

Anscombe the hero as Auckland into semis

Win over Tasman earns them another Eden Park date

RUGBY

Auckland leapt into the National Provincial Rugby championships semifinals yesterday, elbowing aside Taranaki ahead of next weekend's playoffs.

A personal haul of 34 points by young first five-eighth Gareth Anscombe lifted them to a bonus point 49-10 home win over Tasman, a result which promoted them to second and earned them another Eden Park date against Waikato.

The composition of the top four was not clear until after the game, with top qualifiers Canterbury earning a home semifinal against Wellington, despite ending the round robin by being outplayed by Waikato in Hamilton.

Anscombe turned in a classy performance with three tries, his second in the 70th minute doubling as Auckland's bonus point fourth touchdown and crucial in pipping Waikato for second and so avoiding a playoff in Hamilton.

Auckland led 13-3 at the interval after managing just one try, to halfback Toby Morland.

The Aucklanders played more expansively after the break following Anscombe's third penalty and rammed home their advantage with three tries in the last 10 minutes.

Of the four remaining sides, Canterbury lack winning momentum, having lost 6-26 to Waikato.

Waikato built their win on an outstanding display by their forwards, particularly in the scrums.



POWERFUL: Auckland's Ben Atinga battles a Tasman challenge. PICTURE / APN

The Mooloo men, who scored a try either side of halftime, kept Canterbury scoreless in the second spell — and tryless over 80 minutes.

Three Trent Renata penalties gave Waikato an early lead.

and they secured too much possession, forcing the visitors into endless defence and eventually No 8 Alex Bradley burst the line. Renata's conversion gave Waikato a 16-0 lead, and only two late Colin Slade penalties before halftime gave Canterbury any hope.

Waikato extended their lead when Sosene Anesi scored in the 55th minute after another powerful display of scrummaging.

Wellington secured their spot in the semifinals with a gritty 27-14 win over a feisty Southland in Invercargill.

Wellington's young but dangerous backline showed their lack of experience while Southland, guided by the calming influence of first five-eighth Robbie Robinson, were slightly steadier and deservedly took an early lead.

But a composed kicking performance from youthful No 10 Lima Sopoaga, who landed two penalties and three conversions, and opportunist tries to centre Tajhon Mailata and wing Alapati Leiua helped Wellington subdue Southland. In other final round matches, Northland beat Bay of Plenty 36-24, Taranaki defeated North Harbour 49-47, Manawatu downed Otago 46-24 and Hawke's Bay beat Counties-Manukau 31-28.

— NZPA Results, p11

Rotorua rider savours taste of victory

SINGLE SPEED WORLDS

by Alison King
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It came down to who could drink their beer the quickest and that was one thing Rotorua mountainbiker Garth Weinberg hadn't practised.

Ten seconds separated Weinberg from 2009 Single Speed World Champion Ross Schnell as they entered the Waipa car park and raced for the beer tent that stood between them and the finish line.

Weinberg knocked his back and sped off, skidding across the line, landing on his backside full of jubilation. It was a moment he had been dreaming of, he said.

"It was a dream but never a reality," Weinberg said as he waited for the winner's tattoo to be inked.

"I knew who else was competing. I thought about it going through Dipper the last time. I could hear the crowd cheering for me, then I heard them cheering for Ross.

"I would have been stoked for top five. I knew there was a

"I knew there was a chance I would be up there but it all came together."

Garth Weinberg

chance I would be up there but it all came together."

Weinberg's race was that of a champion. He had a good start and picked off a few other contenders early on. He took the long course on the first lap, avoiding the beer tent, but suffered further on.

"I couldn't breathe going up Pig Track, I was trying to drink and ended up throwing up. I was trying to keep my head together and stop myself from choking on the vomit."

He came through and soon made up ground on Schnell, coming into the halfway mark seconds behind. The pair rode close together but while Schnell took the long way around Weinberg veered off for the beer shortcut and took the lead.

It was a lead he held on to until the finish, crossing the line after 1



ACTION MAN: Rotorua rider and world single speed champion Garth Weinberg shows no fear during his ride at the weekend. PICTURE / 231010KT1

hour and 55 minutes.

