

Killamunda 2010

The countdown is on to the Killamunda Challenge, brought to you in 2010 by Boundless Adventure Racing! Race Directors Ian Dalton and John Toomey (below right) have been working tirelessly to make this year's Killa the biggest and best yet. At least, the website is pretty shiny, and we can hopefully expect similar from the course.

The course is being guarded, golem-like, but you can expect some fast mountain biking, solid orienteering courses and probably a quirky novelty exercise or two to keep your brain on its toes. The entry list is almost finalised, and with over 80 competitors it should be an interesting race.

Before I leap into a wildly speculative analysis of the top of the field, I should comment on the huge numbers of non-elite athletes and particularly newcomers in 2010. These are the people who DO have lives outside of training(!): they hold down jobs, raise families, plant gardens, play the piano, speak Italian and probably donate to charity and STILL get outside, get dirty and make the whole event worthwhile. According to a recent poll of 2009 Killamunda race officials, the place to be is the middle and back of the field, which is where the smiles are.

Having discredited the single-minded athletes with the scary race faces at the front of the field (some of whom admittedly also have day jobs and even play chess), here are my vague predictions for the Killa results:



In the men's field, Steve Fletcher has recently reversed his retirement from adventure racing (which conveniently bridged the off season so he didn't miss any races), and is bouncing enthusiastically out of a solid block of training with the motivation to defend his 2009 Killamunda win. He has been seen running REALLY FAST and riding ON A WINDTRAINER and can, on occasion, even read a map.

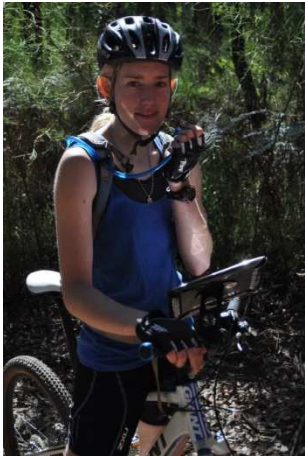
He will have plenty of competition though – a contingent have recently returned from the world's biggest Killamunda training camp, the ten day XPD Adventure Race in Cairns. Ricky Thackray and his team of hired American muscle placed a casual seventh in XPD, and if he recovers in time from his stinging tree wounds, crocodile bites and snorkelling injuries he will be a force to contend with.

Rogainer Paul 'Wil' Williams (above left), third place last year, has also been seen running FAST, and has apparently learned how to read a real map too. Orienteer Graham "Captain Quadricep" Braid (right) always could read a real map, and has been working hard on his running speed. Part-time bike commuters Steve Jackson and Dolph Smetherham have



been seen lurking at orienteering events and training with the Boundless team, in the hope of gleaning some secret course information or at least some navigating skills. And, of course, there are plenty of dark horse entrants who I don't know, who could well turn the whole leaderboard upside down.

The women's field has expanded hugely this year, and is wide open with last year's winner Jen Graham-Taylor determined to maintain her retirement from AR and entering a social team. The smart money is



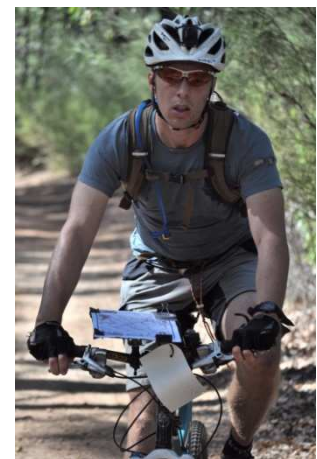
on Sarah Dunnage (left) and her trademark determination – she can definitely read a map, ride a bike and has even been seen at running training.



And her brain is just about quirky enough to cope with anything John and Ian can throw at her.

On the other hand, I have definitely been wrong before. A late entry from experienced orienteer and AR all-rounder Karen Staudte should have her worried. Mountain biker Nancy Caceres made her AR debut at last year's Killa, and left Perth soon afterwards for a year-long Killamunda preparation retreat in the Eastern States. Rebekah Manley, Lisa Muir, Cathy Young and Judy Wenban are all bringing increasing orienteering and AR experience to Killa 2010 and are ready to pounce if Sarah dares to hesitate.

In the team's category, it will be very hard to beat the Woop Woop (including Jake Hannah, below) and Wholly Fit crew for the male and female categories. After some big local AR wins in 2009 (although I heard they were narrowly beaten in the Rat Race) and a constant string of hardcore South-West training camps (specifically with Killa in mind, of course) they are ready to take on their arch-rivals at their own game. Or will their vast AR experience turn out to be a handicap, when they collapse in confusion at the sight of an accurate map?



The one sure prediction I can make, however, is that it will NOT rain. Wishful thinking. Or at least, that the Killamunda Challenge will be a fantastic day out in the bush for everyone involved. Don't forget to smile at those transition officials (especially the frustrated ones running the timing system!); drink plenty of water; wear your helmet on the bike and always count to ten and let your heart rate drop to under 100 before making any uncensored comments about the course to the race directors at the finish line.

Above all, have fun! I look forward to seeing everyone out there.

Jen Graham-Taylor