

**TRIATHLON AUSTRALIA
Media Release
12 February 2008**



**Walton returns to Hobart to defend
National Sprint Title**

Preparations for this weekend's Hobart International Triathlon (Feb 17) have stepped up a notch with a strong elite field confirming their start for the Sprint Championships, including homegrown star Craig Walton who will return to Hobart to defend his title.

However, the work will be cut out for the 32 year old former Olympian when he meets with the likes of 2008 Olympic team member Courtney Atkinson, David Dellow, Clayton Fettell, Matt Hopper, Brendan Sexton and Gareth Halverson along with a host of young up and comers who are all keen to try and run the local down.

Walton, who won the 2007 Noosa Triathlon for a sixth time in early November, is looking forward to heading back to Hobart to retain his title and enjoy his first hit out of the season on home turf.

"I love heading down to Tassie, it is always great to race in my own state," said Walton today.

"This event for me, especially being so early in the season is a bit of a heart starter.

"I can gauge how my training is going, but I know it won't be easy racing though. I will definitely be looking across at Courtney Atkinson on the start line, he has had a great 18 months of racing and he seems to thrive when it come to the Australian series.

"But this is not just a two horse race, looking across the start lists, guys like David Dellow, Brendan Sexton and Dan Wilson are all in great form. Last year Clayton Fettell also gave me a run for the money, especially on the bike," said Walton.

The weekend's racing is expected to be fast and furious with the elite men using the Sprint Championships as a final primer before the selectors turn their eyes towards Mooloolaba and Ishigaki ITU World Cups. With the World Cups being the final two races

they will use to decide just who the third Olympic Team member for the mens team will be.

Walton, after stretching his legs in Hobart will continue to prepare for the rest of his 2008 campaign, which will include the Oceania Championships in New Zealand, and the Mooloolaba ITU World Cup, both set for March.

He will then head over to commence his international season, as well as coaching and monitoring the progress and coaching partner Emma Snowsill, the first nominated woman for the 2008 Australian Olympic team.

In the women's racing three top Olympic hopefuls Erin Densham, Annabelle Luxford and Emma Moffatt will race against each other for the first time this season. Newly crowned Australian Olympic Distance Champion Alee Sharp will also hit the start line along with WA's Felicity Sheedy Ryan and Lisa Norden of Sweden who took out second place in the City of Perth Triathlon.

The race format will see Elite, Under 23's and juniors race the shorter sprint style format, which features a 750m swim, 20 km bike ride and a 5km run. Female Elites will kick off the action at 2pm with Elite Male racing starting at 3:15pm. While the Age group competitors will race Olympic Distance from 7:00am (ESST)

Elite Course – SPRINT Distance

Swim – 1 lap x 750 m...off Waterman Dock.

Bike course - 8 laps x 2.5 km course around the centre of Hobart.

Start at Waterman Dock along Morrison St and onto Castray Esplanade, it's a climb up to the Battery Point turnaround, return down hill, along and turn left into Murray Street - quite a steep gradient, then right into Davey Street, right into Elizabeth, then back along the Morrison Street waterfront.

Run course - 5 laps x 1 km course

Start at Waterman Dock - run along Morrison Street, turn around at Salamanca Place, back along Morrison, up Murray St climb, then right into Davey St, right into Elizabeth, then back along Morrison Street to the waterfront finish line.

Transition – Princes Wharf

The Age Group course will consist of – 2 x 750m Swim, 8 x 5kms laps on the bike that will lead into a 10km (4 x 2.5km) run around Hobart's beautiful waterfront.

Complete start list for elites and under 23's will be distributed on Thursday February 14.

For further information or images please contact: Anna Wallin of IRPR on (02) 9360 1166 or 0408 832 999 or email awallin@irpr.com.au