"I'd not practiced the beer drinking at all," Weinberg said.

"I'd already decided where the tattoo would go as this is the last time I'll win something like this. It will go on my heart."

Weinberg has been a one-gear rider for nine years and has attended three world championships. It was his attendance at the 2007 worlds in Scotland that

sowed the seed for the Rotorua event.

Pro tour cyclist Julian Dean pulled on a retro tracksuit from his own wardrobe for the event.

He said he had never had such an enjoyable time on the bike.

Results: Garth Weinberg (NZ) 1, Ross Schnell (USA) 2, Ben Bostrom 3, Mark Leishman (NZ) 4, Dan San Martin (AUS) 5. Women: Heather Logie (AUS) 1, Nic Leary (NZ) 2, Katie O'Neill (NZ) 3, Anja McDonald (NZ) 4, Janine Cavanagh 5.

Bizarre bikers quest for tattoo

by Alison King
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As far as world championship events go, this one had to be the most unorthodox experienced.

One thousand costumed mountainbikers, tackling the ups and downs of the Whakarewarewa forest in the quest for a tattoo — yes, a tattoo.

The Kiwibikes Single Speed World Championships are a niche event, involving beer short cuts and celebrating flamboyance.

Asterix, Obelisk, three Evel Knievels, a sumo wrestler, a clown, fairies, Vikings, a bear, a fully camouflaged rider and a disco ball — just a few of the hundreds of costumes carefully put together over the past 12 months.

There were the team of Australians wearing matching cricket jerseys and dreadlocks. The Bike Vegas crew decided to go one fur-

ther, dressing up as Croucher beer. They admitted later they managed just one of the two laps, with shop owner Dave Joy falling into the stream. Having a better ride was the Apocalypse Riders on their skeleton bikes. The group of English riders could have been mistaken for a New Zealand gang with their patched jackets. The superheroes were out in force, several Spidermans, Supermans, The Incredibles and Batman raced the trails. Kiwi comedy icon Fred Dagg had swapped his farm bike for a single speed complete with a cow bell. He rattled in among the final finishers to rapturous cheers.

Finishing the race wasn't everyone's goal, getting around just one lap was enough for some — broken chains, failed coaster brakes and flat tyres suffered on the course. Rotorua is unlikely to witness such a spectacle again but it was certainly a spectacle to behold.



CLOWNING AROUND: One thousand mountainbikers took part in the Single Speed Champs with many dressing for the occasion. PICTURE / 231010KT4

THE RACE

- A two-lap course totalling 40km.
- Four beer stops, including three short cuts and one to finish.
- 1000 riders, many in costume.
- A mix of trails from Grade 2 Dipper to Grade 5 Rock Drop.

Canberra visitor wins title

She's more familiar with adventure racing and has spent much of the past year racing hard.

For Canberra's Heather Logie, the Kiwibikes Single Speed World Championship was a way of kicking back, hanging out with friends and dressing up.

Winning the title was a bonus and meant getting inked for her first tattoo.

"I just wanted to have something really fun to look forward to at the end of the year. I've been racing since December. It's been focused and satisfying. This is the reward. I wanted to do something insane.

"I've had a week of loving the trails here. We've nothing like this back home.

"I made a decision not to do the three beer shortcuts

"This is the reward. I wanted to do something insane."

Heather Logie

as I thought my race would end pretty quickly if I did."

Logie finished just 30 seconds ahead of local favourite Nic Leary, who said she was gutted to have finished so close behind. She lost air in her front tyre in the first lap and had to stop to refill it. At the start of the second lap she had to do the same.

"It was really good fun but I had an early reminder to be careful, patient and smart," she said.

"I was among the masses at the start and I was trying to haul myself around to get by people. I got way too keen on the first descent and as I turned I burped air out of my front tyre. I crashed and had to gas the tyre to get going, which was fine."

She rode hard the rest of the way, avoiding the beer short cuts because of her pint size — "I'm small and my tolerance is low".

"If I had been patient I wouldn't have lost air but you have to have a go. I thought I was miles down but I got here [and saw how small the gap was]. I thought Heather had it in the bag." — Alison King