

THESE WACKY RACERS IN HILARIOUS EVENT

BREAST-DRESSED:
One diver's unique outfit for the race



TOP BOG:
Conor Murphy

JACUZZI



MADCAP: 'Boggers' give the event the big thumbs up



PLAYBOYS: Eamonn, John, Declan and Kieran cool off in the 'jacuzzi'



REAL LIVES



'I couldn't find a school for my kid...so I built one'



DOUBLE HEADER
WALPY SIBLINGS HOPING FOR TWIN TITLES

DEADLY

Tourism chiefs have been trying for years to promote the area as an unspoilt beauty spot, but as 50 competitors and a few hundred spectators flocked to a muddy field, Bord Fáilte's North West Tourism gave the wacky race the seal of approval. It was, after all, clearly a great way to bring in some filthy lucre.

"People come to Ireland to have a bit of craic and this kind of thing is what the Irish are good at. You don't even need good weather for it," a Bord Fáilte spokesman said.

Tempted

Hotels and guesthouses enjoyed a mini-boom, with the hen party staying in Declan's self-catering resort Alice's Lodge and Cottages and yours truly shacking up in style in the nearby Glencarn Hotel.

To be honest, I was tempted to skip the bog-snorkelling and just hang out in the hotel pool.

But there was something appealing about spending a day messing about in the muck. It was like being a little kid again.

Pulling a seven-and-a-half mil-

limetre thick wetsuit on over sticky sunscreen and insect-repellent, while sweating in the 21-degree heat, was enough exercise for me even before I got started.

So it was just as well I wasn't trying to beat the world record, set in Wales last year, of one minute 38 seconds over 120 metres.

No wonder swamp monsters in old horror movies moved so slowly, I thought as I flailed about in the muck. I couldn't even get my knees off the ground. It was just two feet deep to start with but the bottom was so sludgy I couldn't be sure.

"You can do it - you look like a mermaid!" a bloke shouted. But I felt more like a fish out of water as I clambered up the slippery bank.

I may have not have won but I was happy to flush myself out of the bog. Locals who turned up for a gawk found it hilarious - it was proof that all city slickers are mad.

But John McKeown, who runs tourism website www.lookaroundireland.com, pointed out: "The bog was just wasteland. Now we're making use of it. I hope

this takes off all over Ireland."

Those who managed to swim the 60 metres along the bog and back again were on a roll.

The highlight was a race between the World Bog-Snorkelling Champ Conor Murphy (21), from Portadown, and bride-to-be Casey Squibb from Dorset.

Fanatic

Casey, who happens to be a triathlete and adventure sports fanatic, briefly led the champ but Conor - who had beaten all records previously across the border in Dungannon and in Wales - reclaimed his title, clocking 1.29.

The organisers hope to get it entered into the Guinness Book of Records.

Meanwhile I bogged off to enjoy a pint of the real black stuff in the 'jacuzzi' - a mucky hole nearby. As a bunch of hunky lads including Declan, John and Kieran joined me, it was just like the Playboy Mansion - in Ballydung.

• More wacky pics can be seen on www.irishbogsnorkelling.com

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