Reino captures record 5th Greenfield Tri

By JOSH SOLOMON
Staff writer

GREENFIELD — In the weeks leading up to the 35th running of the Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon, it seemed the weather was either hot and humid, rainy or both. On Sunday, the 355 race participants were spared torrential rains, but got served a harsh dose of hot and humid.

That’s just what the doctors ordered, though, for perennial favorite, South Deerfield’s JoEllen Reino, who grew up in Virginia. “It’s such a short and sweet season up here,” she said with her usual smile. “I’ll take it.”

Take it she did — Reino walked away from the sprint rendition of the triathlon with her fourth straight title and a new record, five total wins. She finished the feat in 1 hour, 16 minutes, 21 seconds. She broke a tie with Don Dwight, who finished first four times.

“I was happy with how I performed and then whatever the results were, it took care of itself,” Reino said, after claiming her award to the cheers of the many familiar faces in the stands at the Green River Swimming & Recreation Area.

She beat out Northampton’s Tara Strassburg (1:17:00) by 41 seconds.

“Certainly with this heat, I don’t know where she gets her energy from,” race director Christy Moore said. “She’s just fun to watch and I think she has fun competing, which is why I think she’s so successful.”

Reino spent most of her time talking about everyone else in the field, which can feel like a community event even though it attracts talent from across the state and a handful of participants from across the country, including cities like San Francisco and Brooklyn.

She mentioned she saw a lot of new faces this year in what was one of the biggest events in its history, something the founder of the triathlon Chris Ethier, also noted about the growth of the longest continuous triathlon in New England.

“It’s like having children,” said Ethier (1:38:38), who also owns Greenfield’s Bicycle World and finished second in the 70-plus age category for the Sprint. “You want them to flourish. It’s one thing I’m particularly proud of.”

This year’s competitors had varying views of how the course ran, although most saw the water in the Green River as cool, and on the back half choppy. By the time they made their transitions to the bike portion, it began to heat up Sunday morning, and with the sun completely out for the third and final leg, it was.

The triathlon sports two races, the Sprint, which is composed of a 0.31-mile swim, a 1.14-mile bike and a 3.09-mile run, and the longer course, the International, which is made up of 0.63-mile swim, a 3.28-mile bike and a 7.69-mile run.

The top-three of the men’s side of the Sprint were separated by about 36 seconds. The winner was Robert Hollinger of Newburyport, who finished in 1 hour, 4 minutes, 30 seconds. Amherst’s Owen Wright (1:04:30) came in four seconds behind. Both of them ran the final leg’s 5K with a sub 6-minute mile pace.

Reigning champ, Conway’s Jay Gump came in third in the men’s Sprint, despite outperforming the top-two finishers in the swim and bike. Gump completed the run in 19 minutes, 12 seconds, more than two minutes slower than Hollinger’s time.

Greenfield’s Dan Bensen, who was defeated by Gump last year after spending two years on top, fell to fifth.

“I would say this is probably the strongest field we’ve ever had,” said Bensen (1:11:03). “The guys we had in the top three were ridiculous.”

Bensen said the swim was tough, with a stiff current in the second half, and a bit of a cooler water.

Although it’s always a game-time decision of whether the swim portion will pass triathlon guidelines, since testing must be done 72 hours before the race, this year’s choice came a little closer to the proverbial tie-off.

The day before the race, Moore announced they were officially good to go for the swim, after testing came back to indicate it was safe to swim and meet national guidelines. Heavy rains this week had made it a little more of a challenge than usual to make sure the water was OK. She said they were working closely with Greenfield Department of Public Works to control the amount of water flowing in from the dam.

Nonetheless, Bensen said he had a good time as always.

“It’s great to roll out of bed, hop on your bike and coast into the transition zone,” said the University of Vermont graduate, who competed on the triathlon team at the school.

For the group of women who regularly rotate their place on the podium, everything went swimmingly as usual.

Joan LaPierre (1:35:06), of Shelleys Falls, finished first in the Sprint category for women ages 65 to 69, followed by Greenfield’s Margo Jones (1:35:15) and Colrain’s Judith Roberts (1:31:30).

“It used to be that I could beat Jeannie on the bike,” Jones joked. “But no more.”

“We have fun,” LaPierre said. “As we get older, it’s like a challenge of how much longer we can keep doing it.”

Next year, Jones will be by herself in the 70-plus age category while she awaits her friends to age-up with her — but in the meantime, “I’m really psyched to do it” by myself.

Roberts explained she always appreciates the way Moore and the Rec Department run the competition.

“This is our idea of fun,” Roberts said with a smile as her fellow podium-toppers laughed along.

Having fun was the South Deerfield relay team that came in first...
Triathlon
FROM B1

Seth Hoynoski, of Shelburne Falls, front, finishes the last leg of the running section during the Greenfield Triathlon Sunday in Greenfield.

Triathlon
In Greenfield.

Lucas, 12, said after completing his third triathlon that it was “a lot harder than the first time.” He said unahbashed, “the swim was rushing, freezing and muddy.” But, that made things easier afterward, he said, because the most difficult was behind him.

This year Lucas has stepped up his workouts to “intense training that leaves me breathless.” His favorite part about it all is the “school-wide fame,” he said. “It sets my year off to a good start.”

Put aside whether Lucas is thinking about competing in the triathlon next year. He has his sites on more policy changes: Lucas wants the maximum age you can compete at of 120-years-old to be elevated to 130. That way, “I can do it longer,” before admitting that then, it’d be a good time to retire.

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In Greenfield.

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