

Quest Glendalough 2016

Adventure Race Formguide

The Quest Glendalough race this Saturday is the 1st Expert and 2nd Sport event of the 2016 National Adventure Race Series. This is a new event on the calendar but has been sold out since early February which is a testament to the healthy demand for good races in nice places. With the good weather forecast the 1000+ participants are in for a testing treat in some of Wicklow's finest scenery including the Shay Elliott (First Irishman to wear Tour De France's leader's yellow jersey) bike climb, Glenmalure valley (Wicklow's traditional rebel stronghold since the 15th century) and the iconic Glendalough valley where competitors will be the first to be given permission to kayak in the stunningly situated upper lake.

Dessie Duffy is Expert Series champion for the past 2 seasons and has to be foremost amongst the favourites to win here if his form is back to what we know he is capable of when on top form. First time fatherhood recently might give him a different priority list by times but he tends to keep in shape and generally injury free throughout the season and so is the one they all seem to have to beat here.

GFW perennial winner of yesteryear Peter O Farrell is another with fatherhood priorities this past season but he has been training specifically for this event recently and will certainly know the bike legs well. The quite hilly and frequent transition nature of the event should suit him but he is one that tends to peak later in the season and will be content to try and make the podium here in a good quality line up.

David Power and Barry Cronin are a pair that will both be suited by the running sections but whether their cycling is enough to place them on the podium is unclear at this stage. Power's form is generally very good at this time of the year whilst Cronin is still improving his biking as was needed. He has picked up the winning ways in recent races like the 55k Quest Killarney event last month which is always good for the confidence. Brendan Buck is probably the best of the Wicklow Tri club contingent and is another with good course knowledge who could challenge for a podium if his early season form is good.

The dark horse of the pack could well be Gearoid Hynes from Galway who had a super performance in Connemara a few years back and he could have the talent to tackle the top guy if in good shape.

Other likely top 10 contenders include Go Tri's Paul Tierney, Brian Lawlor, Mark Walker, Tinahely Tri's Stephen Perry, and proven ultra mountain runner Torben Dahl who's biking tends to let him down in these events.

In the ladies Expert contest 2015 Series winner Lorraine Horan turns up to defend her title but it looks like that will be a hard task given the opposition facing her in this very strong line up.

2014 Series champion Moire O Sullivan returns to action after a season off having her second child and her focussed training at her new Mourne mountains base looks likely to leave her in great shape to continue her winning ways of the 2014 season.

Emma Hand had 4 Series wins in 4 races in 2015 and will look to continue this sequence here. Her running may not be as strong as previous seasons due to some injury problems but reportedly her biking has improved so she should be a definite podium contender here.

Ellen Vitting has had good past event podium form including a win at Moxie last year and is likely to be improving so should challenge for the podium as could Caroline Conway who had a win and a 2nd in sport events at Moxie and Achill last season and will be looking to make a breakthrough at the Expert level this season as she has a stamina pedigree behind her in other event.

Paula Prendergast is a top runner who made the podium in GFW last year but will need her biking to improve to podium here on this hilly course as will current champion Horan.

Others with definite top 8 ambitions include Waterford's Elaine Mullen, Orla Mc Evoy & Sarah Mulcahy.

The sport race sees the renewal of the 2015 season long rivalry between Series winner Kieran Cosgrove and perennial runner-up John Paul O Connell who made the breakthrough when winning the Sports Series opener in Killarney last month.

Cosgrove is teak tough competitor with great tactical awareness and he has traditionally eeked out narrow victories over his southern rival (3 of 3 in their mechanical free head to heads last season) but as the years move on the gap is likely to be closing and on this slightly running biased Sport course this could be O Connell's chance to turn the tables. He will be ably backed up by his bother Seamus who was runner up in Killarney and it will be interesting to see if team tactics play a part any the event.

The ladies contest seems wide open for any one of a number of talented newcomers to the scene to take their maiden victory.