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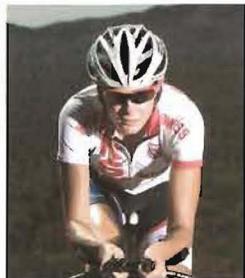
# THE 20 FAVORITES TO EARN THE TITLE OF IRONMAN 70.3 WORLD CHAMPION

For the third year in a row, the IRONMAN 70.3 world champions will be crowned in Henderson, Nevada. Champions return hungry for more, while newcomers will play their hand in a chance for a podium spot. *By Tawnee Prazak*



### HEATHER WURTELE (CAN)

Heather Wurtele exudes champion. This year alone she has four big wins to her name, and enters the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship standing second in the points rankings, trailing only to defending champ Leanda Cave. Wurtele's early-season win at the IRONMAN 70.3 Pan American Championship in Panama scored her huge points and proved she can win against the best. And while her results at the big championships haven't been up to par with the rest of her racing, Wurtele excels on tough, hilly courses like the one here in Henderson. The past couple years she's raced multiple IRONMAN races leading into this event, but this year that is not the case. She completed IRONMAN Coeur d'Alene in June, in which she won and set a course record. Her race schedule remained light after that to focus on key races. The IRONMAN World Championship in Kona is also a priority to Wurtele, and she's a proven threat at both distances.



### LEANDA CAVE (GBR)

Leanda Cave returns to Henderson as the defending IRONMAN and IRONMAN 70.3 reigning champion. She took a long off-season after those victories, and when she got back to it this year, she went a bit too hard too fast and was struck with injury. "I ramped up the volume and intensity of training too soon after taking the longest off-season break of my entire career," she wrote on her blog. She suffered a torn hamstring that left her out of the game until IRONMAN 70.3 Boulder in early August. But at Boulder she had a great comeback, finishing second to Melissa Hauschildt, and she showed the injury was behind her. She will need that same running prowess to get back on the podium in Vegas again this year. Cave is one of those athletes who's seemingly always able to find that extra gear when it matters most.



### KELLY WILLIAMSON (USA)

In Kelly Williamson's first go at Vegas last year she raced brilliantly to claim second. While Williamson is one of the few who juggles peaking for multiple distances throughout the year, it appears this year IRONMAN 70.3 is her priority. Williamson typically packs on a heavy race schedule early in the season then scales back a bit before the fall championships. She enters Vegas ranked third in IRONMAN 70.3 points rankings. Watch for Williamson on the run—last year she closed with a 1:23:19 half-marathon, which was six minutes faster than any other female.



### MELISSA HAUSCHILDT (AUS)

Melissa Hauschildt won this race in 2011, its first year in Henderson, at a time when she was relatively new to the sport and largely an unknown name (back then it was Melissa Rollison). Since then she's dominated long-course racing, including this year with five big wins, including the Abu Dhabi International Triathlon, ITU Long Distance World Championship, and most recently IRONMAN 70.3 Boulder. And Boulder wasn't just any win. In that race she faced some of the same women she'll toe the line with in Vegas and absolutely crushed the field, winning by a 12:51 margin. It's that kind of dominance that has become Hauschildt's signature mark when she's on her "A" game. And after missing a podium in Vegas by one spot last year, you can bet she's hungry to keep her winning streak alive and leave a lasting impression on this this race.



### HEATHER JACKSON (USA)

For Heather Jackson, it is all about the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship. She has no plans of racing a full IRONMAN event until she's won this race—and she's been knocking on the door of becoming a world champion the past few seasons. She's moved her way up from fifth in 2010 to fourth in 2011 to third last year. "All of my focus and dedication is toward Vegas, without a single thought past it," she says. "And so out there, on race day, I'm doing everything I can to try and get that title." She deliberately shut down racing after IRONMAN 70.3 Vineman in July (where she was second to Meredith Kessler) to make it all about prep for this race. "Vegas is definitely a power and strength course, which benefits me," she says. Her combination of strengths in the bike and run are as good as anyone's and she's made it clear she's not racing for second.

