



## TRIATHLON SOLOMON ISLANDS – 2014 RECAP

2014 was an impressive year for Triathlon Solomon Islands.

The club launched the inaugural Triathlon Sprint Series for the under 23s and the Triathlon Super Series for those aiming for international competition at the 2014 Commonwealth Games. In 2015, the Series will expand to women, whom have reached this level.

In 2014, the Race Series were held over six events. Alphones Wale (50 points) won the 2014 Triathlon Men's Super Series narrowly ahead of Jad Nalo (49 points) and Rocky Donald (47 points), while Rocky Donald dominated the second half of the year to win the Men's Sprint Series with 58 points, well ahead of Boris Teddy (40 points) and Alphones Wale (38 points). All four young men have a bright future in triathlon if they can maintain consistency and a healthy rivalry. The podium athletes received cash prizes from the Hatanga Group of Companies.

A very strong feature of the club for many years, the monthly races were supported by many local men and women acting as marshals with Jan Katene from New Zealand providing tireless support with registration, timekeeping and recordkeeping. You would be hard pressed to find a month where Jan has missed the club races in over four years.

Internationally, the club participated in a number of events. Triathlon veteran, Stanley Ofasisili, aged 38, again proved his longevity by gaining selection to the Commonwealth Games held in Glasgow in July. Jad Nalo, aged 19, was also selected with Alphones Wale narrowly missing out. National Coach, Nathan (Thomo) Thompson Siofa joined Stanley and Jad at the pre-Games training camp in Stirling Scotland in early June, with Club President Joe Au Ramosaea and wife, Joy, arriving in time for the Games. Competing against the UK's Brownlee brothers and other world class athletes over the standard triathlon distance (1.5km swim, 40km cycle, and 10km run), Stanley and Jad were lapped during the second of five 8-kilometre cycle laps and thus eliminated under competition rules.

In a boost for triathlon in Solomon Islands, the country received an automatic international placement to the men's sprint triathlon at the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) in Nanjing, China in August 2014. TriSI selected Boris Teddy, now 17, to represent Solomon Islands for his improvement over 2013 and his potential to develop in the future. While Boris completed his event well behind the main field, he had the honour of being the flag bearer for Team Solomon Islands at the Games Opening Ceremony.

Support for international events also came from the Oceania Triathlon Union (OTU), who funded Boris, Jad and Coach Thomo to attend their Junior Training Camp in New Zealand from 20-31 March 2014. Under OTU development coach, Peter Clifford, the team competed and watched the world's best in New Plymouth before travelling across the North Island to compete at the NZ Schools Championships in wild seas off Gisborne.

Domestically, the club held its National Triathlon Championship in October. For the first time in many years the club celebrated three young women athletes completing the sprint distance (750m swim, 20km cycle and 5km run) with Melissa Bereta first,



followed by Andriana Tukuvia and Mary Maria, all from Mataniko village in Guadalcanal. This is a significant achievement for the women, whom with the support of their parents, senior athletes and Coach Thomo, have improved dramatically in the past 12 months and put themselves in contention to represent Solomon Islands at the 2015 Pacific Games in Papua New Guinea. Rocky Donald again proved unbeatable by winning the Men's Championship with Boris Teddy, second and Alphones Wale, third.

For the first time, the club held the Kakambona Ocean Swim Classic in November. The initiative of Alice MacDonald and Andrew Piper, the Ocean Swim is planned as an annual event in future years. Alphones Wale won the men's 1km event just seconds ahead of Albert, with expat, Caroline McGregor winning the women's 1km race closely followed by Andriana Tukuvia. As is the tradition at TriSI, shorter races were held for junior athletes and for pikinini (children) resulting in a record turnout.

