



Laguna Phuket Triathlon 2011 and three-time champion Massimo Cigana.

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Laguna Phuket Triathlon 2011 top three male and female winners celebrate on the podium (left to right): Alberto Cassadei, Belinda Granger, Radka Vodickova, Massimo Cigana, Romain Guillaume and Katja Rabe.

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Cigana First Three-Time Champion at Laguna Phuket Triathlon

Italy's Massimo Cigana carved his name into the history books of the Laguna Phuket Triathlon with a hard-fought victory in sweltering conditions to become the first three-time champion in the annual event's 18-year history.

Cigana – champion last year and in 2008 – completed the gruelling course in 2:32:51, four minutes ahead of fellow Italian Alberto Cassadei.

The impressive Cassadei led the pack out of the swim course, with Cigana trailing further down the field. But bike specialist Cigana overhauled him early in the bike course then stretched his lead on the run, finishing nearly three minutes faster than his winning time last year, with a swim of 00:27:43; bike of 01:18:46; and run of 00:43:54.

Cassadei followed him home in 2:36:56, and in third place was Romain Guillaume of France in 2:37:08. The top male amateur was Todd Spackman of Australia in fifth place in 2:43:42.

The win is a morale-booster for Cigana ahead of next weekend's Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship at Laguna Phuket, when he will be aiming to best his second place finish last year.

"It was definitely a great motivator today to be going for a third victory on this course," said Cigana.

"This is my ideal race and I love the conditions here. The competition was very strong and it was a hard race – I'm very happy to have won today but also to have become the first three-time champion here in Phuket."

In the women's field Radka Vodickova of the Czech Republic was too strong for two-time Laguna champion Australian Belinda Granger, who was seeking to emulate Cigana's achievement with another victory to become a three-time champion.

Granger kept pace with Vodickova in the swim and in the early stages of the bike course before the younger Czech – 2009 Laguna champion and a member of her country's Olympic team – pulled away to build a winning lead that stretched to more than three minutes at the finish.

Vodickova won in 2:54:18 with a swim of 00:27:06; bike of 01:35:15; and run of 00:49:15. Granger finished in 2:57:33 followed by third-placed Katja Rabe of Germany in 2:59:17.

Amateur Cindi Bannick of the USA had a race to remember, snatching fourth place and top amateur position in the women's field with a time of 3:00:15 – just one second ahead of Italian professional Edith Niederfriniger.

Jaray Jearanai of Phuket – the first Thai to compete at both the Ironman 70.3 and Ironman World Championships – was the first Thai finisher in 2:59:38 and 28th overall. First female Thai was Nampetch Porntharukchairoen in 3:57:37.

The race also saw a personal triumph for Laguna Phuket Golf Club director Tim Haddon, six months into a personal mission to overcome health issues, lose weight and train for his first-ever triathlon. Tim crossed the finish line in a time of 5:28:22 to the cheers of family, colleagues and friends. He completed the course with a swim of 0:50:14; bike of 2:35:16 and run of 1:51:04.

This year's Laguna Phuket Triathlon was the biggest-ever in the event's 18 year history, with more than 1,000 athletes representing over 40 countries competing on the picturesque course.

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Results

Men

1. Massimo Cigana (ITA) 2:32:51
2. Alberto Cassadei (ITA) 2:36:56
3. Romain Guillaume (FRA) 2:37:08
4. Frederick Croneborg (SWE) 2:39:10
5. Todd Spackman (AUS) 2:43:42

Women

1. Radka Vodickova (CZE) 2:54:18
2. Belinda Granger (AUS) 2:57:33
3. Katja Rabe (GER) 2:59:17
4. Cindi Bannick (USA) 3:00:15
5. Edith Niederfriniger (ITA) 3:00:16

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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.

