

Shea, Bensen steal show at Lightlife Triathlon

By JASON BUTYNSKI
Recorder Staff

GREENFIELD — Last summer, Gregory Shea was disappointed that the swimming portion of the Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon had to be canceled due to high levels of bacteria in the Green River. This year, he showed why.

One season after finishing second in the Sprint Division of the event, the Shelburne Falls native finished in the top six of all three events during the 30th annual running of the event at the Green River Swimming & Recreation Area, and used that to propel himself to the top of the standings as he finished the event in 1 hour, 5 minutes, 53 seconds to best defending champion Dan Bensen of Greenfield.

Last summer Bensen, who admits that



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Patrick Dwyer crosses the finish line to win the men's International Division title at Sunday's Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon held at the Greenfield Swimming and Recreation Area.

Fitness

swimming is his weakest event of the three in the triathlon, used the absence of the swim to finish the event in 57 minutes, 23 seconds, over one minute faster than Shea, who came in second. This time around, Shea swam the .31-mile in 7 minutes, 50.6 seconds, the sixth fastest of any competitor. He then finished third in the 14.87-mile bike ride with a time of 37:24 (Bensen was second at 36:07), before running the fastest time of everyone in the 3.1-mile run at 19:30.7 to earn the win. Bensen was second overall at 1:07:43, while Adam Hufnagel took third at 1:10:22.

"It's a triathlon so it's nice to have all three events, otherwise it's just a duathlon," Shea said afterward. "That's what it's all about, being able to combine all three events and hope for some good luck and no mechanical problems. Today it worked out. It was a beautiful sunny day, the course is in great shape, and it's awesome to be here and win my hometown race."

Bensen, who was the first person to cross See TRIATHLON Page B3

Meaningful Bell Award winner

By JASON BUTYNSKI
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GREENFIELD — Noah Kramer was a spectator five years ago, watching father Daniel Kramer run the Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon.

During the awards ceremony following the event, Noah, then 9, listened as the Patrick Bell Award was given out to Lexi Skovran, a 12-year-old who was the youngest competitor to finish the race. Afterward, he went up to race organizers and asked how old a person had to be to participate in the triathlon. When the Amherst native was told 10, he knew exactly what to do.

"I spent the next year training for the triathlon," Kramer said on Sunday after completing his third triathlon. "I joined the (Amherst Tritons) swim team and went on long bike rides with my dad."

The very next year, Kramer competed in his first triathlon and was the recipient of the Bell Award as the youngest finisher of the race. On Sunday, four years later, Kramer competed in his second Greenfield triathlon and again won the Bell Award.

"I decided earlier this winter that I wanted to do it again, so I joined the swim team again and started training," the 14-year-old said on Sunday.

The Patrick Bell Award is named in honor of Greenfield native Patrick Bell, who did his first-ever triathlon at the age of 13 when he participated in the Greenfield event. He would go on to run in many more triathlons before he tragically passed away in June of 2005 at the age of 23 after completing the Ashland Lions Club Triathlon.

Each year, three of Bell's siblings, sister Becca and

brothers Peter and Michael, run the race as a team in memory of their brother, and the family then presents the Bell Award to the youngest finisher of the race. This year marked the ninth time the award has been given out, and Kramer, who was the first 10-year-old to win the award, picked up the trophy for the second time.

Prior to handing out the award, the Bell family received a surprise of its own. Rick Roy, one of the organizers of the event, first presented the Bell family with the Robert "Nook" Burniske Award, given out to "a person who embodies the spirit of sportsmanship and has contributed to the Greenfield Triathlon or sports in Greenfield in a significant way." The award is named in honor of Burniske, a long-time participant in the event before he passed away in 1990.



Recorder/Trish Crapo

Meghan Skidmore (310) of Intervale, N.H., crosses the finish line to win the women's Sprint Division title Sunday at the Greenfield Triathlon.

Triathlon: Picture-perfect weather

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the finish line but started in a heat prior to Shea's, knew he had been bested when he saw Shea finish shortly after him.

"I knew that if I could see him anywhere near the finish, he had gotten me," the 28-year-old joked afterward. "But it was really nice today. The water was really cold, but even that was nice. It wasn't nearly as hot and humid as it has been in the past few years."

The 39-year-old Shea will head to London, England in September to compete in the World Triathlon Championships at the Olympic venue in Hyde Park, before taking at least a one-year hiatus from the sport.

Joining him in London for the Worlds will be Meghan Skidmore from Intervale, N.H., who won the Women's Sprint Division with a time of 1:13:35, which was good enough for third overall. Skidmore, 29, who was making her first appearance in the Greenfield event, said she has wanted to branch out further from home to compete and the trip to Franklin County was well worth it.