The year was not without its setbacks. Monthly competitions were cancelled in January due to heavy rain and in April the devastating flash floods washed away bridges and roads along the triathlon course west of Honiara and closed the beach with debris and rubbish. Tragically, local friends and long-time supporters of the club, Godfrey and Margaret Eric, lost a family member, and many were without housing, running water and food sources for weeks or months. However, the strength of Solomon Island character was shown when it truly mattered. With the town cut in two for days, expats provided water and food relief to those affected particularly at Mataniko and Kakambona, while some time later selection races were restored with permission from the local community. The club's resilience was again tested later in the year after TriSI lost access to its home at Kakambona due to a landowner dispute. Senior members were able to negotiate access for training and racing at a neighbouring beach and while monthly races were cancelled from May to August they returned again from September to November.

On the up side, local senior members worked hard in 2015 to take on club governance responsibilities. With expat support, Coach Thomo learnt how to put together the annual events program with fair, transparent and prospective selection processes taking into account international competition. He also bolstered the club's relationship with the national Olympic sports body, NOCSI. In 2014, he drafted a number media releases around significant club events and established contacts with print and radio media in Honiara. The positive press was a factor leading to some commercial sponsorship for the club later in the year from Honiara Hardware, the Hatanga Group and others.

With the support of the club's Management Committee and a committed expat group, senior members took on key functions of the club with Thomo (Coaching and Media), Thomo and Leban Lokata (Sports Development, Sponsorship and Fundraising), Thomo, Leban and George Billy (Equipment) and Stanley Ofasisili and Jad Nalo (Bike maintenance). Local capacity is also being developed in Treasurer and financial management functions and budgeting skills and the preparation of funding applications to international sporting organisations.

In 2014, TriSI received a range of cash and in-kind support from its expat members and friends. Following fundraising initiatives at the start of year, expats contributed



generously with a number of laptop computers. D'anne Ladzinski provided training sessions to Thomo, Leban and Stanley on basic computer literacy skills, such as using email and document software. While Internet data and electricity are still well out of reach of most Solomon Islanders, this is a start to connect the club to the outside world. Generous cash support from a number of expats to raise funds for a storage-shipping container was later used to purchase bike parts from Australia following the donation of a shipping container from DFAT facilitated by Andrew McEvoy. The storage container, located on Godfrey and Margaret's land in Kakambona, means club equipment can now be stored securely.

Later in the year, expats, Finn Batts and D'anne Ladzinski, organised donations of triathlon clothing and equipment from clubs in Victoria and Western Australia respectively, while Bridget Quennell, organised a donation of new running shoes and clothing for the whole squad from Nike-Shimano. A number of expats continued to provide equipment on a needs basis including swimming goggles, paddles, kickboards, running shoes and swimming, running and cycling clothing and equipment. With transport being a large barrier to participation, efforts were made to get more bikes on the road and donated to the club. In addition to private gifts, Rotary contributed a number of used bikes. Very generously, the International Triathlon Union through its regional body, the OTU, donated five Avanti road bikes, two for women and three for men, which arrived in August much to the delight of recipients. The flow-on benefits means the next generation of athletes can use the older road bikes, have transport to attend training and can develop from aquathlon (swim/run only) to triathlon events. This has reduced their dependence on expats for transport and is promoting growth in the sport.

During 2014, the bright future of TriSI was probably most highlighted by the growth of junior male and female athletes in the club, a tribute to the recruitment efforts of senior local members of the club. This is a big challenge for a small club and puts pressure on resources and on the time of a very small group of senior members. The club is meeting the challenge by encouraging the next generation of athletes to step up into administrative and coaching roles. Alphones Wale has recently joined active seniors, Nathan Thompson, Leban Lokata and Stanley Ofasisili on the Management Committee, and deserves special mention for coaching Boris Teddy leading into the YOG while Thomo was in Scotland.

Finally, the club has recently farewelled expats, Jan and Ike Katene, Caroline McGregor and Cid Mateo, who have provided support on many club activities over the past 4 years. We thank them for their efforts and wish them well. However, this will also create further challenges for the club. Last time significant expat support departed, the club fell into mismanagement and dysfunction. It has taken many years to recover. Armed with an improved capacity and confidence, hopefully this time local members are empowered to run things differently.

TriSI wishes to thank members and friends for their support during 2014. Let's keep up the good work in 2015!

Cid Mateo  
obo TriSI Management Committee  
19 January 2015