

# 2019 Avon Descent - Media Kit

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## **Background of Avon Descent**

The Avon Descent is the longest running multi-sport adventure event in Western Australia which pits both paddle and power craft in a thrilling and gruelling 124 kilometre marathon race against the elements over two days from the Shire of Northam to the City of Bayswater Finish Line at Riverside Gardens.

The two day course starts with a 52 kilometre stretch beginning at the Town of Northam, 100 kilometres east of Perth. The course proceeds downriver through the town of Toodyay into the upper reaches of the Darling Range escarpment. The overnight stop is the Boral Campsite located at Cobbler Pool 20 kilometres west of Toodyay.

The second day is 72 kilometres long and sees competitors tackle the valley containing the major white water obstacles and challenges of the event including Supershoot, Emu Falls, Championship Rapids and Bells Rapids. The rush of the valley leaves competitors with the marathon 30 kilometre, flat water stretch to Bayswater. While the victorious burst their way over the Finish Line the achievers are happy just to finish.

## **Greg Kaeding, NADA Chairman**

Chairman of Northam's Avon Descent Association Greg Kaeding said that 'water conditions were looking good for the Avon Descent weekend with levels expected around 0.5m and continuously flowing water from recharged groundwater catchments contributing to steady flow into the river. This will be particularly good news for the estimated 30% of competitors taking part in the variety of short course One Day Avon Challenge events occurring on both days of the Avon Descent weekend.

Of particular interest on Day 1 will be the Avon Schools Challenge from Northam to Toodyay and the Avon One Day Power Challenge from Northam to Cobblers Pool, whilst on Day 2 the Avon Surf Challenge surf boat circuit race and the Avon Paddle Challenge for U18 junior paddle competitors will entertain spectators waiting for the Avon descent full course competitors arriving just after 12 o'clock on Sunday. We are looking forward to some exciting international and interstate competitors competing and expect close if not record times' he said.

Greg is a former State and National medallist, Australian team coach, senior canoe and kayak instructor, accredited Level 2 coach, and current International Canoe Federation (ICF) competition official in the disciplines of canoe marathon and canoe sprint racing.

He is currently Chair of Paddle Australia's Sprint Race Technical Committee, a current national selector and has been a member of the national selection panels for numerous Australian junior, Under 23 and senior canoe sprint and marathon teams as well as a member of the selection panel for the 1992, 2012 and 2016 Olympiads. He was also a member of the national selection panels for the canoe marathon discipline for 16 consecutive years from 1986 - 2000.

# New and Notable to 2019

## **One Day Challenges**

The Avon Descent provides the opportunity for competitors not ready to take on the full 124km course. The *Avon Power Challenge*, *Avon One Day Paddle Challenge*, *Avon Surf Challenge* and the *SunSmart Avon Challenge*.

## **Avon Schools Challenges**

The Avon Schools Challenge is a new and integral part of the Avon Descent's commitment to developing physical and mental health across Western Australia and for fostering a new generation of world class athletes with students ages 14-21 competing in the first 30km of the Avon Descent, starting on the Avon Descent start line in Northam and finishing in Toodyay.

## **Official Charity partner zero2hero and Mental Health Ambassador**

Welcoming back our Official Charity Partner zero2hero with our Mental Health Ambassador Craig Whittome paddling and raising money for the zero2hero Camp Hero program helping to increase awareness of mental health issues. Read more of Craig's story on our website.

## **MyAvon Rewards**

An exclusive Avon Descent offers program promoting local businesses and giving back to competitors. myAvon Rewards is a competitor value-add initiative that provides a range of deals and offers in and around the Avon Descent catchment area to Avon Descent competitors and volunteers as part of their entry package. These offers become available during the Avon Descent festival period.