"It was amazing," she began. "I do a lot of races in New Hampshire and in Maine, and I wanted to come down to Massachusetts and see what the competition was like. We made the three-hour drive down on Saturday night. It's a great course, the pavement is just amazing; I rode it last night, and that's the thing that sticks out in my mind the most. The volunteers here were awesome, and the course is very well marked."

Tara Rasch from Northampton placed second in the Women's Division in 1:15:46 (eighth overall), and Heather McLaughlin from Brookline took third in 1:18:23.

The International Division features an even longer course, with a .63-mile swim, a 21.76-mile bike and a 7.2-mile run. Patrick Dwyer finished with the fifth-fastest time in the water and then finished first in the bike and second in the run among the 79 individuals to win the overall event by

over three minutes.

Dwyer, from Arlington, finished the swim in 15:22 before making his way to the bike course, which he breezed through in 55:25. The 42-year-old then took second in the run in 40:59 to finish with an overall time of 1:53:10, in front of second-place Carson Poe from Northampton, who came in at 1:56:38. Northampton's Michael McRae took third in 1:57:17.

On the women's side of the International Division, Northampton's Madeline Nagy captured her second Lightlife Triathlon crown with her winning time of 2:06:52. Nagy, who is 46, last won the event in 2001 but came back to take the top spot again and beat out Shaina Short, 27, from Hamden, Conn., who took second in 2:20:31, good enough for 25th overall. Lisa Chase, 45, from Golden, Colo., took third in 2:24:13 (36th overall).

The triathlon celebrated its 30th season with the race and the conditions could not have been better. With no humidity to speak of and temperatures in the low-to-mid 70s for much of the race, athletes had ideal conditions. After the event, participants and spectators then took part in an awards ceremony where the top three finishers in all age groups were awarded mugs and other small prizes.

In the Women's Sprint Division, locals finishing in the top three of their age group included Wendell's Meagan Sylvia (1:30:38), who took third in the 30-34 division. Greenfield's Francesca Passiglia (1:30:49) finished second in the 40-44 division, while Nancy Heydinger (1:36:53) from Greenfield finished third in the 50-54 division. The area had two locals in the 55-59 division as Theresa Crowley (1:37:50) from Millers Falls placed second, while Cathy Coutu (1:41:39) from Greenfield took third. Three local women swept the 60-64 division as Shelburne Falls' Joan Lapierre (1:27:52) won, followed by Greenfield's Margo Jones (1:36:01) in second and Colrain's Judith Roberts (1:44:35) in third.

On the men's side of the

Sprint Division, Greenfield's Luke Toritto (1:23:26) was third in the 15-19 division, while Scott Miner (1:25:14) also of Greenfield took second in the 20-24 division. Greenfield's Jeff Chaisson (1:27:20) won the 25-29 division. Northfield's Terry McKeon (1:14:51) placed sixth overall and won the 40-44 division, while Greenfield's Garth Shaneyfelt (1:19:37) took second in the division. Ashfield's Steve Nickoski (1:24:49) placed second in the 45-49 division, while Greenfield's Bruce Bohonowicz (1:30:38) took third. Greenfield's James Flynn (1:26:40) won the 55-59 division, and Millers Falls' Bob Crowley (1:38:08) came in third. Greenfield's Chris Ethier (1:30:48), the founder of the Greenfield Triathlon, won the 65-69 division, while in the 70-74 division, Shelburne Falls' Bob Welsh (1:27:49) finished a remarkable 35th overall and first in the division, and Erving's Paul Bassett (2:47:05) came in second.

Only one local woman finished among the top three in her age group in the International Competition as Greenfield's Lauren Cunniffe (2:35:52) took second in the 50-54 age group.

In Men's International, Greenfield's Mason Ruffing (2:22:24) came in second in the 20-24 division, while Greenfield's Pat Richmond (2:46:10) placed third. Marcus Curran from Greenfield won the 25-29 division in 2:13:10, while Shelburne Falls' Kristian Whitsett was the top local finisher overall in fifth place and won the 30-34 division with a time of 1:59:50. Conway's Jon Storm (2:06:07) took second in the 35-39 division and was 10th overall, and Greenfield's Keith Streeter (2:16:14) placed 20th overall and second in the 50-54 class. Greenfield's Brian Wadman (2:22:57) won the 55-59 division, Greenfield's Frank McDonald (2:22:42) won the 60-64 division, Greenfield's Bob Sagor (2:42:55) won the 65-69 division, and Montague's Allen Ross was the oldest person to compete in the event at age 70 and won the division with a time of 2:54:36.