**THE WOMEN:** *On the women's side, it will be very tight with a handful of athletes whose strengths play to the tough and hilly course, like superb cyclists Heather Jackson and Angela Naeth. However, some notable names will not be toeing the line, such as Mirinda Carfrae and Meredith Kessler, who are putting all of their efforts into prep for IRONMAN World Championship in Kailua-Kona in just five weeks. There are also a couple up-and-coming pros who have made the transition from short-course to long-course racing and are proving to be big threats at the IRONMAN 70.3 distance.*



**ANNABEL LUXFORD (AUS)**

This will be Annabel Luxford's first attempt at the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship, but she's no stranger to the game. The former ITU star switched to long-course racing just last year, bringing with her a resume that includes four ITU World Cup wins, and this year she's landing on the podium at some of the biggest events on the race circuit. Most recently, Luxford had a strong second-place finish at the IRONMAN 70.3 European Championship in Wiesbaden, Germany in July. It will be interesting to see how she handles the tough Vegas conditions, but her performance at IRONMAN 70.3 St. George—where she finished fourth on a comparable course to Vegas—shows she can handle the hills.



**EMMA-KATE LIDBURY (GBR)**

Emma-Kate Lidbury made some big changes this year and it couldn't be working out better. The U.K. native relocated from a cold, wet climate in Great Britain to sunny Santa Monica, California, to live and train full time. "In the U.K. I did the majority of my training alone, which, combined with the terrible British weather, was often soul destroying and was certainly limiting my overall development," she says. "My coach, Matt Dixon, really encouraged me to think about relocating to the U.S. It seemed like a crazy idea at the time, but it's completely transformed my life." Case in point: notable wins at IRONMAN 70.3 Texas and IRONMAN 70.3 Kansas. "I've certainly had a strong season so far and am pleased with my progression," she says, attributing much of the success to the new locale. She loves racing 70.3s and says she still has much to achieve before moving up to full IRONMAN racing.



**LINSEY CORBIN (USA)**

After a premature end to her race in Vegas last year due to a mechanical issue on the bike, you can bet Montana-native Linsey Corbin is hungry to get back on the podium at the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship, as she was in 2011 when she placed third. And while Corbin battled a bit of injury this year, it didn't have her sidelined for too long. Corbin will also be toeing the line in Vegas without having raced a full Ironman this calendar year, which will no doubt serve to her advantage in keeping her fresh. But she validated her Kona qualification with a huge win at IRONMAN Arizona last November, so she'll return to Hawaii. Expect her to be rocking a cowboy hat down the finishing chute at both events.



**ANGELA NAETH (CAN)**

Angela Naeth put together a string of racing this year that left jaws dropping: Four straight IRONMAN 70.3 wins, beginning with Eagleman in early June and ending with Racine in late July. After Racine, Naeth scaled back on racing, withdrawing from IRONMAN 70.3 Boulder, to focus on training and ensure she'd be in top form for this race. "Last year, I was very upset and frustrated," said Naeth, finished 17th after crashing on the bike. When it comes to the bike, it is easily Naeth's biggest weapon. She's known for posting the fastest bike splits in many of her races, including some killer courses, such as IRONMAN 70.3 St. Croix. This year, Naeth also moved to Boulder, Colorado to live and train full time, and she says it's been a positive change. "Everything has become more solid and has grown from last year—my relationships, living, training."



**LIZ BLATCHFORD (GBR)**

British triathlete Liz Blatchford is another former ITU standout who's now a rising star on the IRONMAN 70.3 scene. She has raced quite a few since 2011, while still competing to make the 2012 British Olympic Team. But after not being selected to the team for London, she left behind ITU racing once and for all and put all of her focus into long course. Since then, Blatchford, who was born in the U.K. but grew up in Australia, also stepped in to IRONMAN racing, winning her first-race at the distance at IRONMAN Cairns. That gave her the bug (and the points) to potentially get to the IRONMAN World Championship this year. At Vegas, expect Blatchford to be near the front of the race early since she's one of the best swimmers in the field.

