



Laguna Phuket triathlon

by Michelle Drielsma

2006 marked the 13th consecutive year of the Laguna Phuket Triathlon, an event that continues to grow strongly each year. The 2006 event, held on Sunday 3 December, attracted 752 individual triathletes (including 16 pro men and 8 pro women), 195 relay teams and 590 fun runners (6km). Entrants came from 34 countries and represented 40 nationalities. The popularity of the event is testament to Thailand's proven ability to host international events, the first class facilities, the country's natural beauty, and of course the world-renowned, warm Thai hospitality.

Laguna Phuket is situated on 600 acres of tropical parkland along a 3km beach at Bang Tao Bay on the island of Phuket in southern Thailand. The resort comprises five deluxe hotels, luxury spas, outdoor recreation (including 18-hole golf course) and corporate training centre. In 2006, the bike course was re-routed to pass along the Nai Yang beachfront, while the run passed through the award-winning golf course, which provided plentiful shade. The spectacular setting guarantees that pros and amateurs alike from all over the world truly anticipate this event every year.

Prior to the event, six of the professional competitors attended a panel interview. It was noted that "Laguna is not just a multi-loop, all-road course", setting it apart from many others. Australian Greg Bennett, the 2005 defending men's champion, summed things up when he said: "The entire experience at Laguna is fantastic - massages on the beach, the swim course, the bike course, the run course, the finish, the after party, the other athletes - it truly is the best triathlon experience in the world. The reputation of this event makes it one that every athlete wants to compete in." Greg's wife Laura was also an invited athlete, having placed 2nd in 2005 with the fastest overall swim time of any male or female (23min 59sec).

Samantha McGlone of Canada, the 2005 defending female champion, enjoyed a very impressive season of events in 2006 and returns with a big smile on her face, voicing the sentiments of many competitors by saying: "The race feels like a vacation." Ultra-FIT asked what comprises her usual training, to which she replied: "I usually train two of the three race legs in one day, each for a longer duration than that specified for the event." She says this equates to "four times a week for each mode", allowing for one rest day per week. For example, in one training day, she swims 4km and runs 15-20km. The event is considered Southeast Asia's premier triathlon and offers 25 qualifying slots for the following year's Ironman Australia, awarded to the highest-placed finishers in each age group (excluding pro athletes).

Thailand's average temperature in December is 27°C with 85% humidity. Accordingly, heat acclimatisation is advised, as this increases the plasma volume of your blood, making it thinner. Thinner blood means your central venous pressure drops during exercise, lowering your heart rate and core temperature. Heat acclimatisation also allows an increased sweat rate for more effective cooling and reduces the concentration of electrolytes lost through sweating. Not surprisingly, many triathletes planned to arrive in Thailand at least one week before the race to allow for these adaptations.

Of course, hydration prior to, during and after the event is also important. Numerous studies have shown that simply getting enough fluid can enhance performance by delaying fatigue and reducing circulatory strain. The well-proven preparation method of carbohydrate loading was observed on the race eve by most competitors at the Pasta Party, held at 6pm at Laguna Beach Resort. Unsurprisingly, water was the sole preferred beverage for athletes at this buffet dinner!

On race day, triathletes started arriving with their bikes from 7.15am at the transition area and were then transferred by bus to the swim start at the Sheraton Grande Laguna Resort, where they stepped out onto the sands that rim the resort's beach garden marquee.

The race started promptly at 8am, not in separate waves, but all at once in a straight-out charge into the Andaman Sea. After 300m, there is a sharp 90° left turn, so I chose to position myself as far right as possible to avoid the congestion. This possibly added a few minutes to my time, but saved me the hindrance of flying limbs and the extra exertion of battling the crowd! The following 880m were quite enjoyable, with a couple of less pronounced left turns. The water was very clean, clear and a rich, dark blue, making for a pleasant journey. When we reached the beach, it was a short sand sprint, then back in the water for the last 620m, this time in the lagoon. This part of the swim was not nearly as enjoyable since the water was warm and cloudy, so it was a relief to finally stumble out and onto the ramp to the bike transition.

The recognition of your name voiced over the speakers provided an instant boost in motivation for the 55km journey ahead on self-propelled wheels. The first 15km of the bike leg has five or more relatively large hills and is very tough. Many less experienced competitors were forced to push their bikes at various stages of this section. This is universally the most disliked component of the course! Following these hills, however, the course is relatively flat and very scenic, providing an enjoyable ride, so much so that the race is often forgotten. You pass along winding roads through lush forests with plentiful shade, and past rice fields and local villages, where children provide cheers of support, smiles and waves. Traffic was well controlled, especially at the main road near the airport, which was a great relief since Thailand is infamous for its chaotic bustle of cars and motorbikes with strange road etiquette!

