



‘Queensland’s Friendliest Town welcomes Australia’s Best Triathletes to Celebrate 30 Years in Goondiwindi’

Organisers of the annual “Barambah Organics Hell of the West” have branded the 2021 event, “Hell of a Triumph,” as the community celebrated 30 years of triathlon history in the vibrant Goondiwindi Region.

Just under 1000 competitors crossed the finish line in Queensland’s toughest triathlon notoriously known as the ‘Festival of Hell’. On Saturday, 400 entrants participated in the family friendly “GTH+ Super Saturday Event”, consisting of a 5 & 10km charity run, an enticer triathlon for intermediate athletes and a mini race for kids aged 6-11years.

On Sunday, the gloves were off as 430 individual competitors and 80 team entrants set a cracking pace in deceptively hellish conditions for the Barambah Organics Hell of the West.

Organisers and athletes embraced new COVID safe event regulations as they took to the mighty Macintyre River for a 2km swim followed by an 80km bike and 20km run. Set amongst some of Australia’s most fertile farming country, the Hell of the West presents a unique set of challenges for athletes.

Race Director, Tim Richards said: *“Hell of the West has built a reputation as Queensland’s Toughest Triathlon. From the scorching heat to spur of the moment summer storms, athletes must always prepare for the unexpected”*.

Taking out the individual men’s title in was elite professional triathlete Steve Mckenna from South Australia in 3:29:41’. In second place only 10 secs back, was last year’s winner, Simon Hearn of Queensland in 3:29:51’, both breaking the race record. While in third, a further minute back was 2017 HOTW winner and former World Champion triathlete Tim Reed. However, Steven’s close win will go down as the HOTW own version of a “Bradbury”. For all but the last 5mins of the race it seemed Trent Thorpe of NZ was going to be a clear winner. Trent had built a commanding lead in the swim and continued to build on this advantage throughout the bike and run, until the 18km mark when Trent’s race suddenly came to an end when he collapsed with heat exhaustion in the hot and humid conditions. Trent was quickly assisted to by medical staff and soon was back on his feet but was in not state to continue. Steve saw Trent’s misfortune as his chance to break away with 2kms to go and run for the win. He timed this surge perfectly and managed to hold off fast finishing Simon Hearn. Steve was so exhausted by his last-ditch effort that he struggled to find the strength to raise his hands in victory as he crossed the line to take the title of the 30th Champion of the HOTW.

For the individual women’s event, it was pro athlete and Brisbane local Queensland girl Ellie Salthouse taking the title in 3:50:41’, 15 seconds off the record time. Ellie took the lead early in the swim and was on the bike with a 2min lead over New Zealander, Amelia Watkinson. Amelia is renowned cyclist, and it was expected that she would be able to work back the time she lost on the swim and they would hit the run together. This was not the case, as Ellie put together a great ride and only gave up 20 secs over the 80km bike ride. Once on the run Ellie looked strong and pulled away with and won the title by nearly 5 minutes over Amelia. In third place was Sydney’s Kylie Simpson who came home very strongly with clearly the fastest run leg of the day in a blistering 1hr 15mins for the 20kms.





Other notable performances on the day were from some HOTW legends Gareth Buckley, Allan Pitman and Criag Rule who completed their 29th, 28th and 27th HOTW events respectively. Truly this is an example of endurance and commitment by these men.

With visitors and guests participating in events across the weekend, the festival attracts in excess 2,500 people to the region contributing an estimated \$400,000 with direct economic and tourism impact. Across the weekend 300 volunteers worked alongside a dedicated COVID subcommittee, local ambulance committee (LAC), police authorities, SES, security, main road authorities and Goondiwindi Regional Council to ensure the success and safety of the event.

Mayor of Goondiwindi Regional Council, The Honourable Councillor Lawrence Springborg AM said: *"The Hell of the West is a major event for the Goondiwindi region, which our community is extremely proud of. To be able to celebrate 30 years this year, demonstrates this region at its best. It's involved thousands of volunteers and significant business support over the years to reach such a remarkable milestone. The event promotes our region to visitors from near and far, which is great for the local economy, and a credit to the organisers that they can continue to attract large crowds resulting in booked out hotels and motels."*

Local producer and award-winning dairy, Barambah Organics teamed up with organisers to help bring together this year's exciting line up of events.

Barambah Organics spokesperson, Maja Sliwinski said: *"We love and support the event for so many reasons. It's great for the community, it's great for tourism and it encourages and promotes an active and healthy lifestyle, which is what we are all about"*.

Organisers celebrated this year's 30-year milestone with a number of free activities in the Goondiwindi Town Park and a big breakfast thanking the local community, volunteers and visitors and their guests for their ongoing support.

'We'd like to thank all our sponsors, competitors, industry associations, volunteers, our local council, Southern Queensland Country Tourism and Tourism Events Queensland for their continued support and making the festival such a great weekend. Next year we will return and you just never know what you're going to get!' Mr Richards said.

For more information and detailed results, visit <https://www.hellofthewest.com/>

