

Hurley YMCA triathlon challenging, fun and all for a good cause



By Lee Ann Sides Garrett

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Excitement crackled as the drumbeats of U2's "Beautiful Day" filled the air at Dan Nicholas Park.

"It's a beautiful day for a race," said Raymond Alessandrini, director of the J.F. Hurley YMCA Triathlon. "You can just feel the energy."

The race began at 8 a.m. Saturday morning with waves of participants entering the lake for the first leg of the competition. Just under 450 participants were divided into age groups or experience levels.

The race started with a half-mile swim, followed by a 1.35-mile run, a 20 kilometer bicycle ride, another 1.35-mile run and the final segment, a second half-mile swim.

Spectators moved from the lake to a transition area hoping to catch a glimpse of a family member or favorite participant as athletes returning from each leg changed shoes or parked bikes.

Triathlete Lisa Devergilio of Raleigh crosses the timer line between the running and cycling sections of the event. photo by: Rebecca J. Ducker, Salisbury Post

Brooke Clark of Pembroke and Jessica Scott of Lumberton stood at the finish line to watch for their husbands, Matthew Clark and Adam Scott. Both were soldiers in Iraq and part of a group of five who decided to compete with each other and try a triathlon. Three dropped out.

"We didn't believe them at first," Brooke said. "But we're proud of them."

"They only started training three or four months ago," Jessica added.

Participants ranged in age from 14 to a 69-year-old woman and 82-year-old man.

They competed against each other and the clock. Time chips attached to each participant's ankle tracked their time electronically.

"This race is considered one of the top races in the North Carolina Triathlon Series," said Wade Rouzer, former event director and YMCA volunteer.

And part of the reason for that is the venue. "This park is one of the best sites in the state," Rouzer said.

Alessandrini said it takes about a year's worth of preparation for the event and each event is larger than the last. This year's event required 70 to 80 volunteers.

"The sport has grown so much there are now youth triathlons," he said. "We have toyed with the idea a little."

Money raised from the event sponsors underprivileged kids in YMCA programs. Saturday's race raised about \$18,000.

As the competitors began crossing the finish line, the spectators became animated. Calls of "Go Daddy!" could be heard in the crowd.

"Go Summer!" yelled Kathy Zell. "Catch up with your Dad!"

Zell of Charlotte, was watching her husband Phil, son Joshua, and daughters Summer and Kristen all compete in their first triathlon.

"Phil blew a tire before the race started," she said. "But he's doing well, now."



Finishers gathered at the transition point and cheered on those still competing. One finisher told his children he heard them cheering for him.

"You made me go fast," he said.

Official race results were not available at press time. Organizers said results would be available online at www.setupevents.com by 9 a.m. today.

Swimmers line up prior to the start of the triathlon. Each competitor is assigned a number and they must wear timing devices on their ankles in order for race officials to keep accurate time. photo by: Rebecca J. Ducker, Salisbury Post
