

## Classy Wins at the Scott Karapoti Classic

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Stuart Houltham and Fiona Macdermid outclassed a record field in New Zealand's premier mountain bike race.

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For 23 years Wellington's Scott Karapoti Classic has been New Zealand's best-known mountain bike race. Established in 1986 this mix of uncompromising challenge, super scenery and awesome atmosphere is the Southern Hemisphere's longest running mountain bike gathering. Everyone who has been anyone in this sport has at least tried to win the old-school 50k through Upper Hutt's Akatarawa Ranges.

Stu Houltham and Fiona MacDermid came to this year's Scott Karapoti Classic intent of joining the list of legends. They had both tried and failed before, Houltham in 2000, 2001 and 2002, while just a year ago MacDermid finished second to American-based Commonwealth Games rep Jennifer Smith. But this year Karapoti was kind to them both.

In fact, the Scott Karapoti Classic was superb summer had left a fast dry rain held off for all but the tail end of

For more than a decade, Karapoti has riders (about 300 also ride an organisers received more than 1800 percent of previous finishers recorded

The first, of course, was Houltham. title he simply rode away from a and Swiss reps to claim his first followed fellow Palmy rider Cabin Bennett and Nick Both through the

Leishman, riding a 29-inch bike, found big wheels, and then a string of 20 before fighting his way back to fifth there of, left the pace setting to Bennett and Both, who tried to

"I sort of ended up following them and said Houltham. "On the second climb I with me for a while but I managed to from there I was on my own."

Houltham's superb climbing proved too men eventually slipping to sixth and Upper Hutt's own Wayne Hiscock and

Houltham became Karapoti's third 2:20," he said after winning in 2:18:59,

For Fiona Macdermid, however, the Palmerston North mother shrugged off Deadwood Ridge to produce the best ahead of Brenda Clapp (Nelson) and Vincent fell just six seconds short of

Jennifer Smith had set the current beating MacDermid last year. But this narrow miss. "I couldn't have ridden MacDermid shrugged. "But you can't puncture."



kind to everyone in 2008. Wellington's course, and on race day the forecast the 1300-strong field.

upheld a strict entry limit of 1000 introductory 20k option) and this year applications. Of these, almost 70 personal best times.

Just a week after winning the national collection of New Zealand, Australian Karapoti. The Palmerston North rider Leishman and Aussie favourites Tim early kilometres and up the first climb.

the first-gear climb a bit tough for the punctures saw him slip outside the top-at the finish. Leishman's luck, or lack Australian Flight Centre teammates dominate the climb.

waiting to see what would happen," just went hard for a bit. One stayed get away from him eventually and

tough for the Australian duo, with both eighth behind a tight duel between Gavin McCarthy.

fastest winner. "My goal was to break "so I'm pretty happy.

Karapoti proved bitter-sweet. The a fall at the start and a puncture on ride of her career. But her 16min win former Swiss Amateur champion Sandy the course record.

record of 2hrs 47min 35secs when year's winner was gracious in her any harder at any stage in the race," help but wonder about the fall and the

All told, 1300 riders from nine countries racked up a super fast 2008 that saw seven age group and team records. The most impressive was Upper Hutt's own Jordan Blake winning the Oliver Shelton memorial junior award in 2hrs 26min 18secs. This smashed the existing record by eight minutes, won the junior race by 15min and placed him fifth fastest overall. Also notable was world downhill number two Tracey Mosely from the UK crossing over to cross country to win her 20-29 age group.

The twenty fourth Scott Karapoti Classic is scheduled for March 7, 2009. Online entries go live on Monday May 5, 2008 - don't miss out. For more details see [www.karapoti.co.nz](http://www.karapoti.co.nz).

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