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WITH DAMIEN STANNARD  
stannardd@qnp.newsthd.com.au

SPORT 95

## WEEKENDWARRIOR

# Mudder can be a real shock to the system

ARE we as tough as we think?

I have run the odd marathon but am ashamed to say my legs are smooth and I do not leave home without a heart rate monitor and carbohydrate gel.

As the television ad says, "that's not living".

Living is packing a hangover cure in your raceday kit, slipping on shoes you know won't make it home and lining up for a Tough Mudder event.

An image is worth a thousand words, and pictures of race participants running through flames, crawling through mud and being shocked by live wires will either horrify or excite you.

"It's an event for real men and tough chicks," said Tough Mudder's chief marketing officer Alex Patterson.

The endurance phenomenon was created in the US three years ago by

Will Dean, an Englishman with a background in counter-terrorism.

It is a mix of cross country, obstacle course and Japanese game show. Courses can be up to 24km and Tough Mudder's Australian debut at Phillip Island in March includes dragging logs, scaling 3m walls and sloshing through swamps.

There is a gauntlet of fire and a challenge featuring electric shocks.

Winning is not the goal. Finishing, and helping a mate across the line, is. Instead of sipping electrolyte drinks, finishers are handed cups of beer and offered tattoos.

"The modern world can be a little dull. We live in a world of dishwashers, elevators and hot running water," Patterson said. "Getting a 10,000-volt shock won't permanently harm you. It will rock you.

"You see people mustering the courage to run through the wires

and it's like a caveman, looking outside his cave and seeing lightning. He doesn't know what it is but you know he's going to grit his teeth and go outside to hunt."

It is amazing how the event has gathered speed. This year there were 14 Tough Mudders and next year it will increase to 35.

The first one attracted 4000 starters and this weekend's mad dash over two days in New Jersey has drawn 20,000 people.

They are not all mad. Patterson is a lawyer and he tests every course.

Most are men, aged between 25 and 35, and you can expect about a quarter of the field to be women. "Some of the girls are as tough as the guys. They'll chew you up and spit you out," Patterson said.

Legacy Australia is the official charity partner. See it for yourself at [toughmudder.com.au](http://toughmudder.com.au)



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**Over the top:** Competitors take on the challenge of a Tough Mudder race.