

Scholarship lifts pace for Bridgeman

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By TONY BIRD

NEW PLYMOUTH triathlete Kyle Bridgeman has a hectic five weeks ahead.

Bridgeman (22) leaves this morning bound for Denmark where he will contest the world triathlon long-distance championships on Sunday.

He then plans to join senior elite athletes, including Taranaki's Shane Reed, in a training camp in Switzerland before competing in an ITU race in Geneva later this month.

Bridgeman will then head to Japan to compete in the Simon Britten Memorial Triathlon in Hiroshima on September 3 – the main reason for his trip.

The five-week overseas campaign will be partially funded by the Britten family, of Palmerston North.

Bridgeman said he was honoured to be selected as the first recipient of a Simon Britten Memorial scholarship.

The scholarship was set up by Barry and Gwenda Britten in

memory of their son Simon, who died at age 22 in June last year after surgery on a rare lung condition in a Sydney hospital.

A talented triathlete, Simon spent time living and training with high profile New Plymouth triathlon coach Graham Park and won an under-23 triathlon in Noumea in April, 2003.

Bridgeman said Park, his coach, put forward his name as a possible candidate for the scholarship, which is designed as a helping hand for a promising New Zealand triathlete.

Bridgeman is in only his second full triathlon season. "I got into cycling when I was living in Wellington and a couple of years ago, when I was back home for holidays, I met up with Parksie and he got me into doing triathlons."

Bridgeman's best performance was second place in the under-23 section at



ON THE MOVE: Triathlete Kyle Bridgeman out training on the New Plymouth foreshore yesterday.
TREVOR READ/Taranaki Daily News

the New Zealand long distance champs in January this year. Soon after that event, Bridgeman won the Taranaki open men's title in New Plymouth.

A former pupil of New Plymouth Boys' High School, Bridgeman graduated from Victoria University last year with a science degree and now works as a labourer with Keith Roebuck's building construction firm in New Plymouth. "Keith's been really helpful and allows me time off for training," he said.

Bridgeman has had to endure a wet winter in his build-up to the trip. "The training has been going really well, but I haven't done a race for a while now, so it will be interesting to see how I go over there."

Bridgeman will get to see his coach in person when in Switzerland.

Park is working there with the New Zealand squad as it continues the build-up to the world championships in Japan.

Bridgeman has never been further afield than Australia and is looking forward to spreading his wings and learning from the elite athletes.

The long-distance triathlon on Sunday involves a 4km swim, 120km bike ride and a 30km run.

Bridgeman said the bike ride was, generally, his best leg.

"I find the swim hard work. That's an area I've been working on a lot in training."