

The New Zealand Herald

Triathlon: 15 podium finishes for NZ Team

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Sunday September 18th concluded the 2016 ITU Triathlon World Championships for 103 age group triathletes representing New Zealand. The kiwi contingent landed in Cozumel on the 11th of September, allowing them a few days of acclimatising before racing began.

The team had three events which they could compete in: Aquathlon, Sprint Triathlon and the Standard (Olympic distance) triathlon. All of which were world championship races for athletes aged between 16 and 84.



The week proved successful for the team, given the extreme contrast in weather conditions that many had left in New Zealand. All three race days reaching temperatures upwards of 29 degrees often not long after 9am. The power of the sun only made more challenging by the mid 80's humidity. Team Managers Fred Koenders and Jen Gregory both mentioning their slight nerves of the climate and the potential impact this would have on the athletes' performance and more importantly, their health. However, all things considered, the team experienced very minimal health issues but most athletes admit the heat had taken a toll on their performance.

Team management have said that all athletes have made the team proud, as well as the nation. This was not only limited to those who earned a spot on the podium but to the first timers who have taken on this new challenge, those more experienced who have supported the new entrants and younger athletes as well as the supporters who earned the reputation of being the "loud kiwis" at race venue.

Team captain Ben Eitelberg said, "Competing at a World Triathlon Championship is a very special experience, whether you came to complete as a first timer or to win, it is unique. So many challenges and more importantly, always new experiences. Cherish this and grow a little wiser." Words that echoed true for many athletes.

Early in the week it had become evident that the NZ team had a special gel and vibe. Dozens of supporters (both athletes and family) littered the side lines of the race course encouraging those competing through challenging conditions. It didn't take long for the term "team kiwi" to stick, literally in some cases as many chose to symbolise their support by wearing #teamkiwi tattoos, a gift to the team from Triathlon NZ, the national governing body.

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