## Mens Expert (70km) race – Words as per Eric Wolfe – Race Runner Up

All roads led to Killarney on Friday where 2,300 people had signed up for the Killarney adventure race and a choice of 3 different lengths. A very slick well organised registration team made for a quick passage into the massive expo in the Gleneagles hotel. Registration done it was out to Kate Kearney’s cottage to the bike drop off.

Saturday morning was an early start for all involved and a fleet of buses was on hand to transfer people out to the race start. Mandatory kit check, assemble at start line and go go go

Clearly Dessie Duffy, Jerry O Sullivan and Paul Tierney et al thought they had signed up for a 5km sprint as they tore up the shit laden road and onto Strickeen mountain. So much of the next 4 hours racing was set up in those first 20 minutes as Dessie, Jerry, Paul Tierney’s, Aidan Mcmoreland set a viscous pace that had to be followed if you wanted to be at the pointy end of the racing.

Onto the bikes and Paul Tierney had a lead and worked hard on his own to maintain it while the next group contained Dessie, Aidan and Jerry. The 3rd group contained Eric Wolfe and Trevor Woods and they were all coming together at the top of the gap of Dunloe when there was an unfortunate incident with Paul Tierney and the motorbike camera man. No doubt Paul’s life flashed before him as he balanced precariously on the edge of the road with his back wheel high in the air for what seemed like forever, thankfully all lived to tell the tale but unfortunately Paul’s race was negatively affected. This led to a group of 5 dessie, eric, trevor, jerry and aidan on the bikes. If the “triathletes” were to have any chance they had to get away and eventually they did with Eric, Dessie and Trevor Woods leading into the bike finish.

The kayak leg showed that the first 3 had a few minutes lead but that it was going to be eventful racing once the real race started on the paths of Mangerton.

Eric led onto the run but was quickly caught by Dessie and although never more than 30 seconds separated them up Mangerton it appeared that they had been closed to less than 3 minutes by David Power, Aidan, Jerry and Trevor. The descent was fast and as they got to the end of the run and onto the last leg it was all to play for. Dessie had a 50 second lead and Aidan McMoreland had run fantastically to catch Eric and take 2nd onto the final bike leg. With less than 1 km to go the race was still on with no chance of any let up.

Dessie made it 4 wins out of 4 to demonstrate massive consistency and rightfully take the adventure race series.

25 seconds later Eric finished in 2nd as he managed to hold off Aidan in 3rd by a further 25 seconds, incredibly close racing after such a hard days racing.

The top 10 were rounded off by Jerry O Sullivan 4th, David Power 5th, Peter Cromie first vet in 6th, Adrian Hennessy 7th, Cork’s Paul Tierney 8th, Trevor Woods 9th and Nigel Keane 10th.

The first timers of Mark Nolan and Mark Wolfe coming 11th and 12th demonstrated that they will be ones to watch out for in the future.

**Eric**

**Killarney Adventure Race – Ladies 70k Race as per Moire O Sullivan - Winner**

“Oh shit”, I thought. The grating noise just didn’t sound good. I looked down. My back wheel was making a really unhealthy sound each time I turned the pedal. This was not what I planned as I left my bike at Kate Kearney’s Cottage the night before Killarney Adventure Race. I poked and prodded at different metal bits for several minutes before concluding there was nothing I could do. “It could be just a bit of mud stuck from the day’s ceaseless rain”, I thought. “Or something more serious”. I would just have to wait until the race to see.

My rear wheel dilemma was made all the more stressful knowing who I was up against. Fiona Meade had entered the race, the 2014 National Road Racing Champion who had beaten me by over 20 minutes in last year’s Sea to Summit Adventure Race. Though Killarney’s course is well known to favour mountain runners, I couldn’t lose too much time on the second stage, a 35km cycle from Kate Kearney’s to Muckross Lake. A banjaxed wheel would be enough to hand Fiona the race.

