

# Doctor draws on secret weapon



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John Hellemans will have a secret weapon on the Mizone length-of-New Zealand race that starts at Bluff today.

The Christchurch doctor and former world age-group triathlon champion, will have a high altitude simulator with him on the month-long race which he will use daily to help his recovery between stages.

"I need all the help I can get," said Hellemans whose aim is to finish the race.

Even with the assistance of the simulator he does not consider himself a top contender.

"I've only ever done races up to four hours long. This is four weeks long."

Hellemans has been using the simulator for several weeks as part of his training. He will use himself as a guinea pig during the race, also monitoring other aspects of his performance.

"I will be on the simulator each night and hopefully it will help me recover for the next day. It will be a bit experimental, but the simulator has helped my preparation and fitness for the race."

Hellemans and Kristina Strode-Penny, one of the woman entrants, will wear heart monitors during the race and will keep track of their food intake and energy output.

"We want to see what happens to the body racing every day for a month," said Hellemans. "We will keep food diaries every day and have a blood-test machine with us which will give us instant readouts of our health."

Preparing for the race has been vastly different to preparing for a triathlon.

"This multisport business is a shambles," said Hellemans as he was doing last-minute organisation to ensure he had all the equipment and food he needed.

"I thought triathlon was compli-

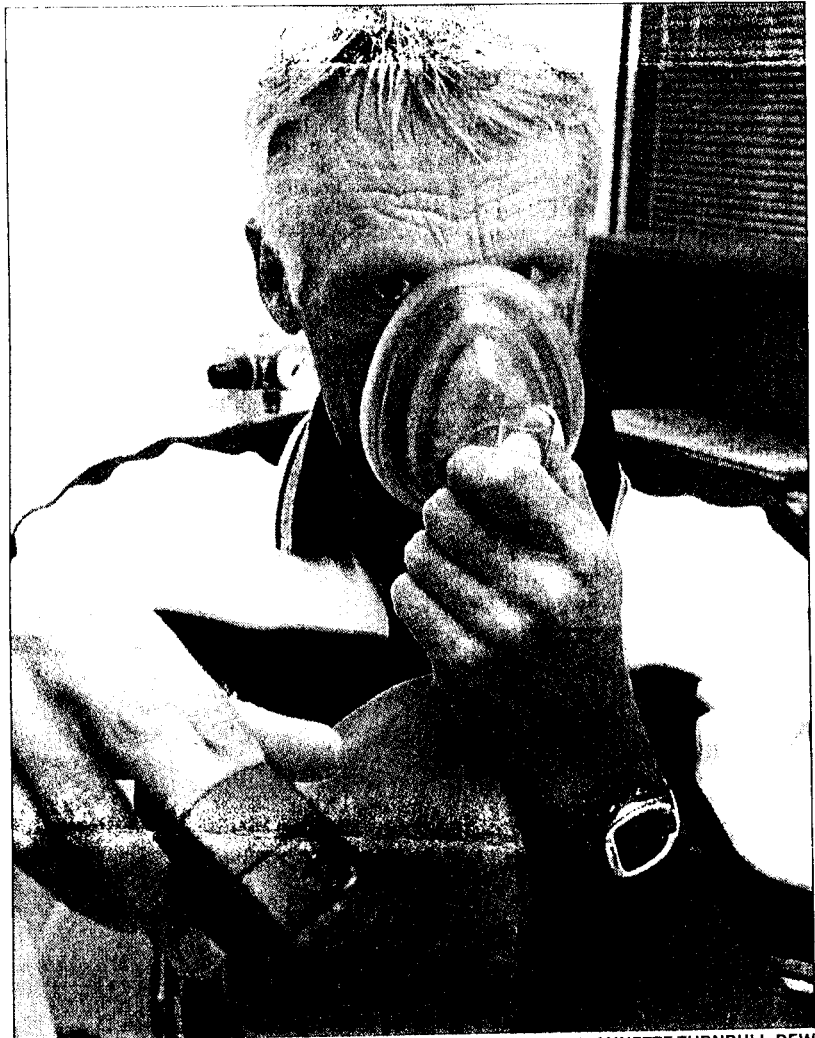


PHOTO: ANNETTE TURNBULL-DEW

Christchurch doctor John Hellemans with his high altitude simulator.

conditions and terrain has been difficult."

Hellemans began training in earnest for the race six months ago. "I've gradually increased my training and the last eight weeks has been full on."

He will not be trying to compete with the race favourites Steve Gurney and Keith Murray, both from Christchurch.

"I'll try to control my pace all the way through and make sure I'm there at the finish."

He gave Murray a tongue-in-cheek warning though.

Murray was 40 last week which

category is much tougher and meaner than the open section, so he's staying in the open section."

Hellemans is also viewing the race as good training for the Coast-to-Coast which he will contest in February with his 21-year-old daughter, Fleur.

"I should be superbly fit by then," he joked.

In 28 days competitors will cover 2787km. Of that, 1459km will be road cycling, 619km mountain biking, 313km running, and 396km kayaking, including a crossing of Cook Strait.

The race will be in stages with