



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

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**For Immediate Release-November 27, 2012**

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**FUKUSHIMA TOPS ROTA BLUE TRIATHLON**

**Rota Residents Roll Out Red Carpet for Athletes**

**Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands (NMI)** – In a field of 114, Tomokazu Fukushima of Japan bested the competition to win the top spot in the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Rota Blue Triathlon on Nov. 17, 2012, in Rota, Northern Mariana Islands.

Fukushima was the first male finisher of the 1.5K swim, 40KM bike, and 10KM run, crossing the finish line of the picturesque course in 2:13:14. The top female finisher in the A-type course was Sonoko Matsubara of Japan, finishing in 2:49:33 and 14th overall.

Japanese competitors swept most top spots in the triathlon. Fukushima bested last year's champion Taro Shirato, who finished in second place in 2:14:18, and last year's second place finisher Hidea Miyazuka, who finished third this year in 2:27:09. In the Women's Division, Yuri Nakagawa followed hot on the heels of Matsubara, finishing in 2:50:19, while Yuki Ando placed in third at 3:12:49.

In the Men's Olympic distance, B-type triathlon, which featured a 2KM swim, 90KM biking course and a 21KM run, Masayuki Matsumaru led with 4:29:48, followed by Tatsuro Yasukawa in 5:04:12 and Satoshi Imaizumi in 5:10:15. Completing first in the Women's

Division (and second overall) was Hiromi Matsumaru with a total combined time of 4:58:46, followed in second by Yoko Kawatani in 5:15:54 and Tomoe Kinoshita in 5:54:30.

The Kumagai family of Japan was the lone team entry. 11-year-old Hayato Kumagai tackled the bike leg of his first triathlon, joined forces with his mother Miharu and his father Koji to finish the race in 3:21:14.

The annual Rota Blue Triathlon is jointly sponsored by the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA), Kiyokazu Fitness Club of Japan and the Rota Mayor's Office. Triathletes from Rota, Saipan, and Japan convened on Rota for the event, many taking a special flight chartered directly from Japan.

"Once again, the municipality of Rota has rolled out the red carpet for the Rota Blue Triathlon," said MVA Community Projects Manager Martin Duenas. "Mother Nature cooperated, organization and logistics went well, community members gave their full support at the aid stations, and we sent many competitors home with happy memories of a great weekend in Rota."

Dozens of government employees, student volunteers, and private citizens began manning water stations before sunrise, offering water and words of encouragement to triathletes long into the day. In some cases, the volunteers made it a family affair, bringing their own barbeque grills, picnic tables, food, and drinks for the long day. Along with their parents, young children offered cups of water to competitors and scurried after discarded cups along Rota's quiet roadsides. Later that day at the open air awards banquet, organizers served up some of the best of local cuisine: red rice, taro, barbecued chicken and ribs, coco (picked) papaya, eggplant boiled in coconut milk, and more.

"The races in Japan are so serious," said Miharu Kumagai, through a translator at the awards banquet. "But here, people are so warm and comfortable."

The annual Rota Blue Triathlon is held each November is one of four major triathlon events held in the Northern Mariana Islands, including the XTERRA Saipan Championship, Tagaman Triathlon and the Tinian Turquoise Blue events. The next big race organized by the MVA will be the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Marianas Coffee Trail Run on Jan. 26, 2013.



Visiting athletes from Japan prepare to start the swim course of the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Rota Blue Triathlon held on Nov. 17, 2012, in Rota, Northern Mariana Islands. One hundred fourteen triathletes joined the event from Rota, Saipan, and Japan.



From left, KFC Triathlon President/CEO Kiyokazu Onishi and Rota Mayor Chief of Staff Tom Quitugua countdown the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Rota Blue Triathlon at Rota East Harbor on Nov. 17, 2012.



Swimmers take off at the sound of the horn during the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Rota Blue Triathlon in Sasanhaya Bay on Nov. 17, 2012, in the Northern Mariana Islands.



A competitor in the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Rota Blue Triathlon smiles while tackling the Olympic-distance course of the race. The triathlon was held on Nov. 17, 2012, in Rota, Northern Mariana Islands and attracted 114 competitors.



From left, Rota residents Ted Manglona and Richard Taisacan, serve water to a competitor in the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Rota Blue Triathlon on Nov. 17, 2012, in Rota, Northern Mariana Islands.



A biker in the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Rota Blue Triathlon on Nov. 17, 2012, glides by the tree-lined turquoise lagoon of Rota, a quiet, unspoiled island in the Northern Marianas.

The 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 and Osaka in Japan by Delta Air Lines and Asiana Airlines. From Korea, Asiana provides direct flights from Seoul and Busan. China is served from Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. For more information visit [www.mymarianas.com](http://www.mymarianas.com).

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