



## KELLOGG'S NUTRI-GRAIN IRONMAN NEW ZEALAND: 35 YEARS YOUNG!

This year's Kellogg's Nutri-Grain IRONMAN New Zealand marks the 35th anniversary of the iconic IRONMAN New Zealand event.

Formerly held in Auckland, the staging of the race began in 1985. Things have changed since then, when 157 athletes raced over a shorter course, starting with a 3.2km swim in Mission Bay before mounting their bikes for a 160 kilometre ride out to Kawakawa Bay and back before completing a scenic 32 kilometre run along the waterfront.

Although the distance was shorter, wetsuits were akin to the thicker variants surfers wear! This was the pre-aero bar era for cyclists and steel framed bikes were the norm, as opposed to the carbon fibre beauties we see now!

Just as triathletes' kit has evolved over time, the event has too, moving to the full IRONMAN distance in 1988 and eventually transferring to our scenic Taupō District in

1999, when 707 athletes completed the race.

These days we see almost double this number, with about 1200 athletes taking up the challenge each year, and over 2000 volunteers turning out to help at registration, hand out nutritious snacks and present medals and towels to finishers, among other things.

The support from locals here in the Taupō District is nothing short of exceptional. Our love for this event has forged a long history and exciting future for the sport here in New Zealand. The partnership with our IRONMAN whanau has seen the event grow into what it is today and was a factor in us winning the hosting rights for the 2020 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championships.

Taupō District Mayor David Trewavas said the community had embraced the event more and more over the years it had been based in Taupō.

"The Kellogg's Nutri-Grain IRONMAN event is a highlight for us every year and something I know our community always looks forward to," he said. "The town really comes alive and the atmosphere is electric. We can't wait to play host again this year!"

Come and enjoy this iconic event for another year here in Taupō on March 2, - we will be down on the lakefront from the crack of dawn!

We are all out for Ironman this week to mark the 35th anniversary of the Kellogg's Nutri-Grain IRONMAN New Zealand!



## LETTERS FROM CHILDREN INSPIRE ATHLETES

Letters from Taupō school children have proved a hit with Kellogg's Nutri-Grain IRONMAN New Zealand athletes.

The initiative was introduced last year, with a letter of encouragement placed in athletes' race packs. This has led many athletes to try and find their letter writers through their schools.

Athlete Fred Housham contacted his letter writer, 13-year-old Jack Mortimer, after being touched by the letter from the 2018 event.

After sending a thank you note back to Jack, the pair had the opportunity to meet after a triathlon camp in Taupō that Fred attended.

"Jack's letter had a really inspiring line on it which I have always remembered; it never gets any easier, you just get better," he says.

"It was great to take the opportunity to meet Jack and his family and hear about his sporting endeavours too. I still have the letter at work on the fridge."

Likewise Jack was touched by the catch-up.

"Meeting Fred was cool. He was really supportive of my sport too and it was great to hear my letter inspired him with his race."

This year's race packs all include letters from local school students - hopefully they add to the inspiration again!



Above: Athlete Fred Housham and student Jack Mortimer have both provided inspiration for each other through their correspondence.

## ATHLETES WIN UNIQUE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE



This year athletes went into a draw through social media to learn a hoake or haka, its meaning, history, words and actions.

Twelve lucky winners were selected by us at the council and representatives from IRONMAN New Zealand. These athletes took up the challenge and the experience to learn, embrace and perform the haka at the official Athletes Welcome Function on Thursday, February 28. The moment was not as daunting as they were supported during the performance by the local Tūwharetoa affiliated Tuhingamata kapa haka group.

Hoake, literally means "burning heart". This is a manawa wera style of haka, or rhythmic chant, performed by both male and female. The athletes have learned to draw on their internal emotions to express themselves with explosive energy. A great experience in the lead up to the big event!