

## Tour de Tasman 2011: Two Days, 1 Double JKK Quaser Kayak, 8 Races and 2 Team mates!

This year we had even more excitement and adventure than usual at this kayaking event! We arrived to start the first race on Saturday morning only to hear that there had been a Tsunami warning and we were waiting for clearance to race! The wind and rain didn't help my active imagination during the waiting! Luckily we didn't have to wait long, put in at Marahau and paddled to the start of Stage 1 (Coquille Bay) which would include navigating the famous Mad Mile!

It was a very challenging Saturday! Leah was not well and I probably shouldn't have let her paddle at all but she was super keen so we started our adventure. The first stage was along the mad mile to anchorage. The mad mile seemed more like 10 mad miles! Huge, messy waves descended on us from all directions as we bobbed around one way and another. Various thoughts flashed through my head including "Rosie's coaching tips, not wanting to tell Jan Kees that we had lost his boat and were we actually paddling into a tsunami! Our communication was good if a little squeaky at times. I think we were both terrified but kept focused on encouraging each other along through each wobble and giant wave until we eventually popped out into the relative calm of Anchorage bay. I was completely exhausted so I can't even imagine what Leah felt like! Most people on the tour found this leg tough but the hardened surf skiers found it extremely entertaining and wanted more! The rescue boat was very busy and did a great job getting everyone back in their boats for more excitement.

We had a well needed recovery break at anchorage hut before stage 2, a 4km time trial race which was a circuit starting and finishing from Anchorage. Even this included some exciting side waves and for 1 moment I thought we had lost it as we had a major wobble but managed to pull through, I think we were still recovering from the mad mile stage.

By the end of this race poor Leah was looking very pale so it was time for her to stop. So now I had a problem, a 2 person kayak and only me! I surveyed my racing buddies for a suitable suspect and somehow managed to convince Louise Egerton to jump in the front of the Quaser. Yay, what an awesome gal! She gave up racing in her JKK Total SS to join me in the double! Having never been in a double I suspect that she didn't know any better and thought it would just be a big eclipse - tee hee! I don't know who was Sh1t\*ng themselves more, me or her!! We paddled for 5min in the sheltered bay before the next race back along the mad mile to Watering Cove (we didn't have much choice as it was the only way back!) I seem to recall her muttering that that the boat was a lot skinnier at the front that she thought it would be! Once out of shelter I could see the white caps and boats in front of us were disappearing from view as huge waves rolled through and I knew we would find out very soon how we worked as a team! Somehow we stayed upright and after a lot of cajoling and goodness knows what else came out of my mouth we arrived intact and upright at the other end of the mad mile :) I used a lot of concrete pills but Louise was awesome and quickly stepped up to the job. I don't think I've ever been so far out of my comfort zone, so an awesome experience to look back on and know that I can survive!

Stage 4 was pretty tame in comparison from Watering Cove to Coquille Bay and we even spotted a penguin! Although we were both pretty shattered by this time and it took a lot of will power to push ourselves. Then of course we had to paddle back to Marahau where the cars were – groan!!!

Slept like a log on Sat night!

Sunday morning we awoke to the complete opposite! Clear, calm, sunny. On the paddle to the start we even saw a pod of dolphins playing in the distance, it couldn't have been more different than Saturday. However it did mean that we could get on with some good solid racing without worrying about stability and we could now focus on our race goals rather than survival against the elements.

Stage 5 was a 10.5km race and a good chance to see how the body was holding up after yesterday's efforts. We soon got into our rhythm in the double and enjoyed the experience, being able to give everything without worrying about falling in!

Stage 6 was a full on 3km TT followed by a 20m sprint up the beach! Yay, some running at last 😊

Stage 7 took us around the back of Fisherman Island and we were able to make use of the slight surf in our long double as we sped towards Split Apple Rock where we hauled ourselves onto the beach very glad that there was only 1 race to go.

Stage 8 was the final 2km Sprint from Split Apple Rock to Ngaio Island and back. This time there was a mass start which made for lots of exciting wash and there was a lot of close paddling as we all battled for the best/quickest lines. Got to the end completely stuffed and had a very cruisey paddle back to Marahau beach where our next mission soon dawned on us! How rude – the tide was way, way out so we had to carry our boats at least half a km back to our cars!

It was a fantastic weekend of thrills and spills. A Big Thanks to JKK for letting us use his awesome double Quaser kayak. The race was very well run and involved a very friendly bunch of kayakers. Full results are available at:

<http://www.tourdetasman.co.nz/>