Northam's Avon Descent Association is committed to promoting tourism and considers this an important strategy of bringing together local business promotion and growth

## **Avon Super Challenge**

*The first ever Avon Descent was held in 1973 with only 49 entries, only 23 of those made it to the finish. Those pioneers lead the way for what has become one of WA's most iconic events. We are now entering a new era in the evolution of this great event bringing even greater challenges and new excitement.*

The Avon Super challenge is this evolution, and 2020 will mark the introduction of a whole new adventure racing aspect to the Avon Descent weekend for the first time in its history. What has long been known as the 124km battle of power and paddle will become a much more diverse multisport event with new race formats, new courses and much more excitement.

In 2019 we will be setting off the first paddle grid with a group of top local, interstate and international paddlers and adventure racers who will not just complete the full 124km paddle but also a 36km mountain bike leg in between. This is not something for the faint of heart. Should these challengers succeed, they will become the pioneers, leading a field of new challengers into an exciting new frontier in 2020.

## **Fun Family Days**

The Avon Descent is proudly associated with local shires that host their own parades, food festivals and fun family days! Visit the Avon Descent website for more information.

# Competitor Stories

## **Craig Whittome, *Ski - Single Open***

### **Fifth Avon Descent / Mental Health Ambassador and zero2hero Fundraiser**

As the Mental Health Ambassador for the 2019 Avon Descent it's important to get the message out there about mental health. I lost my brother to suicide in 2017 so by doing this event it helps my own mental health and gives me a voice to help others. Craig is raising money for zero2hero's Camp Hero program for children.

## **Jesse Phillips & Steve Bird, *Paddle Relay - Team of 2***

### **Competing and developing programs for young athletes**

Last paddled Avon Descent in 2009 (10 years ago) - this was the only opportunity we had as we were away every other year preparing for Sprint World Championships.

- Steve - currently, developing junior surf life-saving program at North Cottesloe SLSC; ski and board paddling a focus with some of his U19 athletes to enter Avon Schools Challenge & SunSmart Avon Challenge
- Jesse - training towards World Canoe Marathon Championships & coaching WA Sprint Pathways Squad (WASPS) towards performances at National Championships and beyond; WASPS athletes to enter Avon Schools Challenge & SunSmart Avon Challenge.

Both experienced in whitewater river racing: Winners of 30km Liffey Descent in Dublin (2010), 7th in K2 Fish River Marathon in South Africa (2010), 10th in K2 Sella Descent in Spain (2008) - all events internationally recognised as benchmark river races. Jesse competed in Avon Challenge (14km) when he was 14-16 at Aranmore College. Steve started competing in kayaking at school (Michaelhouse, South Africa).

## **Michael Baker, *Ski - Single Open***

### **13th Avon Descent**

I've been paddling since I was 18 and part of the Trigg Island Surf Club and was introduced to the Avon Descent by Andrew Mosel and Adam Bloomfield. I have raced all over the World and been selected and represented Australia on a number of occasions as a sprint and marathon kayaker.

## **Kat Bulk, *Ski - Single Open***

### **First time competitor and strong female sportsperson**

I first heard about the Avon Descent from John Carroll when we were training for Coast to Coast NZ a couple of years ago - his avid descriptions of the adventure and carnage immediately piqued my interest. Kayaking is the discipline that I have had to work hardest at, first of all to enjoy it, second of all to get some skill and third of all to get some speed. Super grateful to have stuck with it, and reaping the rewards of hard work now - have gone from a paddler that used to tremble uncontrollably before paddling the river, to getting thrills chasing complicated lines and seeking out some serious endurance paddles - can't wait to have a crack at the challenge of the Avon Descent!

## **Mark Irwin, *Ski - Double Open***

### **13th Avon Descent / Mayor of Stirling**

Mayor of Stirling, Mark Irwin taking up the challenge once again to do the Avon Descent on a Double Ski with his daughter. Mark is also a former President of Surf Life Saving in WA. I have paddled many times with best result a class win with Heath Wright. Have previously paddled with my son and now my daughter is jumping on the ski for a challenge.