**THE MEN:** On the men's side there are the usual big names returning, like past IRONMAN 70.3 World Champions Andy Potts, Craig Alexander and Sebastian Kienle. Champion Terenzo Bozzone having stand-out seasons, winning another world title won't come easy.



**JOE GAMBLES (AUS)**

Multiple IRONMAN 70.3 champion Joe Gambles may have overcooked himself leading into this race last year and he certainly won't make that same mistake again this time. "I feel a lot fresher mentally and physically," he says. "I have cut my training volume back and really focused on making the key sessions count." He's also making the key races count. Gambles had wins at IRONMAN 70.3 Syracuse and Boulder (in fact, his third straight in Boulder). He has yet to make it to the podium in an IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship event, but he's been as close as fourth in 2010. He shut down racing after that win in Boulder in order to perfect his training and taper, and he also won't be racing the IRONMAN World Championship as he did last season.



**BEVAN DOCHERTY (NZL)**

Bevan Docherty broke into the long-course scene a little over a year ago and says he won't be satisfied until he is world champ, something he's no stranger to as an ITU World Champion and four-time national champion of New Zealand. And this year, while the IRONMAN World Championship is his main focus (it will be his first start in Kona), Vegas is still a big priority as he looks to improve his third-place finish from a year ago. "Kona is definitely my focus this year and my training and preparation is focused towards that," he says. "Because of that, there is a chance I could be slightly off my game leading into Vegas, but I'm not going to Vegas to participate." Docherty won his first ever IRONMAN in New Zealand this spring (setting a course record along the way), and most recently had two wins at IRONMAN 70.3 in Boise and Vineman. "I'm pretty happy with my season so far. I've been able to try different things and push myself in different ways," he says. "For example, at both Boise and Vineman I rode off the front and out of my comfort level, when I know I could have just sat in and still possibly run away with the win."



**ANDY POTTS (USA)**

Andy Potts likes to keep his schedule rather consistent, he has a tendency to win the same races over and over, and his signature mark is leading from the beginning in those victories. For example, he's won both IRONMAN 70.3 Oceanside and Escape From Alcatraz five times a piece, plus wins at IRONMAN Lake Placid the past few years. When it comes to the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship, he's had some ups and downs. He won the event in 2007, and has raced in three of the events since then, unable to match that 2007 performance. But last year at Vegas he pulled off a respectable fifth-place finish, and this year he enters the Championship ranked second in the 70.3 points rankings. If he can step up his bike on this course he'll definitely have podium potential—his swim and run on this course have been right there with the best (if not better).



**CRAIG ALEXANDER (AUS)**

In 2011 Craig "Crowie" Alexander stole the show in Vegas, winning comfortably after a stunning 1:11 half-marathon split. But last year, he fell short to Sebastian Kienle at this race and followed it up with a disappointing finish at the IRONMAN World Championship. Now you can bet the two-time IRONMAN 70.3 World Champion is hungry for one more win to match his three IRONMAN world titles. And while he's also managing intense training for Kona, he said that makes this event no less important to him. If his racing schedule is any indicator of his dedication to this distance, Crowie is in good shape heading into Sunday's race. He's won all three races he's done at this distance in 2013, including topping the field by seven minutes at IRONMAN 70.3 Hawaii. "My season so far has been good," he said. "But I am building and working to a plan."



**RICHE CUNNINGHAM (AUS)**

Richie Cunningham is always a factor in any race he enters. This year alone he's had wins at IRONMAN 70.3 St. Croix and IRONMAN 70.3 Texas, but Vegas could be a bit of a gamble. On the Fourth of July, Cunningham was out riding with a small group in the Boulder, Colorado, area when he was hit by a truck. Initial reports from Cunningham and the fellow riders indicated that the truck may have hit him intentionally. The crash landed him in the hospital, and he suffered a separated shoulder, broken elbow and some torn back muscles. But apparently Cunningham heals fast because he's still expected to race in Henderson this weekend. He had a pair of top-five finishes when this race was held in Clearwater Beach, Florida, but has yet to equal that at this venue.

