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Special effort for the kids

By GRANT EDWARDS

SWIMMING from Mudjimba to Mooloolaba has been on Duane Cannell's bucket list.

The 46-year-old swimming instructor and physical education teacher is planning on giving that a big tick this year.

"One of the questions new clients ask you when they find out you're an open-water swimmer is 'have you done the Mudjimba island swim'. I'm sick of saying no," Duane said.

To be staged on May 14 and now organised by Atlas Multisports, the Mudjimba Island Swim has become a Sunshine Coast institution.

Raising money for Nambour and Currimundi special schools for their efforts, solo and team competitors swim from Mudjimba Beach, around Old Woman Island and finish the 11km journey at Mooloolaba.

To Page 2



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Exciting new phase for annual swim

From Page 1

Finding supporters for the swim was a simple task for Duane, who will have Mudjimba lifeguard Blair Day by his side as the paddler.

"I have seen the start and finish but I have never competed. I have talked about it many times," Duane said.

"I'd imagine it would be great feeling finishing the swim and seeing the kids.

"Especially working with young children every day, the cause is close to my heart.

"Ashley Robinson and Bill Hoffman have certainly started a legacy."

Swimming has always been a major part of Duane's life. Breaststroke was a strength during his school years, and after making several state teams, Duane went on to make finals for the Commonwealth Games and Pan Pacifics in the 1990s.

While posting sub 30-second times for 50m and 1:05 for the 100m, he typically finished fifth or sixth in the finals and was unable to break into the Australian swim team.

That led Duane to triathlon, and it was in 1993 that he represented Australia at Manchester's world age group championship where he finished 25th overall.

Duane had planned to continue the following year, but a bout of glandular fever saw him take time off from all sport.

His passion for swimming and competing saw Duane make a return to the pool and he has been teaching swimming for more than 20 years.

Teaching part-time at Woolloowin's Holy Cross and Sandgate's Sacred Heart Primary School, Duane is also kept busy teaching clients young and old through his Makin' Waves Swim School.

Travelling to the Coast most weekends, Duane officially made the move here six years ago where he has become well known in swimming and triathlon circles.

Racing at various open-water events in his age group about 10 times a year, he is regularly a divisional winner and each year heads for Hawaii to compete in the 3.6km Waikiki Rough Water Swim.

But the Mudjimba Island Swim will be a new challenge.

"Every time I hop in the ocean I find it therapeutic and relaxing, even for a long open-water swim," he said.



Duane Cannell is taking part in the Mudjimba to Mooloolaba charity swim. *Photo: Che Chapman*



Ashley Robinson (left) and Bill Hoffman brave the cold waters back in 2008. They took on the challenge to swim the journey in Speedos to raise extra money. *Photo: Warren Lynam*

"It's not a race, it's a charity swim, but I'll be upping the training. Training under Ken from Kawana in the adult squad, I'll be trying to do some 6km pool sessions. I'll be doing a lot of 400s, probably with 15 400s as the main set.

"Normally I do 10 in a main set, plus the warm up and warm down. The 400s are off a time base of six minutes with about 30-40 seconds of rest."

With Atlas Multisports taking over the organisation, this year's

event will also feature a 400m kids' swim at Mooloolaba.

Individual swimmers will still set off from 7.30am at Mudjimba, followed by the teams. The first swimmer is expected to reach Mooloolaba by 9.30am, while the kids' races will start at 10am.

Atlas race director Jason Crowther said he was looking forward to working with the committee to help build the annual swim.

"I'm excited to be organising an iconic event which ties in really

ISLAND SWIM

What: Island Charity Swim.

When: May 14, starting at 7am from Mudjimba Beach.

Entries: Submitted by April 20. Individual swimmers must raise \$1000 in sponsorship/donations to enter; teams of two \$1500; teams of four \$2500 and teams of six \$3000.

Contingency: If conditions are adverse the contingency is 2.5km loops at Mooloolaba Spit.

Kids' event: 400m swim to be staged from Mooloolaba Beach.

History: The swim started as a bet between Ashley Robinson and Bill Hoffman, and has raised more than \$1 million in 15 years.

Website: islandcharityswim.com.au

well with what I do with not-for-profit events," he said.

Atlas runs the Sunshine Coast Marathon Festival and the four-race Sunshine Coast Run Series.