



**16<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

**For immediate release from the State NZ Ocean Swim Series, for further information visit [www.oceanswim.co.nz](http://www.oceanswim.co.nz)**

**Radford and Webby Crowned State New Zealand Ocean Swim Series Champions in awful Auckland conditions**

Charlotte Webby upset favourite Cara Baker to win today's State King of the Bays title and also retain the overall State New Zealand Ocean Swim Series Championship in tough conditions at Takapuna Beach while number one men's seed Kane Radford was upstaged by pool specialist Dylan Dunlop-Barrett in the choppy seas, but hung on for second to retain his State New Zealand Ocean Swim Series crown.

It was not only survival of the fittest and strongest but also the most adaptable as the 2.8km course from Milford Beach to Takapuna Beach was scrapped in favour of a 1500m two-lap swim starting and finishing from Takapuna Beach. Squally conditions and heavy seas led to the change, with Race Director Scott Rice thinking first and foremost for the safety of the over 1100 participants.

The reduction in distance played into the hands Dunlop-Barrett (Oakura), who has had a week to remember after claiming three national titles in the pool, (in the process breaking Danyon Loaders national 800m record) and now adding the State King of the Bays to his 400m, 800m and 1500m pool titles.

"I come from a surf lifesaving back ground and a distance swimming back ground, you put two and two together on a day like this and things were likely to play out well for me.

“Kane has been swimming really well throughout the series, I was hanging onto him for the first lap then I couldn’t see much out of my goggles anyway so I just went as straight as I could and held on for as long as I could.”

Radford (Rotorua) was pleased to claim the series even if it wasn’t with a top of the podium performance that he had been hoping for.

“The conditions did make it a tough day out there, I found the start hard and then didn’t have enough time to catch up really. Dylan had a great race and in the end it came down to his great surf lifesaving skills – he caught a wave that I missed and he pulled away.”

Radford was however satisfied with his performances over the whole season that saw him retain the overall title in a year that also saw him claim the Australian 5km Open Water title. The State Series is based on the best three results from each swimmer over the six races in the series.

“It has been an awesome season and I am stoked to win the overall title again.” said Radford.

Phillip Ryan rounded out a strong summer with a third place to go with his victory at The Mount last month while defending champion Steven Kent finished fifth.

Webby (New Plymouth) was excited with her series title after capitalising on the conditions and shorter distance to pencil in her first win over Aussie based Kiwi Cara Baker this year.

“That was so much fun, I wish all ocean swims were like this!” she exclaimed at the finish line.

“I loved the crashing and banging, you just had to put your head down and go for it. I thought Cara was sitting on my feet that second lap so I just went as hard as I could thinking it would come down to a sprint finish.”

Not enjoying the crashing so much was Baker (Pakuranga) who had a hard time in the water.

“I just kept getting smashed out there; sometimes it just happens that way.”

Penelope Marshall finished third with surf lifesaving star Johanna O’Conner fourth just ahead of Olympian Melissa Ingram.

After a week of calm conditions the weather turned for the worse in Auckland this morning, leading to the decision to move and shorten the course upon consultation with safety provider Surf Lifesaving New Zealand.

Surf Lifesaving New Zealand’s External Events Co-ordinator, Shaun Smith explained there was no other option for the event today.

“The combination of the wind direction, wind strength and the tide made it too dangerous for the swimmers, especially around the exposed rocks between Milford and Takapuna. Our concern is always first and foremost with safety and in particular the safety of the back 50% of the field. There is no way we could have ensured their safety on the original course today.”

Today was the final race in the series of six swims as part of the State New Zealand Ocean Swim Series.

For State Insurance, the support of the series is part of the biggest sponsorship deal in its one hundred year history of supporting New Zealand communities.