



Tight tussle expected at State Sand to Surf
State Sand to Surf, Mt Maunganui, March 21st 2015
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An intriguing battle is looming in the men's elite race at the State Sand to Surf in Mt Maunganui this weekend.

Kane Radford and Nathan Capp, who have won the last two events in the State Ocean Swim Series, will go head to head for the first time in the series this season.

12 months ago, the two Kiwis were powerless to prevent an Australian assault on the Mt Maunganui event, with Rhys Mainstone crossing the line in first place ahead of fellow Aussie George O'Brien. Capp had to settle for third with Radford fourth.

However, the Aussies are nowhere to be seen in 2015, handing the Kiwi swimmers a chance to add another title to their tally.

Radford is in great form heading into the event, having taken out the New Zealand Open Water Championships earlier in the year. But Capp will be brimming with confidence given his dominant victory in the State Capital Classic in February, while the unpredictability of racing at a surf beach can also level the playing field.

Not that the two can focus solely on each other. They would be well advised to keep an eye on current series leader Phillip Ryan, who has already clocked up three podium finishes so far this season, while former Olympian and 2014 World Surf Life Saving Champion Dylan Dunlop-Barrett, who describes himself as semi-retired, showed he should not be underestimated with a solid third place at the State Capital Classic.

Meanwhile, 2014 runner-up Charlotte Webby is favoured to go one better in the elite women's race in Mt Maunganui this year.

Webby won the opening two events on the State Ocean Swim calendar, but opted out of the Wellington and Akaroa legs. If she makes it three from three with a victory this weekend, she will jump to the top of the standings and be in the box seat heading into the final double points round in Takapuna next month, where a

\$20,000 prize pool will be dolled out with the lion's share going to the series winners.

However, standing in Webby's way is Dunedin swimmer Stefannie Gillespie, who is coming off a victory in La Grande Swim at Akaroa. Series leader Abi Chapman is also a danger, while there is a strong challenge from across the Tasman with both Alessandra Columbini and Samantha Watts likely to be among the front-runners.

Over 1,000 swimmers will compete in this year's State Sand to Surf at Mt Maunganui on Saturday, March 21st. The main race starts at 8:30.

2014/2015 Series Standings (after five rounds):

Men:

1.	Phillip Ryan	298.67
2.	Troy Balvert	295.82
3.	Yasunari Hirai	200.00
4.	George O'Brien	199.14
5.	Liam Albery	198.39

Women:

1.	Abi Chapman	287.16
2.	Gendi Roberts	285.06
3.	Aimee Moss	284.80
4.	Charlotte Webby	200.00
5.	Laura Crockart	197.72

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