

Countdown to Portugal AR World Champs



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The Adventure Race World Championship have just started. Kiwi team Orion Health are defending their AR World Champion title claimed in Brazil last year...

...(Wayne Oxenham, Stu Lynch, Anna Berthelson & Brent Edwards) are the same members as in 2008 which has proven to be a formidable combination. Other Kiwi's include Nga Rakau team (Mark Struthers, Tim Cochrane, Neil Kerrison & Fiona McBryde), along with Chris Forne, (who has won a world title with Nike in the past), and George Christison, both racing for Team Nike. There is also team Lundhags home to Kiwi Aaron Prince.

The Kiwi's will be up against 58 international teams on the start line. Racers begun their adventure on 8th Nov, covering a total estimated distance of 700/800 km, with approximately 120 hours in non-stop format to complete the race. All teams have 4 members, and it is compulsory to have at least one female member. Looks like this race edition will provide more than enough adventure and excitement for all, with the race designed to offer much natural and cultural heritage, ranging from Jurassic era, to the Palaeolithic, Roman, Arabic, Medieval, & Modern times. The landscape in Lusitanea, "Land of Light" is beautiful, with the terrain ranging from tricky and physically demanding in some parts, to a complete nightmare in other parts, which will test racer's resilience to the limits.

One particular challenge racers are looking forward to taking on are the technicalities involved in navigation, particularly at night, which will require acute precision and focus. Around 39% of the predicted time, the teams will be walking/running, 41% biking, 18% paddling, and 1% roller blading. The longest section is the 160km MTB section, having the largest share of the 907km race, with more than 57% of the total racing distance.



Wayne Oxenham, captain of defending world champions Orion Health thinks the Portugal race location, "looks very interesting.

Steep and rugged. Loads of little tracks all over the place, which will make it challenging." He has a few clues at this stage as to the course and terrain, "900+km, lots of biking. Two 50km paddles in plastic sit on tops. About 20 stages in the race. Optional check points may mean the race is confusing for spectators and us racers. I just hope we get the right information to make good decisions on," said Oxenham.

In sizing up the course and teams, Wayne comments, "There's a very strong field with perhaps 10 teams all capable of winning. Having raced here before and being able to communicate with the locals will be an advantage. Nike (with George and Chris), Blackheart, Lundhags (with Aaron Prince), Buff, a couple of good French teams. They're all in with a shot. I think decision making about the optional cp's will be very important, thus the value in having raced here before."

With a good build up following the Primal Quest, Team Orion Health are in top shape, "Everyone is well except me, I caught a bug on the plane from the person that sat next to me and coughed the whole way. So I'm a bit under the weather. The build up has been pretty good for us though, we all settled into a few weeks good training once we recovered from the 1000km at Primal Quest," said Oxenham.

Mark Struthers, captain of team Nga Rakau is lapping up the pre-race accommodation, "The pre-race accommodation is luxurious! Close to a small town on the coast called Cascais, full of narrow streets and cobblestones. The weather is warm enough, but windy. Long nights, dark at 6pm, not light till 7am," said Struthers.

Struthers has heard promise of some extremely technical navigation in this year's race, "Limited information so far on the race itself. They talked about last year's race - based in a similar spot - which did a big loop to the south, taking in a section of the 'Portugese Desert' it's not going over any of that ground! So maybe will head north of here. Will apparently do a day in a the Sintra national park which is north of here. They've promised extremely technical navigation, lots of tracks and route choice and lots of decisions to make. Less roller-blading than last year, but still a couple of significant legs. One of them apparently includes a big down hill!" said Struthers.

Team Nga Rakau are expecting some strong competition,

"Lots of teams did last year's race which will be an advantage. Spanish and French teams likely to be strong.

Best of luck to all our kiwis giving it their all over in Portugal.

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