

## **Peak to Peak – Some helpful tips from Last Years Winner**

Not long now until the 15th annual North face Peak to Peak on the 19th of July. Here are a couple of thoughts that might help with your preparation. I hope you find some of it useful.

### **Before the race**

This is the busiest race for any support crew to follow that I have done. It is important that your team of helpers are familiar with the course, especially the transitions, and the best routes to and from these transitions. If entering as an individual it is a good idea to work in with another support crew for the first two transitions as you cannot have your team at both. Plan ahead and organise for one crew to help at the ski to mountain bike transition and another crew helping at the mountain bike to kayak transition.

There is a lot of gear needed for this race. Organise your gear for each stage early and be sure it will all fit in, on and around your support vehicle(s). If you decide a road bike is most appropriate for the final stage for example, you may find it difficult getting two bikes, a kayak and paddle, a pair of skis and all the other gear into/onto one car. It is safest to check everything fits before the day of intended departure.

The race starts at midday so plan your pre-race meal(s) sensibly. I would suggest both an early breakfast and another meal about 2 hours before the start of the race; or one "brunch" type meal mid-morning, depending on your individual needs/preferences. Remember, there is likely to be a wait at the top of the ski field before the starter gun as Geoff Hunt awaits confirmation of the road closure. If you are cold as you wait (very likely) you will use a lot of energy to stay warm, eating adequately prior to this race is certainly advantageous.

### **Stage 1 – Ski**

The hardest part of this ski is the 200m run to your skis. People will be very aggressive right from the start so rather than getting stuck in a mad tussle make sure you know

exactly where your skis are. Have your poles sitting vertical either side of your skis so to make for a quick getaway and remember the time you may lose being conservative on this stage could well be worth it considering the potential consequences of panicking and trying to stay near the front. Remember not everyone that does this race is an experienced skier necessarily, and there is often a few loose bodies and carnage on the slope. Be sure to position yourself wisely, there is plenty of time and opportunity in the following four stages to make up ground.



### **Stage 2 – Mountain Bike**

Again, be patient and ride within your capabilities as you free wheel down the Remarkables access road. This road is loose gravel and many corners are much sharper than they first appear. A number of riders find themselves off the edge of a very steep bank on this stage simply because they have been too reluctant with their brakes. Pick your lines early and be sure to sport an appropriate pair of tyres. The staff at R & R Sport recommend the Speed Kings which are a very affordable option and great for speeding down gravel roads. Pedal hard once you reach the flat sealed section of this stage because one thing is for sure – your legs won't be doing too much work in the following stage.



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### **Stage 3 – Kayak**

This is a great stage for picking up places. I wore warm leggings for stages one and two to keep my knees toasty and once I got to the kayak transition I lay on my back and had my support crew rip them off, I also removed my gloves here. Do not be deceived by this 'lake' paddle. Just as with a kayak down the Waimakariri river be sure to select a kayak you are comfortable paddling in all conditions. Because that is exactly what you can expect on Lake Wakatipu – all conditions. It can be a mirror one minute and white capping waves the next. Going around the Frankton arm can get a bit hairy as the swell tends to meet you side-on. Watch also for the rocks around this point and resist trying to take the corner too fine.



### **Stage 4 – Run**

Now the uphill begins. If you arrive at the kayak-run transition toasty warm, chances are you are over-dressed for running, so be prepared (and advise your support crew) to remove clothing here. The run is an

excellent chance to pick up places as the adrenaline junkies that took off at the start of the race for the downhill sections will begin to tire (or not). Your legs will hopefully be reasonably fresh entering the run and you can concentrate on applying the three R's: Relax (all unnecessary tension, e.g. shoulders, breathing); Rate (stride turnover) and Range (stride length).

### **Stage 5 – Road bike**



Every year there is debate amongst anxious competitors as to what bike to ride to the Coronet car park. I have used both the mountain and road versions in previous years and would recommend you try and use a road bike if the road is not too icy. Be sure to have appropriate tyres especially if you choose to take a road bike up. The R & R Sport staff suggested I used Continental Grand Prix or Four Season tyres for maximum purchase, and they worked a treat. Do not over inflate as you can anticipate an icy road surface. Whether you choose to ride a mountain or a road bike for this stage I suggest you ride in mountain bike shoes. This is because you may need to get off if, for example, you hit a patch of ice or gravel and your back tyre slips. Standing on ice is hard enough to do normally let alone when a road cleat is all the grip offered to you by the sole of your shoe! If you are an individual competitor you will want to plan your nutrition wisely for this last stage. Take food and drink with you because you will have been racing over 2 hours by now and will certainly need to be replenishing blood glucose and hydration levels. I found a few Leppin Squeezies in the back pocket and some water was just what I



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needed to ensure I finished strong on a stage where many people lose or gain placings.

So there you have it. The Peak to Peak is an incredible race. There is something very special about standing on the start line high up in the Remarkables and looking across to Coronet Peak and the finish line off in the distance. Queenstown is a beautiful part of the country and Geoff and Pascale always ensure the experience is memorable. It is well supported by sponsors and spot prizes are plentiful. So while you cannot ever accurately predict the weather forecast for race day, you can certainly be safe in the knowledge that you will not be disappointed if you turn up to the North Face Peak to Peak. Good luck!

Dougal Allan  
BPhE (Hons). Peak to Peak Winner 2007.