Kienle. But there are plenty of dark horses who will no doubt give these guys a run for their money. With athletes like Joe Gambles and 2008 IRONMAN 70.3 World



#### TERENZO BOZZONE (NZL)

Terenzo Bozzone is back. At only 28 years old, Bozzone already has a robust triathlon career under his belt that includes a win in the 2008 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship in Clearwater, Florida. But after some early-career success, Bozzone injured his Achilles tendon and hit a rough patch of racing. We haven't seen him at an IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship event since 2009, when he finished in a disappointing 31st place. But that was then, this is now, and Bozzone is back in great form. Looking at this year, he was second in the ITU Long Distance World Championship, won both IRONMAN 70.3 Florida and IRONMAN 70.3 Mt. Tremblant, and found himself on the podium in four other events at this distance. Bozzone's return to the podium may have to do with less full IRONMAN racing on his schedule these days and more of a focus just on this distance. Bozzone has not raced at this venue, but he's been in enough championship events by now and knows how to play his cards.



#### SEBASTIAN KIENLE (GER)

Sebastian Kienle had it made going into 2013. As the defending IRONMAN 70.3 World Champion, Kienle was an automatic qualifier for this race and the IRONMAN World Championship. As a result, he hasn't had to load up his race schedule to earn qualifying points. That said, the Kienle we've seen race this year has not performed as well as would be expected. He was 18th at IRONMAN 70.3 St. George and ninth at the IRONMAN European Championship in Frankfurt. Nevertheless, Kienle comes up big in big races and has the ability to open things up on the bike. Last year he torched the field with a 2:07:54 bike split, which was five minutes faster than anyone else. This is a course that suits his strength on the bike, so a repeat world title certainly isn't out of the question.



#### BRENT MCMAHON (CAN)

Brent McMahon's claim to fame this year was a huge win at IRONMAN 70.3 St. George where he blew away a stacked field on the run. That performance boosted his rankings to fourth in the IRONMAN 70.3 points rankings. McMahon comes from a short-course background (he was a 2004 Olympian) and has made the leap to 70.3 racing in recent years. And while he has yet to breakthrough at this race, McMahon appears to be finding his groove at this distance in 2013. He's finished second to Bevan Docherty at IRONMAN 70.3 Boise, as well as a second to Terenzo Bozzone at IRONMAN 70.3 Mt. Tremblant. McMahon has not raced the Vegas course, but he is strong on hills as he showed this May in St. George.



#### KEVIN COLLINGTON (USA)

Kevin Collington surprised many people, himself included, by his second-place finish at IRONMAN 70.3 St. George earlier this year against a stacked field, earning him the title of US Pro Champion as the top American. "Given the depth of the field in St. George, my goal was a top eight, so second was a big surprise for me," he said. Collington comes from a short-course background and is now falling into a nice rhythm on the IRONMAN 70.3 circuit. Up until last year his main focus was still ITU and the Olympics (he narrowly missed qualifying for the Olympic Trials). But he has raced the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship three times, including this venue in 2011, where he said he "blew up" after mile 40 on the bike. Prior to that, he earned sixth- and eighth-place finishes in '09 and '10, respectively. "I raced a lot in the first half of the season so after I officially got my slots for Hy-Vee and Vegas I cleared my schedule to just prepare for those two," he says. "The Vegas course is very similar to St. George, so I know I have the ability to excel here."



#### TIM REED (AUS)

Australian Tim Reed is a rising IRONMAN 70.3 star and is hungry for a top result at this year's world championship. At only 28 years old, he's stringing together impressive results this season with six podium finishes. Notably, he finished just behind Bevan Docherty and edged out Terenzo Bozzone for second at IRONMAN 70.3 Vineman in July. Prior to that, he snagged second at IRONMAN 70.3 Texas behind Richie Cunningham. Reed's weakness was once part swim, part bike, but he said he and his coach Matt Dixon have addressed that, and Reed's now hanging with the best. Last year at this race he had a great swim, making the front pack, but doing so might have taken a toll. Combined with the heat, Reed faced disaster. He admits that he experienced debilitating cramping on the bike that led to a DNF. He's made 2013 all about IRONMAN 70.3, and he'll no doubt be hungry for redemption in Henderson.