

timaruherald.co.nz**The Timaru Herald**

Bikers prime for Centennial race

By BETHANY MARETT - The Timaru Herald Last updated 05:00 16/01/2010

Elite mountain bike riders are expected to line up in this month's new-look South Canterbury Mountain Bike Cup.

Event organiser Chris Thomas said they already had several top New Zealand mountain bikers requesting race information for the event after the demise of the Canterbury Mountain Bike Cup.

The details of the new-look event were announced yesterday, with the event now having an expanded four-race format traversing the South Canterbury region.

Mr Thomas said they wanted to make the series longer and more appealing to out-of-town riders.

"The series is spread over four months, and in four different locations, giving club riders with local knowledge the chance to force some upsets," he said.

The series starts in Timaru on January 31 with the X Scenic race – a tough three-lap circuit of Centennial Park that will test the skills and endurance of all riders.

Fairlie hosts the second leg on February 14, with the 30km Sherwood Enduro, held on Sherwood Downs, near Lake Opuha. This race involves a difficult 600m hill climb and an exhilarating 10km downhill run to the finish line.

The new Raincliff Forest MTB track has been incorporated into the Raincliff Rumble on March 28 for race three of the series.

The final round is the 63km Blue Mountain Gorges Challenge on April 11. Starting and finishing at Peel Forest, this event is a strenuous, testing course with spectacular mountain trails and magnificent alpine scenery.

Mr Thomas said riders collected points for each race based on their finishing time compared with the winning time in their grades.

"The best three results will count, so riders can drop their worst performance and the Blue Mountain race will count as double points."

Any regular biker can be involved with the cup as there are six grades from the under-15 juniors, through to the over-55 classics.

Mr Thomas said all races in the series also had shorter support races suitable for less-experienced riders, meaning that just about any one could get involved.