



## Official Release

# 'Limb-it-Less' Combo Proves Winning Formula at IronmanNZ

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A recipe of adversity, grit and teamwork proved a history making formula for Hawke's Bay rescue helicopter's Kelley Waite and good friend Shaz Dagg earlier this month, when the pair successfully completed IronmanNZ.

At 58 years of age, Sharon (Shaz) Dagg has become the first female amputee to conquer one of the country's most gruelling adventure races, and she's crediting the accomplishment to the help of her good friend and fellow 'fitness junky', Hawke's Bay Rescue Helicopter Air Crew Officer Lead, Kelley.

"To help guide me safely around the course I wanted the support of someone I knew I could rely on, that's where Kelley came into the picture. I could not think of a better mate who has the mental strength and sheer pig-headed determination to see her own challenges through along with mine."

On March 1st, 2025, the pair pushed their physical and mental limits in an extraordinary test of endurance across a 3.8 kilometre swim, 180 kilometre bike and 42.2 kilometre run. Crossing the finish line in a time of 15 hours and 31 minutes was immensely satisfying.

"Just five weeks after agreeing to tackle IronmanNZ together, 'Stumpy' and I did IronMaori in Napier. By comparison IronmanNZ was more demanding due to the sheer pressure to perform, keep up with Shaz and keep her afloat and clear of all the crowds, especially in the swim leg," says Kelley.

“Shaz and I have trained together for other events in the past and so when she asked me this time, I could not say no. I am immensely proud to have been able to help her achieve her goal.”

As an able-bodied athlete, Sharon represented New Zealand in triathlon but in 2016 an accident on a friend’s farm left her arm badly broken before complications post-surgery resulted in limited use of her arm. A brave decision to ‘cut her losses’ and have it removed left her more determined than ever to push her limits and inspire others that physical limitation is a mindset and not always a reality.

As Air Crew Officer Lead for SRSL based in Hastings with Hawke’s Bay’s Rescue Helicopter, and sixteen years with RNZAF, Kelley Waite is well versed with problem solving but competing alongside such a gritty competitor, presented its own set of challenges.

“Having the distraction of someone going through the day with me, knowing they were hurting as much if not more but never stopped moving the whole way, made the mental challenge much more bearable!” shares Kelley.

Reflecting on how the experience has changed her, Kelley says “I certainly have a new perspective on what I can achieve when I put my mind to it. Great to have another milestone reached, all be it a long time before I intended.”

**ENDS.**

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