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WELLINGTON TO SHOWCASE NEW 'TRI TAG RELAY' EVENT

The removal of one race has led to the introduction of a brand new concept at the Wellington round of the Contact Tri Series in March next year with the addition of a 'Tri Tag Relay' event to the programme, with a cash prize of \$4,000 to the team first across the line in the open category.

With many of New Zealand's elite athletes now heading to Australia for the ITU Oceania Championships on the same weekend, organisers have decided to withdraw the elite Contact Cup races from the busy schedule, introducing instead a team relay concept already hugely popular in Europe and fast gaining in credibility with the ITU.

Tri NZ Event Director Haidee Stratford explains how the opportunity arose.

"This is a stunning opportunity to introduce the fastest growing aspect of the sport internationally and something we think will be hugely popular with athletes and spectators here.

"While we knew of the Oceania status for the Australian race, it was only recently announced that the Devonport event would also be a selection race for our elite U19 and U23 athletes, while also chasing ITU points.

"This has had an immediate impact on our field for the elite Contact Cup race (age group racing is not affected) in Wellington, with national titles for elite, U23 and U19 competitors now on the line in Devonport (this is a change with the U19 championship moving from Kinloch in February).

"Once the first priority of contacting the few athletes affected was successfully ticked off, we put our heads together to come up with a new and different event, hence today we are confirming a short relay race called the 'Tri Tag Relay'. Very much in keeping with ITU and European club racing, it involves 2 men and 2 women per team, with each racing over a super sprint distance before literally tagging a team mate who races off to do the same."

Stratford stressed that racing for age group competitors is not changed at all and the popular event will still play host to hundreds of age groupers chasing national titles and qualification for the 2012 World Champs to be hosted in Auckland on Labour Weekend.

“This will have a very small impact on the day and in reality will not even register for the vast majority of our age group participants. It did however leave us with time to include something different, something to replace our elite races with. Tri Tag Team racing will be super intensive and exciting for participants and spectators with athletes right on red line pace throughout the short distances (250m swim, 5km bike, 1500m run).

“This isn’t a team event for beginners, with four thousand dollars first prize money on offer with an expectation that clubs, regions and indeed training groups will get together and enter the best teams they can muster. Some competitors already qualified for the 2012 World Champs might now decide to gather together and chase the first ever Tri Tag Relay national title. We want to see athletes in uniforms, with some ‘war paint’ on perhaps as we really introduce the team aspect of the sport to New Zealand.”

Entries into the Tri Tag Relay are limited to 40 teams with entries open online next Monday at www.triseries.co.nz. There are no age groups in the teams racing and no requirement for teams to be from the same club or indeed region. There will however be an award for the ‘best dressed’ team, encouraging some fun as well as serious racing on the day.

There is however a separate corporate category for those that wish to make it a team building exercise in the work place. Triathlon New Zealand and sponsors have pledged \$1,000 to the winning team’s preferred charity.

Contact Tri Series
Wellington
Saturday 10th March
Age Group National Championships (standard distance)
Tri Tag Relay
www.triseries.co.nz for details

For further information contact:

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