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Sport + Ironman Australia Triathlon Media Release

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“IRONMAN QUALIFIER CHALLENGE" GROWS AND GOES NATIONAL IN 1997/98

Australian triathlon and local triathletes have received a further boost to the sport with the announcement by the International Management Group that the second annual Ironman Qualifier Challenge series will expand to ten races in the 1997/98 season providing Australian triathletes with a unique triathlon experience and a fair way to qualify for the annual Sport+ Ironman Australian Triathlon.

Dedicated to those athletes who thirst for longer distance races and the ultimate triathlon challenge, the ten round series will visit Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, the far north and southern Queensland plus the Northern Territory and New South Wales with no race shorter than the long course distance of 2km swim, 80km ride and 20 kilometre run!

The Ironman Qualifier Challenge, now just one year old, has already become a truly national series of events and organisers expect over 5,000 triathletes to enter the ten events in 1997/98!

The 1997/98 series began in Victoria on March 16 with a scintillating win by Chris Legh in the Frankston Long Course triathlon. The series continued in South Australia with the Normanville Long Course race on March 23 before the running of the 12th annual Sport+ Ironman Australian Triathlon in Forster Tuncurry which, like the other Ironman Qualifier Challenge races, is also allocated qualifying slots for the following year’s race!

From Forster / Tuncurry the series heads west to the Rottnest Long Course event held on Rottnest Island off Perth on May 4, 1997 and then the series heads to FNQ, far north Queensland and Cairns for the Cairns Half Ironman on June 8, 1997.

The qualifying season then turns very serious with the prestigious Forster/Tuncurry Half Ironman race on the NSW Holiday Coast on November 23 followed by an all new race, the Gold Coast Half Ironman on Queensland’s Gold Coast on December 7. Competitors will then target the Callala Half Ironman race, introduced in 1996 and held on December 14, 1997 and leaving just one more qualifying chance for competitors at the final race of the series on January 4, 1998 to be aptly named the Half Ironman from Snowy River and held at Jindabyne in the Snowy Mountains!
Some of Australia's finest organisational teams will stand behind the races including GLITA and Race Director Ken Baggs at Forster/Tuncurry, Lez Freeman and his crew at Callala bay, Brian Upton on the Gold Coast, Digger Elrick in Frankston and John Holt and his ESP team at Jindabyne...

Half Ironman races in 1997/98 will be held under the WTC Ironman licence and will give competitors a real taste of the ultimate Ironman triathlon with high organisational, safety and entertainment standards.

Already the very real benefits of the series have been seen in the entry for the 1997 Sport+ Ironman Australian Triathlon, with female entries up 40% on previous years and the field the best balanced national entry in the 12 year history of the race!

Many of the international stars of Ironman Triathlon will be in Australia for this April's race and an elite media conference with defending Ironman Australia champions, Germany's Jürgen Zack and America's Paula Newby-Fraser, plus international and local challengers, will be conducted at the Cambridge Room, ANA Hotel Sydney at 10.30 am on April 8, 1997 before the athletes head for final training in Forster/Tuncurry and the race on April 13!

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