And Fiona meant business. We were no sooner started than I saw Fiona sprinting off ahead of me up the tarmac towards Strickeen mountain. I pushed hard to overtake her to get to the mountain section first. Up the zigzags, I kept a handy pace, bouncing up the bog and stones to get into a nice rhythm. I reached the summit first, but as sooner as I turned I saw Fiona running straight towards me, with Avril Copeland not far behind her. I hightailed it out of there, feeling good with my descent until a Channel 4 cameraman caught sight of me. He sprinted off down the hill with his huge camera in hand, easily picking up speed as I struggled to keep up with him.

I reluctantly grabbed my bike after 33 minutes of running and prayed my rear wheel would behave. Little did I know that a bit of dirt would be the least of my worries. Friday’s rain had made the tarmac slippery smooth. That, combined with the course’s steep descents, hairpin bends, and a glaring autumnal rising sun made cycling totally treacherous. They warned us at the safety briefing to be careful. I got a stark reminder as I crested the Gap of Dunloe and saw an ambulance all ready and waiting. I kept my fingers on my brakes until I was safely down in Black Valley. Then it was a case of catching and drafting as many lads as possible. These lads all got away again from me after Moll’s Gap as we hit the main road to Killarney, only for me to find one of the guys flat on the floor minutes later at Ladies View. I found out after the race that his water bottle got stuck when he tried to drink whilst descending. He looked down at the cage, then looked up only to see himself heading at speed towards a ditch on the roadside. He got away with a broken collarbone, but not before spending a couple of hours in hospital.

Pedalling towards the bike transition, I kept waiting for Fiona to pass me. In the end, she gained 30 seconds on me on the bike, arriving in to the transition two and a half minutes behind me.

I ran to the lake and, being the leading lady, I was placed in a single kayak with a go-pro camera focused on me. For the entire journey, I had to stop myself from swearing or doing anything stupid in case it got caught on camera. That included not grimacing too much as my abductors began cramping. There was little difference in the top 4 ladies kayak times, all finishing their paddles around the 15 minute mark.

I knew that the real race would begin after the kayak, 2 hours into the course. The 18km run up and down Mangerton was where it would be won or lost. With that in mind, I ran towards the mountain, happy to have finished with the bike and boat. The forest section was longer than I expected, with many stretches where I ran alone. At times I forgot I was racing as I chugged along in the pretty woods daydreaming as if on a training run. I was rudely awakened however when I emerged from the trees and saw Mangerton, looming large above me. The ascent was boggy and rocky, and too steep to run in places. But I knew this is where I was to make up time if I was to break clear of the opposition.

I realised I was reaching the summit when I saw the lads running towards me. Dessie was booting down the hill with Eric in hot pursuit. Then Aidan sped past with Jerry not far behind. Next came my fellow Outfront Events adventure racing teammates Peter Cromie and Adrian Hennessy. They shouted words of encouragement interspersed with abuse as they rocketed down the heather. Dibbing in at the summit, I checked my watch to see how much time I had gained. By the time I met Fiona coming up the mountain, I figured I was around 10 minutes ahead. Triathlete Ellen Vitting and multi-day adventure Racer Avril Copeland were in turn chasing after her.

I hopped and jumped down the mountain, coming back to my bike after 1 hour 52 minutes of running. In the meantime, Ellen had thrown herself down the mountain to sneak into second place just ahead of Fiona. On the final 5km bike to the finish I was accompanied by a motorbike and cameraman Tour de France style, which I was sorely tempted to draft. Then it was the cruellest ascent of 3 flights of stairs over the tarmac before descending into the finish.

I came home in 4:22:23, 1st lady and 21st overall. Ellen arrived over the line 22 minutes later, with Fiona a close 3rd less than a minute after that.

Denise Casey was just behind Fiona in 4th and picked up the top vet prize with Avril Copeland 8 mins back in 5th.

I was really pleased with the race, and apologised to my bike afterwards for even daring to doubt that it would make it.

Moire