

# Never giving up is key to success

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**T**he Lonestar Triathlon Weekend in Galveston on March 29-30 included a sprint distance, a Quarter Ironman, a Half Ironman and an Aquabike event. On March 29, I was up at 3 a.m. and off to Moody Gardens shortly after 4 for the sprint event to redeem myself for my failing to finish the Athens, Texas, Triathlon on March 8 because of a flat tire.

The sprint event included a 550-yard open-water swim, a 12.6-mile cycle route and a 5K (3.1-mile run). Neither my body nor my bike failed me this time. I logged triathlon No. 26 and made the distances with transitions in 2:05:02 to win the second-place award in my age group by default: Only two of us in the 65-69 age group finished.

The swim course adjacent to Moody Gardens was saltwater and cold, 69 degrees at race start. Most of the triathletes had wetsuits. A fellow triathlete, Ralph Miller, 76, of Tiki Island, the oldest of the sprint triathletes, said I was going to freeze.

Into the cold water I went sans wetsuit. The swim also challenged me to swim 20 yards to the starting buoys and tread water for four or five minutes before the horn sounded for our swim wave to begin. I tried to

relax and take my time and concentrated on finishing the distance.

My swim went well until the 29-and-younger females, who started eight minutes behind my wave, caught up with me. I learned that 29-and-younger competitive female triathletes will swim over or through anything in their way, which happened to be me. I thought for awhile I might drown.



I made the distance, staggered out of the water and stumbled the 150 yards to the transition area for the bike ride. From that point on, everything went smoothly. Triathlon 26 accomplished.

On March 30, four Lake Jackson triathletes challenged themselves in the Lonestar Aquabike, the Quarter Ironman Triathlon and the Half Ironman Triathlon.

Michael Tarabay, 32, and Christopher Dorow, 44, finished the Aquabike competition, a 1.2-mile swim followed by a 56-mile cycle route. Tarabay finished 11th overall in 3:34:11; Dorow finished 20th overall in 3:56:33.

Richard Romero, 41, and Gregory Gray, 36, finished the Quarter Ironman competition, a 1-kilometer (.6-mile) swim, a 28-mile cycle route and a 6.5-mile run. Romero finished 207 overall in 2:47:37; Gray finished 240 overall in 2:52:38.

Roger Kuhlman, 40, and

Peter Norris, 54, met the challenge of the Half Ironman competition, a 1.2-mile swim, a 56-mile cycle route and a 13.2-mile run. Kuhlman finished 104 overall in 5:16:17; Norris finished 321 overall in 6:31:46.

More runners and cyclists have the itch lately to become triathletes. One runner-cyclist who rode the MS150 this weekend e-mailed me about triathlete training, particularly swimming, and we talked about training after we finished the Gator Gallop. Another runner started swimming with our group at the high school with a goal to finish all segments of the Brazosport Relay Triathlon in September, a 1,000-meter swim (1,100 yards), two-5K runs and a 15-mile cycle route.

The greatest challenge for “wannabe” triathletes is usually the swim. I took up swimming only when my doctor told me I could do nothing else to recover from a back injury.

I could swim only one 25-yard length of the pool, then clung to the wall panting in exhaustion. Last Saturday, I swam 550 yards in open water.

Finishing your first triathlon is like finishing your first marathon. You are exhilarated, proud and hooked despite the exhaustion.

With training and persistence, you, too, can boast you are not only a runner. You can say, “I am a triathlete.”

**Bill Shaw’s running column appears in The Facts every other Monday.**