



**MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY**  
**News Release**

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*Tourism is Everybody's Business!*

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**SHIRATO RETURNS TO TOP 18<sup>th</sup> ROTA BLUE**

**Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands (NMI)** – The Northern Mariana Islands’ annual Rota Blue Triathlon was held on Nov. 13, 2011, with 130 competitors taking on the challenge and last year’s 2<sup>nd</sup> place finisher Taro Shirato of Japan rising to the top this year for the win. Niwa Nahoko of Japan finished first for the women and seventh overall.

The annual signature event of Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA) was co-sponsored by the Rota Mayor’s Office and the Kiyokazu Fitness Club of Japan (KFC), which was instrumental in attracting 116 Japanese athletes to the event this year. Twelve competitors from Guam and two from Rota rounded out the pack.

“Once again, the community of Rota rolled out the red carpet to welcome our visiting athletes, and the 18<sup>th</sup> Rota Blue was another success,” said MVA Community Projects Manager Martin Duenas. “Through the hard work of our Rota and Saipan staff, our government partners, and the private sponsors, we again showcased what makes Rota a great destination.”

The event was covered also covered by Japan-based media, generating more publicity for Rota in its primary tourism market.

Japanese competitors swept all the top spots in the triathlon. In the A-type Solo Triathlon, which featured a 1.5-km swim, 40-km biking course and a 10-km run, Shirato led the Men's Division with 2:12:59, followed by Hidea Miyazuka in 2:24:14 and Ayato Matsuyama in 2:26:53. Completing first in the Women's Division was Niwa with a total combined time of 2:44:23, followed in second by Akiko Murata in 2:47:37 and landing in third was Sonoko Matsubara with a total time of 2:52:09.

The rigorous B-type Solo Triathlon featured a 2-km swim, followed by a 90-km biking course and a 21-km run. Japan's Katsumi Kimura led all competitors in the B-type course. He was followed by Masaaki Sato in 5:05:34 and Kazuto Ito in 5:10:16. The top finisher in the Women's Division was Toshimi Doi in 6:25:45, followed by Kaori Suzuki in 6:58:29 and Aya Yamamoto in 7:03:58.

At 62, Syozo Ikeda of Japan was the oldest competitor to complete the triathlon, finishing the B-type course in 6:27:42. 18-year-old Guam native Ayn Justine Charfauros completed the team Challenge Course in 3:33:44.

Competitors were welcomed and congratulated by Rota Mayor Melchor A. Mendiola and other dignitaries at an awards banquet was held on race day at Rota East Harbor.

The Rota Blue Triathlon is one of four major triathlon events held in the Northern Mariana Islands each year, including the XTERRA Saipan Championship, Tagaman Triathlon and the Tinian Turquoise Blue Triathlon.

The triathlon was also sponsored by Rota Resort & Country Club, Bay Breeze Restaurant & Bar, JSBM, Aqua Gift Shop, Mark Michael, RUBIN, Sirena, Pacific Development Inc., Kinki Nippon Tourist Company Ltd., Dept. of Public Safety and other government departments and agencies, numerous volunteers and the friendly people of Rota.



Competitors start the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Rota Blue Triathlon in the early morning light of Nov. 12, 2012, at East Harbor, Rota, Northern Mariana Islands. The event drew 130 competitors this year.



The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Rota Blue Triathlon on Nov. 12, 2012, attracted 130 international competitors this year, including 116 participants from Japan. The annual signature event is one of the biggest tourism draws to the pristine island of Rota in the Northern Mariana Islands.



Men's top finisher Taro Shirato, left, cuts loose with Rota native Dan Calvo at the awards dinner following the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Rota Blue Triathlon on Nov. 12, 2012. Rota, also known in the Northern Mariana Islands as the "Friendly Island," is renowned for its hospitality.

Northern Mariana Islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are a chain of idyllic islands in the West Pacific, offering a friendly, fun and exciting vacation in paradise. They are an excellent destination for families, adventure and sports-minded travelers, as well as business people looking for a tropical haven. Adventurous travelers from Asia, Australia, Europe and elsewhere looking for new travel discoveries will find them in the Mariana Islands, just three hours travel from most cities in Japan, and four from Asia and Australia. The Northern Marianas are served from Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka in Japan by Delta and Asiana Airlines. From Korea, Asiana Airlines provides direct flights from Seoul and Busan. Fly Guam/Fly Marianas provides direct flights from Hong Kong and Nagoya, Japan. For more information visit [www.mymarianas.com](http://www.mymarianas.com).

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