The run is by far the hardest leg, since by now it is much hotter and you are partially fatigued from the 56.8km already covered. During these last 12km, many fell victim to minor dehydration, muscle cramps and mild heat exhaustion, despite the fact that water, Gatorade and ice-cold sponges were provided every 2km. Knowing the importance of hydration and cooling at this stage of the race, I didn't miss a drink station and managed to finish without having to resort to walking the remaining distance. With half a kilometre to go, I felt a surge of fulfilment and satisfaction with my effort. Crossing the finish line was even better! The post-race hospitality included a lunch box, an abundance of bottled water and a complimentary, 15-minute Thai massage. At 6.30pm, the awards presentation was held at the Sheraton beach garden marquee with another welcoming buffet meal of Thai and internationally inspired cuisine.

Reinaldo Colucci, a 21-year-old Brazilian, took 1st place in a total race time of 2:30:58. He was followed by Terenzo Bozzone of New Zealand, also 21, who finished in 2:33:39, making up for his disappointment in 2005 when he was stranded with a punctured tyre. Massimo Cigana of Italy (2:35:31) and Greg Bennett of Australia (2:36:16) finished third and fourth respectively.

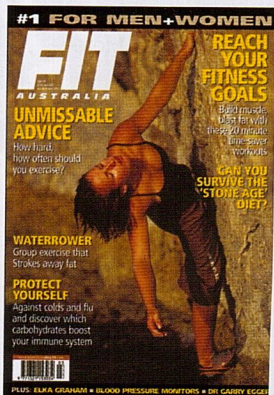
Samantha McGlone successfully defended her 2005 title in a time of 2:48:34, finishing with such ease that she had time to stop before the finish line to wait for the event elephant to join her over the last few metres! Leanda Cave of Great Britain (2:50:35) and Laura Bennett of the US (2:54:02) finished second and third respectively.

This year's Laguna Phuket Triathlon will be held on 4 December 2007 and I can strongly recommend participation in this very well organised event. As soon as I was dressed to attend the awards party, all I could think about was returning in 2007. It is a tough event, but the scenic course makes it especially enjoyable and satisfying to complete. Beginners are welcome and many participants in 2006 were first-time triathletes. In the words of Laura Bennett: "It's too easy to say yes and come back!"

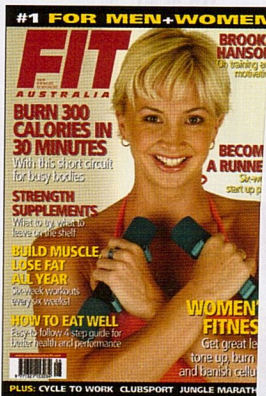


For more details, visit www.lagunaphuket.com/triathlon

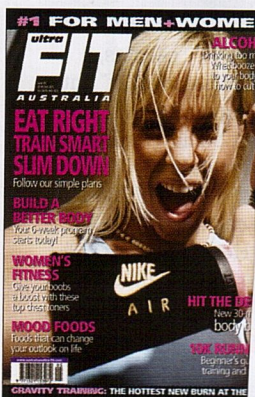
Swim	1.8km
Bike	55km
Run	12km



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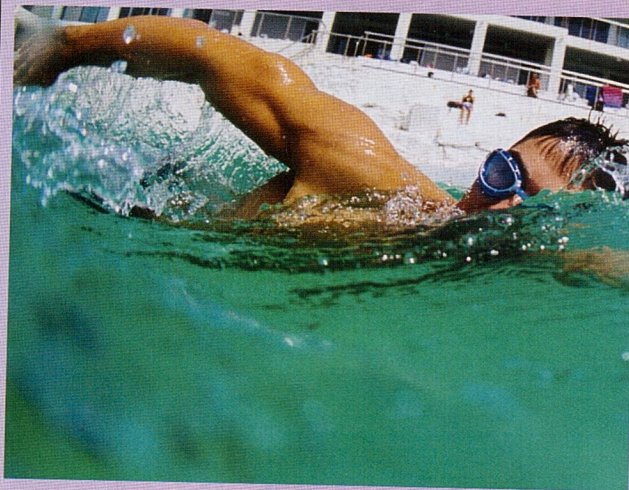
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eventreport

SYDNEY HARBOUR
SWIM CLASSIC 2006

First place to Team Ultra-FIT!!!

