

Wanaka double at multisport champs

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Dougal Allan's vague plans of retirement have been well and truly shelved after a brilliant win in the Australasian multisport championships in Rotorua today.

The 28-year-old Wanaka athlete toppled two-time champion Richard Ussher in a dramatic late surge, after doggedly pursuing the Nelson multisport legend over the final 11km run leg through the Whakarewarewa Forest.

Allan crossed in 2hrs 38mins 44secs, only taking the lead 1.5km from the end but doing enough over the final stretch to post a convincing 24sec margin over Ussher in the feature race of the ThermoTech 3D Rotorua Multisport Festival.



Richard Ussher (left) leads Tim Grammar (middle) and Travis Mitchell on the kayaking leg of the 2013 Australasian Multisport race at the ThermoTech 3D Rotorua Multisport Festival.

Photo by Jamie Troughton/Dscribe Journalism

"I'm getting married in December and I'm building a house this year and it's just so hard to do those things when you're competing at the highest level," Allan, who works part-time as a lifeguard at the Wanaka community swimming pool, explained. "I was starting to think that I should put sport on hold but since I told my coach that, I've pretty much won every race I've done. This win probably means I'm going to stay in the sport a bit longer and the break I was planning to have might not be so long."



Wanaka's Dougall Allan on his way to winning the 2013 Australasian Multisport race at the ThermaTech 3D Rotorua Multisport Festival. Photo by Jamie Troughton/Dscribe Journalism

Allan was understandably jubilant with the win, his second conquering of Ussher in the last eight months after beating him at the Lake Waikaremoana Challenge late last year. He was even more thrilled when workmate and fellow Wanaka athlete, German-born Simone Maier, created another upset in the women's race.



Wanaka's Simone Maier on her way to winning the 2013 Australasian Multisport race at the ThermaTech 3D Rotorua Multisport Festival. Photo by Jamie Troughton/Dscribe Journalism

Maier, better known for her triathlon exploits, overcame a slow kayak start on Lake Tikitapu to cruise home in 3:04:04, more than 2mins ahead of Nelson's Coast to Coast champion Sophie Hart, who finished in 3:06:45. Two-time champion Elina Ussher could only manage third in the stacked field, finishing in 3:08:58.

"Paddling is not my strength and I was happy to make it through without having a swim," 33-year-old Maier, who borrowed a spare kayak off the Usshers, said. "My training is based around triathlon but I really enjoyed the bike and the run was amazing - I was just blown away by the scenery."

Hart, who was raised a short distance away in Ohope, opened up a clear lead on the kayak and only conceded it in the opening exchanges of the run.

"I knew I had to have a strong paddle because my mountain biking is probably not my strongest discipline," Hart said. "I knew I had to have a bit of a gap coming off the water. It wasn't quite enough as it turned out but I feel like I raced really well."



Wanaka's Simone Maier is congratulated by Sophie Hart after winning the 2013 Australasian Multisport race at the ThermaTech 3D Rotorua Multisport Festival. Photo by Jamie Troughton/Dscribe Journalism

Wanaka athletes continued to feature through the top-10 - rising star Jess Simson, who won the two-day title at the Coast to Coast this year, was fourth in 3:10:01, ahead of Rotorua local Nic Leary, while Deanna Blegg was again the first Australian home in sixth. Emily Wilson and Ailsa Rollinson (both Wanaka) were seventh and eighth, while Kim Beckinsale (Australia) and Christchurch's Sia Svendsen rounded out the top-10.

Richard Ussher, meanwhile, was far from despondent at losing his title after a tough start to the year, rocked by illness. He was 11mins clear of fellow Nelson athlete Trevor Voyce, happy to have been part of a gripping finish.

"I just got beaten by a better man on the day - when he went for it on the run, there was nothing I could do," Ussher said. "I just didn't have the legs to follow but it's nice to feel healthy again and nice to be able to push hard and race at a good level."

Ussher had decent company on the opening kayak leg, joining renowned kayaker Tim Grammar and national surf ski champion Travis Mitchell out in front. He pulled away on the bike, though Allan eventually caught him near the end. The pair swapped the lead for much of the run leg before Allan's final push.

James Pretto was the best Australian in fourth, just behind Voyce, while Mitchell completed a memorable multisport debut by holding on to finish ninth.

Results from the 50km Australasian multisport championships, part of the ThermaTech 3D Rotorua Multisport Festival, in Rotorua today:
(9km kayak, 30km mountain bike, 11km run)

Men: Dougal Allan (Wanaka) 2hrs 38mins 44secs 1, Richard Ussher (Nelson) 2:39:08 2, Trevor Voyce (Nelson) 2:50:10 3, James Pretto (Australia) 2:50:35 4, Luke Osborne (Hastings) 2:54:33 5, Seamus Meikle (Greymouth) 2:58:14 6, Sam Manson (Auckland) 3:00:29 7, Sam Stedman (Australia) 3:03:57 8, Travis Mitchell (Mairangi Bay) 3:07:37 9, Andrew Mowlem (Auckland) 3:08:41 10.

Women: Simone Maier (Wanaka) 3:04:04 1, Sophie Hart (Nelson) 3:06:45 2, Elina Ussher (Nelson) 3:08:58 3, Jess Simson (Wanaka) 3:10:01 4, Nic Leary (Rotorua) 3:10:46 5, Deanna Blegg (Australia) 3:19:41 6, Emily Wilson (Wanaka) 3:25:42 7, Ailsa Rollinson (Wanaka) 3:27:12 8, Kim Beckinsale (Australia) 3:27:19 9, Sia Svendsen (Christchurch) 3:31:27 10.