



**WORLD'S BEST CROSS-TRIATHLETES MEET ON SOME OF WORLDS BEST TRAILS**  
***May 19, 2012 at Oak Mountain State Park in Shelby County, Alabama***

**April 6, 2012** - To illustrate how good the trails are at Oak Mountain State Park in Pelham, Alabama – home to this year's Shelby County ITU Cross Triathlon World Championships / XTERRA Southeast Championship on May 19 – one only needs to hear from the world's greatest cross-triathlete – Conrad "the Caveman" Stoltz.

"This place is amazing, and I know I speak for all of us when I say we love it here. It's a true XTERA course with a nice swim in a beautiful lake, a technical, fun mountain bike course and a tough run," said Stoltz after last year's Southeast Championship race, adding that after 20 years of racing around the world, "this course is my favorite of all."

The two-time Olympian from South Africa won the inaugural ITU Cross Tri World Title last year in Spain, is the only elite to win four XTERRA World Championships and nine XTERRA U.S. Pro Series titles, and his 43 career XTERRA championship victories is an all-time record. While his word is gold and could stand by itself, he's not the only one offering high-praise for this course.

[Runner's World Magazine](#) called the trails one of America's "Crown Jewels - 25 best trails in the nation," and the [International Mountain Bicycling Association](#) granted them the prestigious EPIC designation – given only to those rare trails "guaranteed to blow your mind."

Credit belongs to the Birmingham Urban Mountain Pedalers (BUMP) and Shelby County for the continued development of world class trails along with their State Partners; Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs and Oak Mountain State Park who have worked hand in hand to elevate the caliber of mountain biking at this venue.

BUMP has spent more than 100,000 hours in design and construction of new trails over the past 20 years in conjunction with the efforts of County Manager Alex Dudchock and Oak Mountain Superintendent Michael Jeffreys to make this trail system what it is today. See some [POV video from the course here](#).

The unique format for the 2012 ITU Cross Triathlon World Championships, which provides a spectator friendly competition for the men's and women's pro-only races, features multiple loops on the bike and run courses that will pass through the main athlete village and around scenic Double Oak Lake. While pros will miss the famous "blood rock" section on the epic single-loop course, they excitedly embrace the Nascar-style of fast-and-furious racing through the trees.

“I really enjoyed the lap courses for the bike and run in Spain,” said Stoltz after winning last year’s inaugural ITU Cross Tri title which featured 4-5K bike loops and 2-3K run loops. “The spectators, many of them age groupers who raced earlier, lined the course to cheer and watch the action. The crowds were great, and because of the multiple loops groupers and spectators could really get into it.”

The course at Oak Mountain is longer by distance than what they raced in Spain with 3 laps totaling 31K on the bike and two 5K laps on the run, but the format is the same with multiple laps. With the pros starting in the afternoon, and hundreds of amateurs, their friends and family already done with their race remaining at the venue to watch, you can expect the same great crowd interaction.

Of note, the under-23, junior, age-group and paratriathlon race courses will be staged on the traditional XTERRA single-loop short and long courses to allow for the larger fields.

“The Oak Mountain course is really fun, and it’s always one of our favorite stops on tour because everyone is so nice, inviting, and thoughtful,” said reigning ITU Cross Tri Women’s World Champ Melanie McQuaid from Canada. “It’s fun to enjoy the southern lifestyle for a while like this, and the race itself is true XTERRA.”

Rising star Dan Hugo, who is also from South Africa, has finished runner-up to Stoltz on this course twice, and said he’s come away with great appreciation for what he’s found in the foothills of the Appalachians.

“It’s a fun course, so testing. You have to concentrate the entire time. Can’t drink water or take your eyes off the trail for a second. It’s very intense, out of the ordinary intense because the penalty for losing your focus is disaster. I loved the run too but was begging for it to end. It had so many elements. I really think this course represents what off-road tri is all about,” said Hugo.

Here are links to previews to the run (everyone) and (pro) bike course. These videos were taken in February, and by mid-May the foliage will be thick and green!

[Bike Course Preview](#) : [Run Course Preview](#)

Beyond just the racing, year-after-year athletes comment on how real the Southern hospitality is, and how much they enjoyed the friendly people and delicious food.

“Alabama is always a very interesting cultural experience for me,” said Stoltz a few years back. “I had hush puppies, fried catfish, prawns, cornbread, and grits. We went to the Cracker Barrel and I thought that it was a mom and pop store and someone said ‘No, there are thousands of them’. We got to meet a lot of the locals, talk to the people, enjoy the Southern hospitality and the Southern food which was really pretty cool.”

Stoltz serves not just as an ambassador to the sport of cross (off-road) triathlon, but also as a promoter of the healthy, active outdoors lifestyle and has been strong about telling the community in Shelby County just how good they have it.

“When we talk to kids and adults alike it’s not so much about becoming an elite athlete, it’s about being fit and healthy and enjoying the outdoors. Not everyone can be an Olympian, but they can feel good about themselves and be healthy and enjoy the nature around them, it’s a great lifestyle. And when you’re lucky enough to live where Mother Nature is at its finest like here at Oak Mountain, that’s a gift that shouldn’t be ignored,” said Stoltz.

“The recreational infrastructure at Oak Mountain State Park is very important to past successes and our goals for advancing tourism in our county, we plan to continue improving the facilities and developing additional regional and national events,” said Alex Dudchock, County Manager.

Also of note about the Shelby County ITU Cross Tri World Championships/XTERRA Southeast Championship race:

- Easy to get to from anywhere. Atlanta, one of the biggest airports on earth is just 2.5 hours away. The Birmingham airport with direct connections is only 30 minutes away
- Shelby County is home to the venue site, Oak Mountain State Park, the State’s largest State park, with more than 10,000 acres. There is so much more to see in Shelby County. The County boasts 50 public parks, eight museums, three wineries and 10 golf courses.
- There are dozens of good hotels within 15 minutes of the start line with prices as low as \$US80 for two people. Many include breakfast. To find convenient hotels to the venue site visit the [Shelby County hotel link](#) and for other hotels in nearby Hoover [click here](#). Choice Hotels also has several offerings in the area, and athletes can use the XTERRA discount code 00224890 when visiting [choicesportstravel.com](#).
- There are dozens of restaurants in the area from simple to gourmet
- Birmingham is a historic city with roots back to the US Civil War and was the center of the US civil rights movement of the 1960's. Museums and historic places abound
- This area of the United States is known for its Southern Hospitality and friendly people
- For motor enthusiasts, the Barber Motorsports park and museum is one of the foremost motorcycle and car museums anywhere. Over 850 motorcycles and 50 racing cars
- The weather will be fantastic!! Temperature between 80 to 85F/29-31C
- Over 40 miles of trails from single track to jeep road, rolling hills, fast descents, technical yet fast.
- Lake temperature normally 75F /24C
- We’ll host 5K and 10K Mud Runs, and 21K and 42K trail runs on Sunday for all to enjoy
- We’ll also host an XTERRA Sprint off-road tri open to all for those that did not qualify for the ITU Cross Tri World Championship/XTERRA Southeast Championship race

Learn more at the official [ITU Cross Tri Worlds Website](#) and [xterrapelham.com](#).

Visit [www.shelbycountytourism.org](http://www.shelbycountytourism.org) to learn more about everything Shelby County has to offer.

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