## **Jay Branson, *Power - 10hp Sports***

### **26th Avon Descent / Five Time Power Boat 10hp Sports Class winner and record holder**

Justin Ferguson and I won the Avon Descent last year (2018) and broke the race record in the process. I also won the year before so this year I will be going for the hat-trick. I have won the Avon 5 times over the years and Justin has won it 4 times. I also have the honour of being a legend of the Avon Descent. I am also a Life Member of the Power Dinghy Racing Club. I love the Avon Valley and Paddle the river quite a lot around Avon time, but feel that there is nothing quite like driving a boat in the river when I can.

## **Paul Hepworth, *SUP - Open SUP***

### **Second Avon Descent / Made history in the SUP category**

Made history last year as the first competitor to ever complete the 124km Avon Descent course in the SUP category (Stand Up Paddleboard). This year Paul is returning to Take the Plunge for the second time!

## **Team Liddle, *Paddle Relay - Team of 4***

### **Family team - Jane, Peter, Michael & Bailie Liddle**

First paddled the Avon Descent with my husband Peter in 2013, since then we have competed every year either in teams or solo. Now 2 of our 3 children paddle as well and our third child is support crew. So every member is involved. - Jane Liddle

## **Serge Kurov, *Ski - Single Open***

### **First time competitor**

I had been paddling white water in catamarans in the school back in Russia, and then switched to endurance sports, primarily XC Skiing. When I moved to Australia I was already converted to adventure racing, and limited access to snow prompted me to start paddling in the bay and downriver more. I'm accomplished elite level adventure racer, owner of [adventurejunkie.com.au](http://adventurejunkie.com.au), event director at a few different adventure events and happy dad!

## **Anjie Lees, *Kayak - Single Marathon***

### **Third Avon Descent**

This will be my third Avon having a go in a Kayak Centre K1 as preparation for the Fish River Marathon in September in South Africa. We are bringing a whole team across from Sydney most have not completed anything like the Avon before.

The team is: Anjie Lees, Duncan Johnstone, Richard Barnes and Chris Stanley, Warwick Sherwood and Luke Barnett & Ben and Peter Taylor.

Special thanks to Michael Laloli for his amazing behind the scenes in sourcing boats locally for some of our team, receiving and getting all our boats through Scrutineering. He is also organising paddlers from Victoria and South Australia. He has been doing this for several years now.

# Competitors to Watch - Paddle

*In order by category*

Race ID	Category	Competitor 1	Competitor 2	Competitor 3	Competitor 4
504	Kayak - Double Marathon	John Hilton	Spencer King		
370	Kayak - Double Marathon	Darryl Long	Paul Genovesi		
369	Kayak - Double Marathon	Wayne Martin	Siobhan Martin		
325	Kayak - Single Marathon	Travis England			
800	Kayak - Single Marathon	James Morfitt			
363	Kayak - Single Marathon	Euan Cameron			
345	Kayak - Single Marathon	Andrew Mowlem			
334	Kayak - Single Wildwater	Phil Edwards			
675	Kayak - Single Wildwater	Malcolm Henning			
747	Ocean Racer - Single	David Martin			
559	Paddle Relay - Team of 2	William Lee	Andrew Crothers		
565	Paddle Relay - Team of 2	Ben Carrick	Jack Retty		
574	Paddle Relay - Team of 2	Gary Clarke	Ron Clarke		
566	Paddle Relay - Team of 2	Brad Headling	Troy Baird		
554	Paddle Relay - Team of 2	Peter Gigengack	Luke Walkemeyer		
600	Paddle Relay - Team of 4	Michael Liddle	Jane Liddle	Peter Liddle	Bailie Liddle
337	Recreational Paddle - Single	Warren Southwell			
413	Recreational Paddle - Single	Harry Langley			
508	Ski - Double Open	Cimon Albertsen	Byron Albertsen		
339	Ski - Single Open	Joseph Ford			
573	Ski - Single Open	Ric Yeates			
524	Ski - Single Open	Ron Mckenzie			
338	Ski - Single Open	Kiera Albertsen			
305	Ski - Single Open	Kevin Kelly			
346	Ski - Single Open	Michael Swain			
353	Ski - Single Open	Jose Costa			
403	Ski - Single Open	Daniel Smee			
792	Ski - Single Open	Morris Newton			
326	Ski - Single Open	Craig Whittome			
348	Ski - Single Open	Steven Wilde			
342	Ski - Single Open	Neil Cowley			

