Road and along the rocks to the racked

bikes. I was feeling alright at this point and, beside the fact I had to sit on my (very hard) bike seat, I was happy about having only the bike and a short beach run to go.

The punishing uphill bike leg is often the breaking point for many competitors. So, I was careful to spin up the hill in granny gear ('cos I'm almost one anyway!) and was still feeling good at the top. I was excited to be on the home run, with a fun, speedy downhill that always takes years off! I was thoroughly entertained by a male competitor on the course who crashed three times on the last part of the steep single track. The third time he wedged himself between two trees and had to be extracted by some others on the track.

I rode the final little bit and then it was onto the beach for a

ride over rocks and soft sand to the transition area. I was happy to have made it this far, and was so relaxed and excited, I ran the last 1500 metres on the beach in my socks.

Running through the finish chute is always emotional. I reflected on my event and the fact I had now finished four from five of the Anaconda Adventure events at Lorne. This time was special, being the oldest female individual competitor (actually I'm always the oldest).

It just goes to show that an 'old lady' can still accomplish this feat. I'm about to turn 50, so I will have a category of my own for the next one. No 'vintage' female has ever finished one of these events! I was still over-joyed to place second veteran female. I even chatted to people throughout the event and took in all the beauty of the surroundings we traveled through.

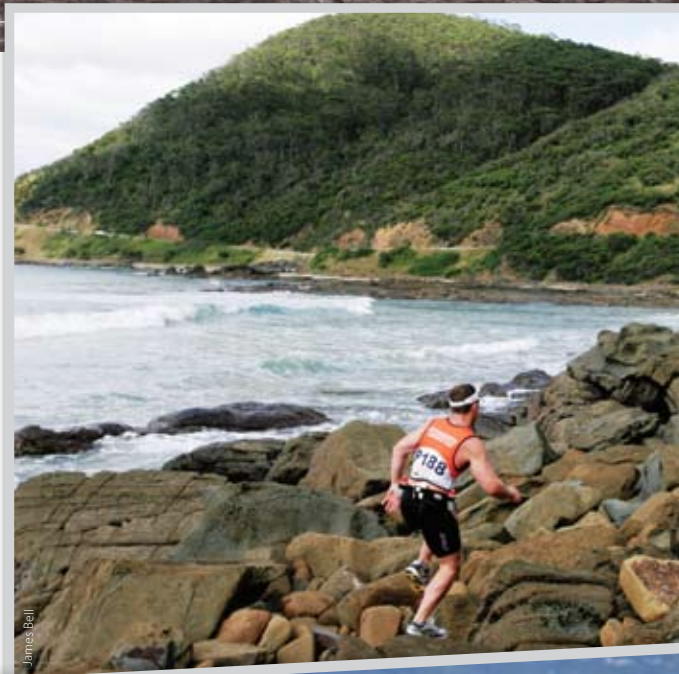
The feedback from competitors and spectators is always the same at the adventure races – they can't believe the events are so friendly and are pleasantly surprised when people stop to help or just display such a wonderfully relaxed attitude. The beauty of nature obviously works its magic.

The individual men's event was won by local athlete Grant Suckling and the female winner was Queensland's Kim Beckinsale who both took the time to say hello to me when I greeted them on the course. Ironman triathlete Luke Bell was also in the race and placed and incredible fourth, having just learned to paddle in the few weeks leading up to the event.

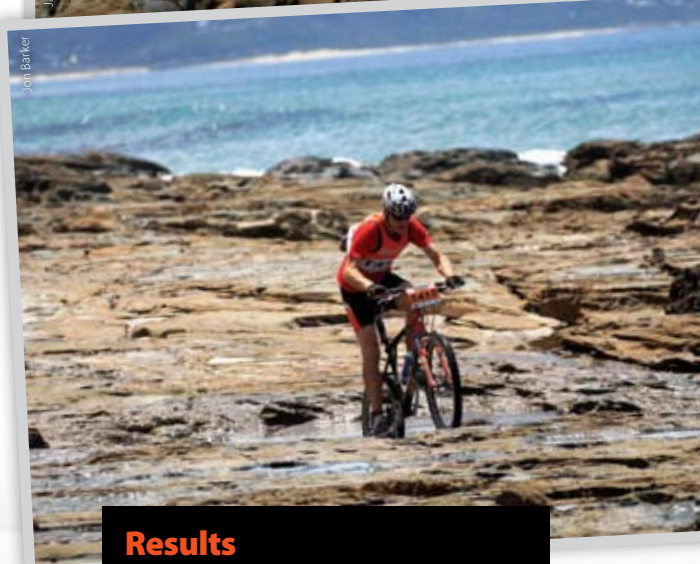
The family atmosphere was enhanced by the Junior Survivor held on Saturday afternoon before the main event. The Lorne foreshore was a wonderful area to spectate from with everyone giving great encouragement throughout.

As I get organised for my epic solo drive back to Queensland, I think how lucky I am to compete in the Anaconda Adventure Races and look forward to the next two events of this series – including the inaugural New Zealand event in April, 2010. It will surely take me out of my comfort zone, again. But, that's all part of the adventure. I'll see you out there! **TMSM**

Jan Leverton and Kim Beckinsale are the team behind Tri Adventure (see www.triadventure.com.au).



James Bell



Jan Banker

Results

1st Male: Grant Suckling
1st Female: Kim Beckinsale
1st Junior Individual: Cassidy Redden

