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Triple threat

Parris Island Triathlon tests competitors with swim, bike and run



File | The Beaufort Gazette

Kevin Lisska runs the final leg of last year's Parris Island Triathlon. The swim, bike and run event will take place Saturday on Parris Island.

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For most, Saturday's Parris Island Triathlon sounds like a downright crazy way to spend a day off. But for the more than 500 expected participants, it's a pretty ordinary morning start.

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Competitors wash their faces during a 500-meter swim, stretch their legs through a 13-mile bike ride and use the 5K run as a brisk morning jog.

Of course, the stakes get a bit higher when you're racing against time.

"For those who really race it, you give it everything you've got for about an hour, and if you can talk while you're doing it, you're going too slow" said Eric Mitchell, who will be competing for the third time. "But there's a boatload of people who do it for fun and recreation, which has become the spirit of the triathlon."

This spirit will be on display beginning at 9 a.m. Saturday, when those ranging from 13 to 77 years old will test their mettle on the course at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island.

Awards will be go to those who record the three best times in each of the 22 categories, with the overall winner coming from the open division.

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▸ [More...](#) Last year, Kevin Lisska emerged victorious over 490 others with a time of 54 minutes and 6 seconds despite starting in the second heat of swimmers. Such a performance supports the belief of some that this sprint-distance triathlon is often won in the final two stages of biking and running.

"To me, since the swim takes longer with people starting at different times every 10 seconds, it seems that those who are most competitive are strong bikers and runners," race director Bill Brown said.

Strategies also might be changed by the rain showers expected Saturday in the Beaufort area. But that won't stop participants from putting to work their months of training for what will be the first of 11 events within the 2008 South Carolina Triathlon Series.

Plus, Marine Corps volunteers are spread throughout the course to provide extra motivation for competitors who already are surrounded by a wealth of camaraderie in this evolving sport.

"Triathlons have really come a long way since they became an Olympic sport in the 2000 Summer Olympics," Mitchell said. "Now you've got average joes like me out there trying to stay physically fit and having fun while we're doing it."

And after the last person has crossed the finish line that seemed so far away at outset, it's the evident sense of accomplishment that makes for the day's best rewards.

"My favorite part is when we hand out awards to the novice group," Brown said. "Just the look on their faces is the greatest. You can see how proud they are of what they've just done and that they're going to get hooked on this type of competition."

What: Parris Island Triathlon When: 9 a.m. Where: Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island

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