

# Dean Johnson – Frostbuster 2009

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17 October 2009

No pre-race nerves here. On the morning of the race, I was feeling very relaxed. Calm. Casual. Some might say totally lacking in focus.

At a leisurely pace, I drove with my support crew from Christchurch to the start line on Saturday morning. My support crew consisted of my kids, aged seven and five, and my wife, Debbie – an understanding fellow multisporter. Her turn comes later, when I support her in the Teva Big Day at the Office, a considerably gnarlier event.



The Frostbuster is a three stage race which starts at the bottom of the Mount Hutt access road. It begins with an 8 km off-road run, then comes a 25 km road ride and it finishes with an 18 km paddle down the Rakaia River. Don't believe the marketing material which states it's a 15 km paddle. Last year they said it was 12 km. My GPS is adamant it's 18.

The problem with cruising casually to the start is finding somewhere to park your bike. The run is a loop, finishing at the start line, where the bikes are lined up against a farm fence. Ideally, you want your bike as close to the start line as possible. Mine ended up approximately halfway to the kayak transition. Oooh darn.

The race started in a novel way, with someone hitting a golf ball. The start was briefly delayed because someone's support crew was standing in the firing line. Oh crap, that's my wife and kids! Thank goodness the golfer guy didn't hook it, or slice it, or whatever the golfing term is, or it would have scythed through the competitors, eliminating half the field before they started.

The run leg is superb, with a little bit of everything. Gravel road, river bed and a viscous little hill. I mean really nasty.

From the moment the golf club struck that ball, the laid back attitude was cast aside. I was Captain Focus. I was Doctor Dedication. I was having fun.

Two minutes later I was Puffing Percy. The pace was pretty hot (for me), but once I reached the river bed I was in my element. I love the rough stuff. I made up a lot of places in the river. The elation was short lived, as I then lost most of them once we hit that damn hill.

Nevertheless, I had a great run and, after crossing the run start/finish line, I jogged on for several kilometres until I reached my bike.

The bike leg was largely uneventful, unless you count each person passing me as an "event". I had a minor gear failure on the bike, which I can't blame in any way for my lacklustre performance. The bike computer's wheel magnet had fallen off, so all I had to look at was my cadence, and that was just depressing. Actually, I could monitor speed on my heart rate monitor / GPS unit (OK, so I like my gadgets), but that was no more encouraging, so I stopped bothering.

Mercifully I arrived at the long downhill stretch to the river. I took great pleasure in passing a car on the bridge (I had passed sod-all bikes, after all).

The kayak leg went well, although I got to the pylons and thought "not long to go now". Wrong. Still, no-one passed me on the river – I guess all the fast paddlers had already passed me on the bike!

For the first hour of the paddle I was trying desperately to catch a guy in front of me. I finally got him with about 8 minutes to go. It turned out to be Mike "Mouse" Robson, a fellow Complete Performance student. We battled it out for a bit and about 200 meters from the finish line he appeared to take a better channel than me. Damn, he was going to pop out in front. And then he beached. "Bad luck" I shouted (hee hee hee).

With 50 meters to go I saw Kim, my Complete Performance Coach, standing at the finish line. So I got my paddle technique sorted as well as I could – to make it look like I had been maintaining it all the way – and beamed a big smile.

My exit from the kayak was less than perfect (more on that later) and as I was hobbling and slipping around on the rocks in the run to the line, someone zipped past me. Mouse, damn it. I put on a sprint and we crossed the line together. Sort of. OK, so Mouse was a millisecond in front.

And the reason for my poor kayak exit? My support crew was nowhere to be seen. It turns out Debbie was helpfully assisting some of my mates at the bike / kayak transition and didn't get away in time.

Never mind, the Teva Big Day at the Office is coming up and revenge is sweet.

Dean Johnson.