By Michelle Drielsma

A warm, inviting morning on Sunday March 5th provided a friendly atmosphere for the 1.6K swim in Sydney's harbour from Man O War steps. Over 600 people turned up to compete in the 6th year for this unique harbour swim. They all received a copy of Ultra-FIT Magazine as did many onlookers!

The swim provides an opportunity for the general public aged 13-65 to compete in a community swim event, aiming to bring the people of Sydney together and celebrate our unique water-sports culture.

The first group started in the water at 9:30am, patiently awaiting the sound of the gun. Being a participant myself, the first 100m was the toughest, trying to find a steady rhythm and avoid flying limbs of fellow swimmers. The swim progressed around the buoys of Lady Macquarie's Chair, up to the Point and around to Fort Denison, (where I was already being absolutely swamped by the next wave of participants!), to return to the Opera House, almost to trip up the steps of Man O War and stumble across the finish line.

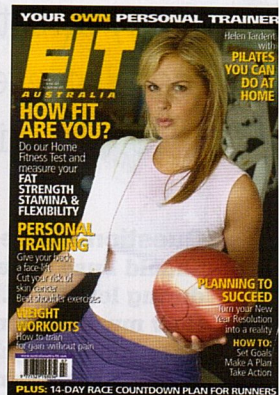
Overall it was a well organised event providing ample safety, smooth sailing and a generally welcoming atmosphere which has been generated over the last 6 years of running. This is a perfect first entry swim for new comers who might wish to take on more demanding ocean swims.

Ultra-FIT proudly supported the event with their own team of five men, headed by Andrew Hill. They finished **FIRST PLACE** in a mere time of 1:48:08! Well done guys.

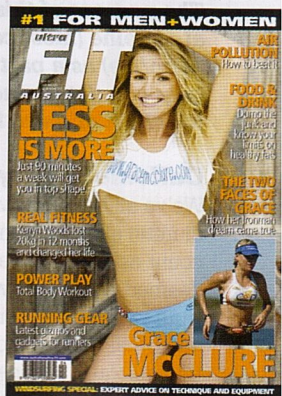
Congratulations to an amazing individual finish time of 17.11mins by Andrew Beato! We have a new Ocean swim champion in the making here in Sydney. He was nearly one full minute ahead of any other time!

Looking forward to next year's swim, which takes place annually in March 2007. As a competitor I can see my need to clock up some laps in the pool to prepare for this fine Sydney Harbour week event!

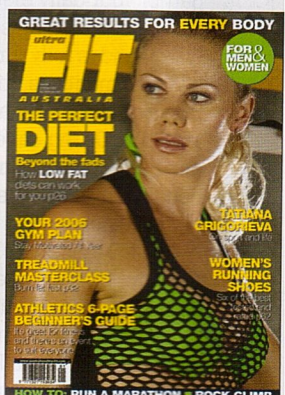
For further details log onto www.sydneyharboursim.com



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TRINSW BYRON BAY TRIATHLON

1500 m ocean swim/ 40 km out and back cycle/ two 5 km loops finishing with an end of season A with a live band till late.

When: Saturday 13th May **Start time:** 1pm

Distance: 1.5 km Swim, 40 km Cycle, 10 km Run

Where: Byron Bay Surf Club

Contact: Kate Young, F2R Promotions.

Phone: (02) 6680 9580. **email:** kate@freetoride.com

Cost: \$100 (\$90 TA Members). \$135 for teams.

TRINSW CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS

When: Saturday 6th May **Start time:** 1pm

Distance: 1 km Swim, 30 km Cycle, 8 km Run

Where: Held in the beautiful waters of Port Stevens the foreshore surrounding the base at Soldiers Point

Contact: Nick Munting. **Phone:** 0412228409.

email: nick@trinswrace.org.au **Cost:** \$65

MOTHER'S DAY CLASSIC

A great family and community event committed to research into every aspect of breast cancer.

When: Sunday 14th May **Start time:** 7.30am, 9

Distance: 8 km Run, 4 km Run, 4 km Walk

Where: Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, H

Contact: Louise Davidson. **Phone:** (03) 9657 432

email: ldavidson@mail.ifs.net.au

NOOSA BLUE WATER SWIM