# Competitors to Watch - Power

Grid	Boat	Driver / Deckie	Contest
1	100	Matt Even / Nick Gardner	10hp Sports
1	144	Jay Branson / Justin Ferguson	10hp Sports
2	007	Michael Prosser / Perrin Franks	10hp Sports
2	190	Kris Parnell / Shaun Leavy	10hp Sports
3	9	Scott Goodbody / Justin Green	10hp Sports
3	186	James Clark / Ben Taylor	10hp Sports
4	188	Matthew Spencer / Richard Murray	10hp Sports
4	006	Chris King / Robert Burvill	10hp Sports
5	174	Darren Green / Nick Uyen	10hp Super Standard
5	172	Dean Pasco / Steve Found	10hp Sports
6	262	Chris Johnson / Jacob Paggi	10hp Super Standard
6	166	Todd Williamson / Lee Odonovan	10hp Sports
7	134	Graham Butt / Michael Ryan	10hp Standard
7	139	Shane Tregurtha / Zac Jonson	10hp Super Standard
8	158	Brad Watson / Brad Taylor	10hp Super Standard
8	202	Troy Kitcher / Sahara Kitcher	10hp Sports
9	092	Dave McConkey / Reece McIver	10hp Sports
9	151	Tim James / Ed Vaneer	10hp Standard
10	208	Della Carl / Damian Della	10hp Standard
10	176	Todd Crosswell / Jason Sieracki	10hp Super Standard



# NADA Chairman speech, Greg Kaeding

*Featured in the 2019 Avon Descent Event Guide.*

The 47th annual Avon Descent remains WA's longest running multisport community adventure event for a reason, because the Avon Descent is not a sport, it is a community event.

It continues to focus on engaging the community and recruiting, training and developing an ongoing pool of community volunteers who are inspired and motivated by those individuals, groups and families that seek that unique challenge of mind, body and spirit that is the Avon Descent.

'The Avon' as it is affectionately known, remains the only adventure event in the world that sees both power and paddle in both wild-water and flat water, side by side, in a competition, not against each other, but against the tyranny of distance, the clock, and the river.

Whilst today's Avon Descent affords the opportunity of a number of One Day Challenge events for young and old, for schools, for community groups and individuals, the integrity and intent of those intrepid early adventurers in the late 1960's is enshrined in the ultimate challenge of completing the two days and 124 kilometres of the Avon and Swan Rivers from Northam to Perth.

An event where the success of a competitor is as much a success for the families and individuals that support them, and where to succeed is a team effort, to be celebrated and appreciated by all involved from the time of early craft preparation, through the many training sessions, days and weekends over the year and the ultimate excitement of the adventure weekend.

We sincerely thank our supporters, sponsors, event partners, the WA Government and its agencies, the local governments through which the event is held and of course YOU the participants.

Without your continued interest, support and cooperation, delivering an event of this magnitude through the towns, cities, farmlands, forests, national parks and reserves would not be possible and would deny the over 200,000 spectators each and every year who grace the banks and the shores of the Avon and Swan Rivers from the start at the Town of Northam to the finish at Riverside Gardens, a unique spectacle of river racing which has become the mainstay of adventure event racing in Western Australia for nearly 50 years.

And regardless of water level, as always, we welcome our returning local and National champions and novice participants alike, to again Take the Plunge!

take the  
plunge!  
in 2019

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find out more at  
avondescent.com.au  
3-4 August



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MAP OVERVIEW

