



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Joellen Reno finishes the sprint course in the 2021 Greenfield Triathlon at the Green River Swimming and Recreation Area on Sunday.

GREENFIELD TRIATHLON

BACK IN THE SADDLE

South Deerfield's Reno crosses the line first in race's return edition

By THOMAS JOHNSTON
Staff Writer

GREENFIELD — Good luck trying to catch Joellen Reno in the Greenfield Triathlon.

The South Deerfield resident blistered through the .31 mile swim, 15.14 mile bike and 3.08 mile sprint course in a time of 1 hour, 19 minutes, 36.5 seconds Sunday in the 38th edition, first amongst women.

The win was Reno's seventh.

"It's very exciting," Reno said. "The best part is so many people you know are on the course. You smile and cheer for them. It's such a local race, everyone is so encouraging. It's the whole atmosphere and I'm so grateful they put it on this year. It brings so much joy and normalcy to so many people."

With the race being canceled last year — and the course returning to its original trail after having to switch up in 2019 due to construction — just being able to compete in the race was thrilling for Reno.

Winning it made it all the more better.

"I did miss it," Reno said. "You're running by yourself, biking by yourself. It's nice to talk in transition and see everybody."

The 58-year-old finished nearly six minutes ahead of the next female finisher in a dominant performance. Reno, who hadn't swam in over a year, got out to a slow start in the water but separated herself in the bike (44:34) and run (22:28) sections.

She was the first female to cross the finish line, but held



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Paul Mikuszewski of Agawam, the men's sprint winner, transitions to the bike in the 2021 Greenfield Triathlon on Sunday.

her breath until the later heats came in to make sure her time stood up.

"I don't assume anything," Reno said. "I'm 58, there's a lot of fast 30 and 40 year olds that hadn't come in yet. I started in the first wave that was way ahead of everyone, so I had no idea where they'd finish."

After Reno, Gabrielle Galat placed second on the women's side in the sprint with a time of 1:25:16. Alicia Wondolowski took third (1:27:24), Lisa Ritchie came in fourth (1:27:30) and Lisa Chase (1:29:35) earned fifth.

On the men's side, it was a successful first triathlon back for Agawam's Paul Mikuszewski.

Mikuszewski — who hadn't raced a triathlon in three years — got back into training during the pandemic, lost

some weight and decided to see what he could do.

He shocked himself by coming across in 1:10:45, the top overall time in the sprint field.

"It was better than I expected," Mikuszewski said. "I just wanted to have fun, test my fitness to see where I was at. During the pandemic, I did this 75-hard challenge and I lost 26 pounds and was feeling good so I decided to swim and bike again. I just wanted to come here and see what I could do."

Not in the top heat, Mikuszewski wasn't the first to cross the finish line. He didn't even check where his time placed him after finishing, having to be told that he had the top time by others.

"My intention was not trying to race to win," Mikuszewski said. "I was in

the general heat, I wasn't in the elite wave that went off. It's encouraged me to get back into triathlons. I missed it. On the run I really realized I missed doing it."

Mikuszewski took advantage in the swim and bike portion of the race, finishing with the top time in both events.

His run was just the 12th fastest overall, but he had done enough in the first two parts of the race to make up for it.

"I am not a runner," Mikuszewski said. "I'm always getting chased down. I swam in high school and college, so swimming has been always been a strength, biking second. Then it's just holding on for dear life in the run. There's nothing worse than hearing the footsteps

SEE TRIATHLON B4

Triathlon featured cold swimming portions for athletes returning to sport

FROM B2

coming, all those skinny runners coming on their six minute paces.”

Finishing just behind Mikuszewski was Greenfield's Daniel Benson, who took second (1:12:48).

A three-time winner of the Greenfield Triathlon, Benson knew what to expect despite not racing in any triathlon in nearly two years.

“I've done enough of these where I know going into the run, it's going to feel like a piano was just dropped on me,” Benson said. “Slowing down doesn't make it any better so you might as well get it done sooner. I'm happy with this. It's good to be back. It's such a great event and I hope I can keep doing this for as long as I

can stay on two wheels.”

Benson got off to a slow start in the water, entering the bike portion in 25th place but recovered by posting the second fastest time on the bike and eighth fastest run.

He knew swimming was what would hold him back and that he needed a big time on the bike to put himself in a medal position, something he was able to do.

“I've been swimming once in two years, which was yesterday,” Benson said. “I improvised my way through that. I've been saying for years I swim like an anchor so I don't cry when we don't have it but it makes it a complete race. It's what keeps you coming back. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses.”

Mitchell Tebo placed third

(1:14:24), followed by Matt Cain in fourth (1:15:48) and Twain Mein in fifth (1:16:03).

On the .63 mile swim, 30.28 mile bike and 7.17 mile sprint international course, Sean Flemming took first with a time of 2:24:34. He had the third-fastest swim followed by the fastest bike and run.

Shelburne Falls' Kristian Whitsett placed second in the international (2:28:32). Like most of the field, Whitsett was just pleased to be back racing after a lot of time off.

“This is my second race post-COVID and you can tell how psyched everyone is to be here,” Whitsett said. “Usually it's a bundle of nerves but everyone is just excited to be back out.”

Whitsett finished second in the swim and run and fourth in

the bike in the international field.

“It was a nice day, not too hot,” Whitsett said. “The water was freezing cold. It was interesting swimming up current then flying down the river. I'm pretty across the board but usually waiting to get passed on the run. It was a great race.”

Carson Poe was third amongst men (2:33:54) followed by Carl Wilke in fourth (2:36:45) and Ezra Barneson in fifth (2:52:23).

Cassandra Maximenko had the fastest time in the international women's field of 2:35:11. Her time was a distant first, with Julia Koch in second (2:59:44), Deborah Moorelai in third (3:01:02), Devon Powers in fourth (3:02:46) and Lauren Rabideau in fifth (3:05:58).



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Competitors in the sprint exit the Green River after completing the swim portion of the 2021 Greenfield Triathlon on Sunday.