

# Athletes struggle in soaked Motatapu

By DEBBIE JAMIESON

A massive lead disappeared only 300 metres from the finish line for Alexandra cyclist James Williamson in one of the slowest Motatapu mountainbike races in the event's 11-year history.

It was a mud-covered Mike Crawford, of Prebbleton, who took line honours after a rain drenched 47 kilometres through back country stations between Glendhu Bay and Arrowtown.

While delighted with his win, the 33-year-old tax adviser felt the agony for Williamson whom he passed running and carrying his broken bike about 300m from the finish line.

"I feel I've robbed him to a certain extent but part of this race is getting your equipment up to standard so it's a total package sort of race."

A gutted Williamson, 25, was completely on his own ahead of over 2800 riders for most of the race battling thick mud and high rivers until he was negotiating a steep decline about three kilometres from the finish line. "My chain just snapped and pinged off," he said.

Unable to continue cycling he picked up his bike and ran the rest of the way.

A first time entrant last year, he placed fourth after his bike broke



**Tough:** Kate Fluker was the first woman to complete the 47km Motatapu mountainbike race.

just before the finish line. "I'm pretty gutted. I was really hoping to win it this year."

Crawford's finishing time of 2:18:00 was more than 30 minutes behind the course record due to the wet conditions. Brent Miller of Christchurch was third in 2:21:41.

In the women's race, Olympic hopeful Kate Fluker was first over the line in a time of 2:40:23, after setting the course record last year



**Gutted:** Alexandra cyclist James Williamson was pipped at the post and came in second in the Motatapu mountainbike race on Saturday.

in a time of 2:08.

"I'm disgusting," the mud-splattered, soaked, Queenstown resident said on the finish line.

"It was so much slower through there. It's just so wet... The rivers were really high - probably up to my waist some of the time. They were fast moving - it was quite scary at times."

The 27-year-old has just returned from Australia where



**Relieved:** Wanaka multisporters Jess Simson (left) and Simone Maier were first equal in the Motatapu Xterra triathlon on Saturday. Photo: GODZONE

she was second in the Oceania mountainbiking champs and won a round at the national champs.

"I'm feeling really good but today was a challenge. I'm not worried [about my time] - I'm not slower than last year, I've improved."

The Speight's Mountain Bike race was the first of five events held through Motatapu Station to finish on Saturday.

There were 4567 registered competitors, with 2000 of those racing in the Torpedo7 Adventure Run, XTERRA UDC Finance Triathlon, Icebreaker Off Road Marathon and Arrowtown.com Miners' Trail.

Wanaka contestants dominated the triathlon with Dougal Allan first in the professional men's event (4:27:41) and Jess Simson and Simone Maier first equal in the women's (5:32:36).

Heavy rain and rising rivers forced organisers to put their contingency plans in place and change the finish line at the Arrow River, affecting the course, timing and results for age-group finishers.

St John Ambulance treated about 110 patients.

Central Otago territory manager Kelvin Perriman said about 40 people were treated on the course between Glendhu Bay and Arrowtown, while another 70 were treated at the Wilcox Green control centre. Four athletes were flown off the course by helicopter to the Lakes District Hospital - two with foot injuries, one with a head injury and one with a back injury - while another four people were taken by road ambulance to hospital from Wilcox Green. Two of those people were spectators who suffered a medical emergency.