

CLOSE FINISH PREDICTED AT SEVENTH STATE HARBOUR CROSSING

The strongest field ever assembled will lead over 1200 swimmers at this year's State Harbour Crossing this Sunday, an event that has become iconic to the city of Auckland as marine traffic is halted to allow swimmers rite of passage.

The State Harbour Crossing marks the beginning of another summer of ocean swimming with the State New Zealand Ocean Swim Series once again attracting some of the world's best open water swimmers to New Zealand over six races this summer, all chasing their share of a \$75,000 cash and prize pool.

The event starts in Bayswater on the North Shore and finishes at the Viaduct Harbour in Auckland City.

Event Director Scott Rice says the race is shaping up to be one of the greatest in the series history.

"We have five out of the previous six* Harbour Crossing champions on the start line this year - it is going to be a great battle, particularly between Bryn Murphy, Kane Radford and Steven Kent. Between the three of them, they won all six of last season's State NZ Ocean Series Swims."

Kent will go in with confidence after winning the State King of the Bays title at the end of last season, just six months ago.

However Rice believes that with such great talent on the start line, it could come down to the conditions and navigation on the day that will determine the winner.

"Murphy and Radford both know the course and the likely conditions really well. Murphy will enter the water as defending champion having taken the crown off Radford last year who prior to that had held the title for three years in a row and established himself as a world class open water swimmer."

Commonwealth Games swimmer Glenn Snyders will also be keeping the ocean water specialists honest.

Also in the field is 3rd place getter in last year's State Harbour Crossing - Phillip Ryan and also the Oceania 10km Open Water Swimming Champion - Cody Grimsey from Australia. Rice believes both swimmers will also be ones to watch, with Grimsey especially adding genuine international class to an already strong field.

"I honestly can't remember a field of this quality and depth, we are going to witness some great swimming on Sunday. The boys are really fired up for a great day. I am predicting a close finish, the spectators are going to be in for a treat."

The women's race sees a strong showing of talent as well, led by Cara Baker, formally from the Manawatu. This Kiwi is now living in Australia and making big waves in the Open Water Swimming world. Earlier this year she finished second behind the world champion in the 10km race at the Australian Open Water Championships. She went on to win the 5km event at the same Championships. These performances qualified her for the New Zealand team to the World Open Water Swimming Championships in Canada in July 2011.

Baker is expected to not have it all her own way though with 2nd and 3rd place getters from 2009 State Harbour Crossing event also on the start line. Commonwealth Games swimmer Melissa Ingram took 2nd last year while talented North Shore teenager Alannah Jury took 3rd.

The State Harbour Crossing is the first event in the State New Zealand Ocean Swim Series that includes six ocean swims over the summer, with most venues offering distance options for everyone including a 300m option, and 1km swim and a longer option of between 2.8 and 3.3 kilometres.

For State Insurance, the support of the series is part of the biggest sponsorship deal in its one hundred year history of supporting New Zealand communities.

State's Executive General Manager, Mary-Jane Daly said they are thrilled to be a part of such a great series and iconic New Zealand event.

"I am looking forward to being at the start line on Sunday morning and have the privilege of starting the first event of the State NZ Ocean Swim Series for 2011. I wish all the swimmers the very best."

- ENDS -

State Harbour Crossing

Sunday 21st November

7.05am start

Quinton Park, Bayswater to Viaduct Harbour, Auckland

www.oceanswim.co.nz

State NZ Ocean Swim Series, 2010/2011

State Harbour Crossing, Auckland: Sunday 21 November 2010

State Russell to Paihia, Bay of Islands: Saturday 11 December 2010

State Capital Classic, Wellington: Saturday 29 January 2011

State Corsair Classic, Christchurch: Saturday 26 February 2011

State Sand to Surf, Mt Maunganui: Saturday 26 March 2011

State King of the Bays, North Shore City, Auckland: Saturday 16 April 2011

Take the plunge this summer. Find out more at www.oceanswim.co.nz

***Previous winners of the State Harbour Crossing:**

2004	Brent Foster 32.32 & Helen Norfolk 34.52
2005	Moss Burmester 33.32 & Helen Norfolk 35m 48s
2006	Kane Radford 33.16 & Melissa Ingram 37.49
2007	Kane Radford 29s 37s & Helen Norfolk 33m 48s
2008	Kane Radford 33m 00s & Kate Brookes-Peterson 34m 25s
2009	Bryn Murphy 34m 54s & Charlotte Webby 38m 15s

Athlete profiles for State Harbour Crossing:

Male:

Bryn Murphy

Bryn heads into the 2010 Harbour Crossing as defending champion and one to watch this season after a very impressive 2009/2010 season. The 2007 NZ 1500m freestyle champion was fairly new to open water swimming last season however surprised a few taking several podium finishers and taking second place in the overall series.

Kane Radford

Rotorua swimmer Kane Radford has huge interest through his dominance of the State Swim Series. He is a three time series champion and has won the State Harbour Crossing in three straight years (2006- 2008) and is back to reclaim his title after a season in the States.

Steven Kent

Winner of State Kings of the Bays) in April 2010. National swimming representative and title holder. New Zealand representative in Surf Lifesaving. Younger brother of Olympian, Dean Kent.

Glenn Snyders

Glenn is the current New Zealand record holder for the 50m, 100m and 200m breaststroke.

He won the silver medal at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in the 50m breaststroke. While he won't be breast stroking in the Ocean Swim Series, he is a likely challenger for the podium positions.

Cody Grimsey (AUS)

Cody is the current 10km Oceania Open Water Swimming Champion. He also placed 2nd in 5km event at the same competition. He is a current member of the Australian Open Water Swimming Squad.

Phillip Ryan

3rd place in last years Harbour Crossing, Phillip will be looking to move up the podium this year and his confidence will be up after finishing the best of the Kiwis in the 10km event at the Australian Open Water Championships earlier this year. He finished in seventh place, just ahead of fellow Kiwi Kane Radford.

Female:

Cara Baker

Formally from the Manawatu, this Kiwi is now living in Australia and making big waves in the Open water swimming world. Earlier this year she finished second behind the world champion in the 10km race at the Australian Open Water Championships. She went on to win the 5km event at the same Championships. These performances qualified her for the World Open Water Swimming Championships to be staged in Canada in July 2011.

Baker was the winner of State King of the bays last season and the current Australian and New Zealand Open Water Champion

Melissa Ingram

Melissa has represented New Zealand at three Commonwealth Games and one Olympic Games.

She is the current New Zealand record holder for the 200m freestyle and 200m backstroke.

In 2007 and 2009 she finished second in the Harbour Crossing, she will be looking to go one better this year.

Alannah Jury

Jury is a New Zealand Rep in Open water swimming and achieved an outstanding third at the 2009 Australian 10km open water championship, in doing so qualifying for the FINA World Championships where she finished an amazing 13th on debut in Rome, despite losing her goggles on lap one. The North Shore 19 year old is a great prospect and with a third place at the 2009/2010 State Harbour Crossing event, confirmed her place as one of the countries best open water swimmers.