



4th Annual Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle

It's a little less than a month before the 4th Annual Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle slated for December 4, 2010 and all around Saipan, motorists can see cyclists training for the upcoming 100km bike race. Never have there been more bicycles on Saipan as novice and advance cyclists prepare for the "toughest race in Micronesia". While 100km (61 miles) sounds daunting to most, relay teams comprised of two to four bikers can traverse the course in 25km increments, making it more manageable and perhaps, more fun!

Saipan cyclists will ride with over 120 pro and amateur bike enthusiasts on race day. Unfortunately, defending champions, Alexander Bagenov and Amber Halliday will not return due

to schedule conflicts. However, Russia's Konstantin Fast (yes, that's his actual surname), will vie for the title to retain the HOM under the Russian helm. Fast, age 34, comes from a family of pro cyclists as both his parents excelled in the sport and he previously raced with the Italian team G.S. 93 OFZ FAAC Electromatic. He currently resides in Khabarovsk and works at the Russian Ministry of Youth Culture and Sports to promote cycling in his country.



Japan's Takahiro Ogasawara, aka "Oga san", age 30, is a familiar pro triathlete name to the CNMI as he has placed in the top five of several local triathlons (XTERRA, Tagaman, Rota Blue, Tinian Turquoise). Oga san is the current National Coach for Japan's Mountain Biking Team and also participates regularly in adventure and mountain bike races. His strengths include steep hill climbs, which should aid him as he tackles, Kagman, Kingfisher, Radar Station





and Suicide Cliff.

Guam's Jazy Garcia, age 43, competed in the past three HOM's with his fastest 2nd place finish in 2008 with a 3 hr 18 behind Eli Torgeson who won in 3 hours 2 min. In the last few weeks, Jazy's presence at the local "Ride Around the Ridge" and the "50km Pre-HOM" races support his efforts in training seriously for the HOM to not only beat his time but win overall. It's rumored that a group of

Guam cyclists will be participating in the race this year so Garcia may have help from his fellow Guamanians to lead him to the front of the pack this year.

Last month, PIC was one of the sponsors for Korea's 2010 Tour de DMZ and invited some of the winners to participate in the HOM. Mr. Choi Kung Kyu, age 32, placed 1st in the in the 70km race. He and Mr. Lee Suck Woo, age 42, finished just twenty seconds apart in the race (1:48:18 vs. 1:48:38).



Among the women's competition is Saipan's hometown pro triathlete, Mieko Carey. Carey, age 32, finished 2010 season with a



string of wins and podium finishes. Recently, Carey competed in the XTERRA World Championships in Maui and placed 12th in the Pro Women's Division. Not only does she also hold the 2010 XTERRA Japan title, Just last weekend, Carey dominated the Round the Ridge mountain bike race and beat everyone as well as a mountain bike race in Japan last month.

Korea's Ms. Kim Myo Jin, age 32, finished first in the 70km Tour de DMZ and the KINTEX 77km race in 1 hr 48 min. Kim says that she prefers mountains and steep slopes so she may have an advantage on this particular course. She and Ms. Lee Kyeung Eun, age 35, may strategize together during much of the race to become triumphant at the finish line. Lee won the 20km Misiryung Climbing Competition and placed second in the DMZ Race with a time of 1 hour 49 minutes.



Among the women's field, Chiyo Lombard from Guam is anticipated



to be a top contender. As the inaugural champion and placing second in 2008, she and Carey will battle it out on the course. Aside from endurance and power, tactical riding will prevail for the women.

The 2010 Hell of the Marianas will host prominent media from Japan, Korea and Russia to feature the race in their upcoming issues:

Japan: Funride (leading cycling magazine)

Korea: Bicycle Life (#1 cycling magazine), AB Road (leading travel magazine), Newsweek (weekly magazine), 1 Power Blogger

Russia: Gran (outdoor & extreme sports magazine)