

Sugar Land Jets posts second consecutive win in Relay Triathlon

By Bill Shaw

The Facts

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LAKE JACKSON — With less than two miles to go on the anchor leg of the 24th annual Brazosport Relay Triathlon, Sugar Land Jets' cyclist Chris Clark trailed Richmond Tornado Warning cyclist Agapito Gaytan by a minute and a half.

Then Gaytan's front tire blew, which cost his team a first-place finish.

"He was way ahead of me, and all of a sudden, I saw him on the side of the road," Clark said.

Clark finished his 15-mile cycle route out from the Lake Jackson Recreation Center on Highway 332 and back via Lake Road in 41:25. The Jets' swimmer, Steve Long, swam 1,000 meters in the recreation center pool in 13:35, and the team's runners, Doug Earl and Dean Liscum, finished their 5K runs from the recreation center along the Bottomlands Trail and back, respectively in 21:03 and 18:14, for a total team time of 1 hour, 34 minutes and 17 seconds.

The Jets recorded their second consecutive first overall male team finish in the contest but finished 1:38 slower than last year.

Clark attributed his team's slower time to streets made slick by an early morning rain and a couple of dangerous intersections.



Gaytan changed his flat in about a minute and a half and finished the cycle leg in 42:05, which earned the team second place overall in the competition and first place in the male 161-200 age group determined by the total age of team members.

Tornado Warning finished in 1:35:16, just 59 seconds slower than the Jets despite the flat, with swimmer Christopher Arend (16:10) and runners Kevin Regis (20:17) and Jose Lara (16:44).

The Jets fell short of the 1:22:31 contest record set in 1999 and the 1:24:29 male team competition record set in 2002.

The Venus Connection of Lake Jackson finished 39th overall and first in the female team competition in 2:04:44 with swimmer Cindy Wehmeyer (23:15), runners Julie Eggleston (31:57) and Rachel Mulherin (27:13) and cyclist Sarah Hayne (42:19).

"We did OK last year but beat last year's time," swimmer Wehmeyer said. "The camaraderie we have as a team makes it fun. No matter how you do, your teammates always encourage you; that's what makes it fun. It's a celebration of youth and health."

"My time was about the same as last year, but the weather was cooler, and my sister Julie ran with me," Mulherin said. "My son, who is 12, won in one of the categories, and that excited me. I want to get more kids involved."

Finishing fifth overall in 1:37:34, Oops, I Poop My Pants from League City finished first in the mixed (male and female) team competition in 1:37:34 with swimmer Jill Graff (20:12), runners Donald Murphy (21:48) and Wooch Graff (19:11) and cyclist Robert Coreale (36:23). No team members were available for comment after the contest.

Twelve individuals, 10

males and one female, braved all four segments to finish the contest solo.

Francisco Jimenez, 28, of Lake Jackson finished first in the individual male competition in 1:45:05 with a swim of 16:07, runs of 25:30 and 23:31 and a bike ride of 39:57. Jimenez finished 6:40 slower and second in last year's individual competition.

"I'm swimming faster and running better," Jimenez said. "Last year I had a foot injury and didn't do as well on the run, and it was cooler this year."

Jimenez fell 11:12 short of the individual male contest record set in 2004 by Bill Bender of Missouri City.

Local triathlete Jenny Seagraves finished her second individual triathlon in 2:23:36 for first place in the female competition with a swim of 21:23, runs of 35:53 and 32:35 and a cycle ride of 53:45.

"This is my first triathlon trophy ever," said Seagraves. "My best (segment) probably was the swim. But I took it easy because I've never done an event this long. The weather was in our (participants') favor, cooler than usual."

Houstonian Brian Dupre, a frequent participant and second individual finisher in 2004, finished the distances in 1:45:24 to garner second place in the individual male competition with a swim of 19:53, runs of 22:27 and 21:18 and a cycle ride of 41:46.

Dupre finished 19 seconds slower than Jimenez.

"I didn't know I was so close," Dupre said, "because we

were in different swim heats. I might have had something for him if I had known he was ahead of me. I was substantially faster this year."

Third-place overall male individual finisher Jeff Dean, 25, of Lake Jackson swam in the same heat with Jimenez and initially was ahead of him.

"I passed him (Jimenez) on the run, and he passed me on the bike," Dean said. "The run was my best segment."

Dean finished the distances in 1:48:28 with a swim of 18:25, runs of 23:23 and 21:47 and a cycle of 44:53.

Dow Chemical Co. and Texas Dow Employees Credit Union took top honors in the corporate competition.

Older but Wiser of Dow finished third overall in 1:36:02 and first in the all-male corporate competition with a team of seasoned veterans: swimmer Ronnie Paul (13:43), runners Jerry Gipson (21:05) and Bob Bowden (22:39) and cyclist Al Ochoa (38:35).

"We've won for eight out of 11 years," Ochoa said. The team has "been largely intact, which is absolutely an asset."

Older but Wiser set the 1:31:54 male corporate team record in 2004.

The Pretenders, a TDECU rookie team, took top honors in the female corporate division in 2:33:54 with swimmer Steph Sherrod (23:33) runners Kim Shelton (42:52) and Sandra Loeza (31:37) and cyclist Tammy Price (55:52).

"Since this is the first time any of us have done this, time was not a factor," Shelton said. "I'm

very pleased we completed it."

Supernova of Dow finished first in the mixed corporate competition in 1:45:20 with swimmer Alison Harsbargen (14:09), runners Jacob Cherian (25:09) and Chet Davidson (22:40) and cyclist Jon Bennett (43:22).

"I have done this for five or six years, and this is my sixth trophy," said second runner Davidson.

"I think it's a great race. Alison is our secret weapon. She's fast.

"She gave us a good head start."

This year's contest drew 69 teams, 17 more than last year.

The City of Lake Jackson, BASF and the Dow Swimming League were major contributors to this year's contest, and other sponsors were BEARCOM, Shane and Linda Pirtle, HELP, Inc., Thorn Crown Builders, Taylor Sport Chiropractic, Signal Electronics, Brazosport Spine and Joint Clinic, First State Bank of Clute and Coastal Switch Gear.

