

Hundreds Brave Outback Scorcher for Australia's Toughest Triathlon

358 brave triathletes battled scorching sun, muddy water, billowing winds, mercury approaching 40-degrees and thousands of flies at Australia's toughest triathlon yesterday (12 April, 2014).

Brisbane athlete Sam Betten swam, rode and ran his way into Australia's triathlon history books by taking out a record four consecutive wins at Outback Queensland's infamous Julia Creek Dirt n Dust Triathlon in 01:03:21, against a 25km/h headwind and in 38-degree heat.

Betten said the cycle leg's notorious headwind was particularly mean this year, affecting the speed he'd normally reach riding the Dirt n Dust's 25K cycle leg along the barren Flinders Highway.

"This year's ride was exceptionally tough and the wind set in harder and hotter than it has in previous years," said Betten.

"It was scorching on the bitumen and I was welcoming the wet cloths to try and keep my face cool, but it was a bit of a losing battle – that's why people come to Julia Creek though, because it's a tough event that really tests your skill, your mind and your determination.

Betten beat special guests and celebrity lifeguards Adriel 'Bacon' Young, Andrew 'Reidy' Reid and Corey Oliver from Bondi Rescue who finished 2nd, 8th and 27th, respectively.

Bacon said the outback's harsh environment turned on the toughest short course race he'd ever run.

"Jumping into the muddy creek I didn't have a great swim, then when you get out onto that highway it is tough – some of the windiest conditions I've ever ridden a bike in," Bacon said.

"Then as you come off the bike and hit the ground with bare feet on the tarmac it's boiling. The sun is pounding down on the pavement and the wind is still smashing you on one side. I heard it was going to be tough, but that just took it up a notch. It's the mental challenges that get you."

Finishing first for the women was Mount Isa's Amanda Gowing who crossed the finish line in 01:20:26 to take out her first Dirt n Dust win after four years racing at Julia Creek.

"I had no idea where I was placed coming off the bike and I spotted one of my training mates, who gave me the nod to say I was in first. That's when I knew I just had to get off the bike and start the run – there are a lot of people out there who can run a 5K quicker than me, so the whole aim of the run was to hold the other girls off," said Gowing.

"Today marks four years since I started in the sport of triathlon, so to come back to where it all began for me and claim the number one spot is great."

Gowing also claimed the North Queensland Champion prize money, along with Townsville's Connor McKay.

High resolution photos available for download at <http://bit.ly/1oWYGgl>

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