

THEY CAME, THEY SAW, WE CONQUERED

WHAT A FANTASTIC THREE DAYS.

In a true celebration of the best our sport has to offer, we saw courage, drama, action aplenty, and in the end, our Gizzy kids conquered the rest of the country. Welcome to the NZ Secondary Schools' National Triathlon and Open Water Swimming Championships.

We got what we wanted (and maybe even a bit more☺) – as we invited the rest of NZ to our little corner of summer paradise.

A fun Pasta Party set the ball rolling on Wednesday night – one of many new experiences for regulars at the Nationals, as things quickly began to feel like an 'event.'

DAY 1 - Thursday dawned with BIG swells for the Individual Triathlon. While our pale visitors looked on anxiously, our kids squealed with delight. This is what we have trained in, this is what we wanted. Thanks Glen Sutton for everything! Numerous kids from all age groups were unable to accept the challenge of the waves; our kids just swam like dolphins. Our sincerest sympathies to all the parents who felt it was unfair to have to swim in the surf ☺. A full list of Gisborne results follows, but Tom van Kregten started everything off brilliantly placing 2nd in the U12 Boys – at just 10 years old. Kate Blakeman was also 2nd in the U13 Girls, with Christy Tate just 2 seconds away from a medal.

Then came the U14s. And Olivia Corrin. No one else knew about Olivia, but we did. A huge lead out of the water, just holding her lead on the cycle, then smashing the field on the run – **GOLD**. And to add the icing to the cake, Alicia Hoskin blitzed the field on the cycle leg and ran strongly to grab 3rd. Our Canadian import Josiah Ney all but repeated the medal colour in the Boys' race, battling fiercely before accepting 2nd while Jack McLaughlin ran his best race ever for 11th.

The U16 Boys and Girls all showed character and pride, while not quite making the step up to the podium level. Kendra Tate just beat home Hannah Overbye, while a strong swim by Reefahn Brown-Terekia helped him see off the challenge from Michael Webb. Little did all four know how special Day 2 would be for them.

And so to the U19s. And the battle for silver for the rest of the competitors. Up stepped National Champion Tayler Reid, and he left the field for dead. With a huge lead out of the water, Tayler battled the head winds on the cycle by himself, incredibly extending his lead while the chasers rode in draft formation. The run was a formality, but Tayler only stopped when he crossed the line in the 'Moment of the Nationals' – receiving an emotional, powerful haka from his school mates. **GOLD**.

Two National Champions, and we hadn't even made it to lunchtime on the first day.

The afternoon relays saw more Gisborne Glory. Three team mates raced one leg of the triathlon each (so you could enter discipline specialists in this event.)

Excitement in both U12 races – Gislnts Briana Irving, Brooke Morrison and Samantha Durston not only smoked the girls' race, they even beat home the winning Gislnt boys of Caleb Ney, Logan Fergus and Michael Picket! **GOLD** and **GOLD**.

The second most one sided race of the Nationals went to the U14 Girls' High team of Olivia, Alicia and Ngahaia Wilson. **GOLD**. It really didn't seem fair on the rest ☺.

A delighted trio of Georgia Donnelly, Courtney Hoskin and Ella Andrew from Girls' High collected 3rd in the U19 Girls to complete an awesome day for Team Gisborne – five gold medals. And we'd only just started.

DAY 2 – Friday. Yes!! More surf, but this time with big, clean waves. Even better ☺. A new event, welcome to the Aquathon – a swim/run event, just made for Gizzy kids! First race, U12 Boys. Tom van Kregten **GOLD**, Nicolas Proffit, 2nd. Great start, and it only got better. In a family affair, Tom's big sister Ella placed 3rd in the U13 Girls, while Nicolas' big brother Matthew crossed first in the U13 Boys – **GOLD**.

Then came the U14s. And Olivia. It must have been fun lining up against the best swimmer and runner in NZ (for the rest of the field) and she blew them all away to win by nearly four minutes. **GOLD**. Boys can do anything too, and Josiah Ney showed his fierce determination to turn yesterday's silver to a better colour medal. In the best race of the morning, Josiah reversed places with his Christchurch rival – **GOLD**.

Reeftahn gave another strong performance in the U16 Boys, a valuable warm up for his big afternoon, before the Tayler Reid Show resumed. Another huge swim lead saw the lonely Tayler again run away from the rest of the field all by himself. **GOLD**.

And then the excitement stepped up – the first ever Super Sprint Teams Relay – two girls and two boys – from either the same school or two single sex schools – running a greatly shortened triathlon each. Did I say EXCITEMENT!! You had to be there to experience the tension, the thrill, and for Gizzy kids, the delight!

Up first, the U12s 2 Fast 4 U...and they were. Holly Williams, Joely Wardle, Caleb Ney and Logan Fergus from Gislnt – **GOLD**.

Then came the U14s. This just wasn't fair ☺. Already with 5 golds between the GGHS and GBHS team mates, this was such a delight to watch, if you came from Gizzy! Olivia, Jack, Alicia and Josiah won by over four minutes – **GOLD**.

Surely that was it. Up stepped the gutsy U16s. Another GGHS/GBHS team, hoping they might just sneak a medal. But as Kendra Tate, Michael Webb, Hannah Overbye and Reeftahn Brown-Terekia ran the races of their lives, and one by one passed their opponents, suddenly the most unexpected – and therefore thrilling result of the day arrived – **GOLD**. Congrats team, you deserved this (says a proud dad ☺.)

Awesome prize giving, awesome food, awesome music, and lots of happy Gizzy people.

DAY 3 – Saturday. More surf, but much cleaner. The decision was made to shift the Open Water Swimming race to Waikanae Beach, but that just made the very hot day a little bit more pleasurable, as the big crowd walked down the beach following the swimmers.

First up was the U12s, and Edan Wilson, with 7th in the girls and Nicolas Proffit with 8th in the boys' race gave strong accounts of themselves. In the U13 Girls, Clare Milne finished a solid 3rd. Then came Olivia, again. **GOLD** in her closest finish of the three days – winning by 'just' 30 seconds. She is a real talent; it will be a lot of fun for everyone to see how her career progresses. Josiah just missed a wave near the end of his race, and consequently missed another medal by the slimmest of margins.

Jessica Blakeman grabbed a deserved 3rd in the U16 girls, with Danielle Scott a close 5th, and with another year in this age group. A solid swim by Margeaux Pittar saw her exit the water with a big smile. Blake Brown, a strong surf club swimmer took an excellent 3rd in the U16 Boys while Reeftahn and Michael completed a good three days for each.

Congrats to Lytton's Jaimee Fisher, on another 3rd in the U19 Girls. Then the big one – Matt v Tayler. The 1500m was no problem for Matt Scott as he followed up his U16 win last year with the big one in 2014 **GOLD**, Tayler taking 3rd spot.

What a three days!

Seven individual titles.

Six team titles.

Twenty one kids can now proudly say they are National Champions.

A further ten kids medalled.

The smallest triathlon area had the biggest swag of medals.

Read it, and be in awe, the rest of New Zealand.

And let's not forget for a second that neither hosting the Championships themselves, nor especially the unbelievable local success, would have been possible without the fantastic coaching and never-ending 'giving' of our super coach John Scott. We are immeasurably grateful.

Gizyy kids rule the world!

Gizzy kids rock!