



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Double Delight For Hirai And Webby

Yasunari Hirai and Charlotte Webby have maximum points in the State Ocean Swim Series after winning the men's and women's races respectively in Auckland today (Sunday).

Hirai, Japan's number one ranked open-water swimmer, won the State Harbour Crossing from Bayswater to the Viaduct from George O'Brien (AUS) in a time of 35'24.

Hometown hero Phillip Ryan (Waterhole Swimming Club) was a mere two seconds back in third.

Meanwhile Webby, from New Plymouth, beat Laura Crockart (AUS) by over a minute with countrywoman Alessandra Colombini a further two minutes behind.

Both Hirai and Webby also won the opening races in the Bay of Islands a fortnight ago and have 200 points as the six-round series breaks for Christmas.

Webby said it was a tough day in the water.

"There was a bit of a current going out there, though probably not as choppy as I wanted it, and the last 400 metres felt like about a kilometre so I'm glad I came away with the win.

"I started off faster than I usually do trying to keep on the boys' feet and stayed with them for about a kilometre before they started to get away so I was hoping I could hang on at the end."

The 26-year-old's focus now turns to 10km open-water championships in NSW, Taupo and Western Australia.

"I've done what I set out to do so now I build on my other open water swimming and come back towards the end of the Series hopefully in form again."

Ryan led for much of the 2.9km race in calm, flat conditions before being hauled in by the two visitors who train together on the Gold Coast.

"I wanted to get out and grab a great line, put the pressure on and extend the lead but in the end they caught me," Ryan said. "Yasu passed me, though I tried to stick on his feet, then George did as well however I was glad I stayed in there for third."

Fellow Kiwi Troy Balvert led the elite field out of a sunny Bayswater before Ryan took over at the second buoy.

The middle third saw a six-way tussle involving the top three, Balvert, Liam Albery and Australian Jarrod Poort though Ryan kept his nose in front as the field headed into the Viaduct.

As he had done in Paihia, the 24-year-old Hirai found an extra gear.

"Yasu had more to give in the end," said O'Brien, making his first appearance in the Harbour Crossing. "I knew that's what he would do and I was hoping I had enough but he was too good today."

O'Brien sits in second place on the Series ahead of Ryan.

The Kiwi, who now also turns his attention to the New Zealand Open Water Championships in Taupo and the other events in Australia, said it was fantastic to be part of the event.

"It's great for Auckland, for the event and for open water swimming in general."

More than 1600 competitors finished the race which was first held in 2004.

RESULTS OF THE STATE HARBOUR CROSSING, Auckland

Male

- 1 Yasunari Hirai (JPN), 35'24
- 2 George O'Brien (AUS), 35'39
- 3 Phillip Ryan (NZL), 35'41

Female

- 1 Charlotte Webby (NZL), 37'55
- 2 Laura Crockart (AUS), 39'11
- 3 Alessandra Columbini (AUS), 41'21

REMAINING EVENTS

- Capital Classic, Wellington, 25 January 2015
- La Grande Swim, Akaroa, Christchurch, 15 February
- Sand to Surf, Mt Maunganui, 21 March
- King of the Bays, Auckland, 18 April

ENDS

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