

# If it doesn't kill you

DAVID POLKINGHORNE

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Strange things will happen up on Mount Stromlo late tonight.

Legs will be burning from 12 hours of riding, it will be dark, cold and, worse of all, lonely.

A select group of athletes will be trapped in their own little world as their minds become their worst enemy.

That is the night ahead for Canberra's Jason McAvoy, who at 39 years of age is looking to emulate his top-10 overall finish from last year's world solo 24-hour mountain bike championships held in Canada.

"I've definitely [hallucinated], yeah lots. Usually between midnight and dawn all sorts of things can go crazy because most people go off course and it gets very lonely out there," he said.

"A lot of people go to bed so you're out there by yourself and you'll hear things in the forest and you'll wonder what it is. You see crazy things, you see leprechauns and gnomes and all sorts of weird stuff out there."

Thankfully, the leprechauns don't talk but that's when it's time to "hit the caffeine and get your brain working again".

So why would you spend a perfectly good weekend putting yourself through it all?

"It's a self discovery thing. It's about pushing yourself to the limit and then seeing if you can go that little bit further," McAvoy said.

"And then when you come out the other side and you realise what you can do it's a pretty elating feeling when you cross the finish line.

"It's not so much about where you finish it's about what you've achieved, what you've gone through and how you've managed it."

Zen buddhists would no doubt understand it's about the journey, not the destination.

After finishing second twice in the 35-39 age group, McAvoy has spent the last three months training on his home course and he thinks that will hold him in good stead to climb that final rung of the podium.

"I think it will be a bit of an advantage [knowing Stromlo]. I'll be able to find a few smoother lines that people that aren't from here won't know.

"And later on in the race that will help me with upper body fatigue because [the course] will take a big toll on their body cause it's a rough course out the back if you take the wrong lines you can get beaten up."

If he crosses the line first, it will be in no small part a team effort with his wife Kylie and three children Lachlan, Cameron and Charlotte.

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