

GREENFIELD LIGHTLIFE TRIATHLON NOTEBOOK

Precocious Scotera wins 2016 Patrick Bell Award

By JASON BUTYNSKI
Recorder Staff

GREENFIELD — Although it may be difficult to remember the type of things you were doing as a 10-year-old, running triathlons probably wasn't among them.

Greenfield's Luke Scotera will forever be able to boast about doing just that as a 10-year-old, however, as he was awarded the Patrick Bell Award, which is given annually to the youngest finisher in the Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon Sprint Division. The award is named in memory of Greenfield native Bell, who got his start in triathlons in 1995 at the Greenfield event at age 13. He continued competing in the sport for 10 years before tragically dying in 2005 at the age of 23 after completing the Ashland Lions Club Triathlon. Each year his family comes out for the Greenfield Triathlon and many of his brothers and sisters compete in teams. Then the family hands out the award that typically goes to someone around 12 or 13, but this year was awarded to someone even younger.

"My mom encouraged me to do it," Scotera said about his impetus. "It was great. I had a lot of fun."

Scotera finished the .31-mile swim, 15.14-mile bike and 3.19-mile run in 2 hours, 32 minutes, 21.5 seconds to place 154th overall.

"The hardest part of it was probably the end of the run because I was tired," the precocious tri-athlete said. "The swim was OK, the bike was great."

It should be noted that the under-14 division featured four athletes, while the male 30-34 division featured just

two, although one was Sprint Division champion Dan Bensen of Greenfield.

And the under-14 division will have at least one entrant again next year because Scotera plans to return.

There could also be a future triathlete in the family with the addition of Milo Patrick Littwin, who was recently born to Patrick's sister Rebecca and her husband Tyler Littwin.

Speaking of the under-14 division, Northfield's Rowan McKeon won it in 1:34:50.8, good enough for 65th overall. He finished 63 places behind his father, Terry McKeon, who finished second overall in 1:11:58.3. Rowan was competing in his first triathlon and said he enjoyed it.

"This year I just decided I kind of wanted to try it and it went well," he said. "I think I went a little too hard on the swim. I was pretty tired after that."

McKeon said he did not do too much training prior to his triathlon debut. He went to a soccer camp, which helped, and also went for a couple of bike rides, including doing the triathlon course once. Like Scotera, McKeon believed that the run was the hardest part of the competition because he was tired after everything else.

He said he is hoping to do it again next season, plus continue to close the gap on his dad. Terry said that before long, he may be looking up at his son in the standings.

"It won't take him long to beat me. He's catching up and I'm on the decline," he joked.

The Greenfield Triathlon has connections to the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro,



RECORDER STAFF/MATT BURKHART

A competitor participating in the swim leg of the Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon receives encouragement from longtime race volunteer Rick Roy as she exits the water at the Green River Swimming & Recreation Area Sunday morning.

Brazil, as Sarah (Gross) True makes her return to Olympic competition this summer.

True was born and raised in Cooperstown, N.Y., and came to our area in 1990 as a Deerfield Academy student competing on the cross country and swimming teams. It was there that True became friends with Patrick and Rebecca Bell and, after graduating from DA in 1999, Patrick Bell encouraged his friend to return to the area to compete in the Greenfield Tri.

According to Bell's mother, Paula, True was not all that interested at first because she had little experience cycling. Patrick's encouragement eventually paid off and True wound up placing 23rd overall in the International Competition as a 17-year-old with a time of 2 hours, 45 minutes, 49 seconds. She was the third fastest swimmer that year, 27th as a runner, and 37th as a biker.

True went on to graduate from Middlebury College, where she was an All-American swimmer. She got serious about triathlons after graduating college. She qualified for the 2012 London Games and finished just shy of the podium, placing fourth overall with a finish time of exactly 2 hours. That was 10 seconds shy of winning the bronze medal. In 2014, she ended the triathlon season ranked No. 2 in the world. In 2015, she was No. 3.

The Olympic women's triathlon takes place on Aug. 20 beginning at 10 a.m.

The Robert "Nook" Burniske Award went to Peter McLean, a member of the Greenfield Triathlon Committee.

The award is given annually to a person who embodies the spirit of sportsmanship and has contributed to the Greenfield Triathlon or sports

program, which the Rec Department puts on Sunday mornings in preparation for the event. He also helps put together the Triathlon Clinic, which takes place on a Saturday before the event and helps first-time athletes learn about diet and how to transition properly.

Paul Bilenki finished third in the men's age 70-plus division after finishing the Sprint Competition in 1:50:59.6. According to race officials, Bilenki made the trip to the Greenfield Triathlon all the way from Denton, Md. His reason for coming? He saw the scenery in the movie "The Judge," filmed in nearby Shelburne Falls, and wanted to visit the area.

The four triathlon divisions (men's and women's Sprint and International) all received a hand-carved trophy made by race volunteer Rick Roy. Each champion had the option of turning the circular wooden trophy into a cribbage board, and defending champions JoEllen Cameron and Carson Poe each took him up on that option last year. Upon receiving the trophy, they both played Roy in a game of cribbage and Roy beat them both.