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**High resolution:**

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## Laguna Phuket Triathlete to Race in Two World Championships

### *Scoops Coveted Ironman World Championship Qualifying Slot to Become First Thai Competing in Back-to-Back Worldwide Ironman Pinnacles*

Phuket triathlete Jaray Jearanai will take on the world's triathlon elite when he competes in this year's Ironman 70.3 and full Ironman World Championships - less than a year after completing his first-ever Ironman 70.3 triathlon at Laguna Phuket - to become the first Thai national competitor at these worldwide triathlon pinnacles.

Jaray, a marketing executive at Laguna Holiday Club was sponsored by Laguna Phuket to race in the Ironman 70.3 Philippines on 14 August, which offered top age group finishers 30 qualifying slots for the Ford Ironman World Championship in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii on 7 October, as well as qualifying slots for the Ironman 70.3 World Championship in Lake Las Vegas on 11 September.

And Jaray's storming performance - finishing fifth in his age group and 29<sup>th</sup> overall in a time of 4:46:41 among a field of almost 700 triathletes - saw him scoop qualifying slots to both World Championships.

His feat sets up a unique double challenge for the dedicated amateur. It means he will be pitting himself against the cream of triathlon talent in two top World Championship endurance events just a month apart - and the Kailua-Kailua-Kona race will be his first-ever full distance Ironman.

"I trained hard for the Philippines Ironman 70.3 but I was really surprised to finish so well and get the Ironman World Championship slot," said Jaray, aged 31.

"It's always been my ambition to compete in a full Ironman. I just didn't expect my first one to be the World Championship, competing against the best triathletes in the world."

"But I'm absolutely thrilled and honoured to be able to participate in such a massive event."

The full Ironman consists of a 3.8km swim followed by a 180.2km bike ride and a 42.1km marathon. The legendary Kailua-Kona World Championship, competed on an iconic lava field course, is considered the sport's "Holy Grail."

Jaray's Philippines triumph was only his third Ironman 70.3 - a 1.9 km swim, 90km bike ride and 21km run - and his second overseas triathlon.

He finished just 15 minutes behind triathlon legend Australian Belinda Granger, the current Laguna Phuket Triathlon women's champion, who was first woman home in eighth place overall.

Jaray will go on to line up in Las Vegas and Kailua-Kona among the cream of professional and age group triathletes from around the world, headed by defending Ironman World Champions Chris McCormack and Mirinda Carfrae, and defending Ironman 70.3 World Champions Michael Raelert and Caroline Steffen - women's winner of the inaugural Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific at Laguna Phuket last December.

Each race has only 1,800 slots that are eagerly coveted by tens of thousands of triathletes worldwide, who vie for them in a global series of qualifying triathlons and also in lotteries organised by the World Triathlon Corporation.

But if his recent form is any indication, Jaray stands a great chance of once again proving his triathlon mettle against the best in the world.

In 2010 he placed third in his age group in the Laguna Phuket International Marathon; was second placed Thai athlete in the Laguna Phuket Triathlon; and first Thai finisher in the Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship at Laguna Phuket – his first Ironman 70.3 - in a time of 05:02:03.

In April this year he completed the Singapore Aviva Ironman 70.3 – his first overseas triathlon - in 4:49:22 to place 10<sup>th</sup> in his age group; in June he was the first half marathon runner home in the Laguna Phuket International Marathon; and in July he was the first Thai finisher and second overall in the Bangkok Triathlon with a time of 2: 28:59.

Jaray took up cycling and running just eight years ago and was inspired to add swimming to his athletic repertoire after watching competitors in the annual Laguna Phuket Triathlon.

His first triathlon was the 2007 Laguna Phuket Triathlon. Since then he's taken part in the event every year, as well as other triathlons in Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

Jaray's race preparations have included training with triathlon legend Jürgen Zäck, the record-breaking eight-time Ironman winner, in his Triathlon Academy at Thanyapura Sports & Leisure Club in Phuket. His current schedule sees him training for up to five hours each day.

Jaray rates Jürgen as a hard taskmaster: "It's extremely hard and concentrated training," he says.

He admits that swimming is the weakest of his three triathlon disciplines, but says he's improved under Jürgen's instruction: "I am getting better and faster."

He's pushing his 61kg body - "It used to be 64kg before I started with Jürgen" - to the limit with sprints and endurance training in each triathlon discipline.

In addition to sponsorship from Laguna Phuket, Jaray is supported by the Thai Ocean Venture seafood exporting company of Phuket and You Can bike shop in Bang Tao.

Jaray says: "It's amazing to achieve this opportunity to take part in not one, but two World Championships and I'll be giving all my best efforts.

"It also makes me very proud to represent my country at this level and I hope I can inspire more Thai athletes to get involved in the great sport of triathlon."

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**Note to the Editor:**

Laguna Phuket is Asia's finest destination resort – a collection of deluxe hotels and villas including Banyan Tree Phuket, Angsana Laguna Phuket (opening December 2011), Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket, Laguna Beach Resort, Outrigger Laguna Phuket Resort and Villas, Best Western Allamanda Laguna Phuket, Laguna Holiday Club Resort, and Laguna Property offering luxury investment and lifestyle residential properties - all sharing 1,000 acres of tropical parkland and three kilometres of beach frontage with the Laguna Phuket Golf Club, Canal Shopping Village, Banyan Tree Spa, four Angsana Spas, Laguna Wedding Chapel, Quest Laguna Phuket Adventure an on-site team building facility, and Latitude, a unique stand-alone function venue.

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