

Brazosport's signature triathlon approaches

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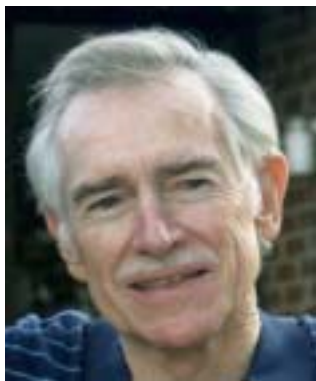
I sat rapt as Romanian Constantina Tomescu pulled ahead of the pack of women marathoners halfway through the race, held a one-minute lead and grew more determined as she neared "The Bird's Nest" and ran around the stadium to the finish line. I sat awed as 41-year-old swimmer Dara Torres won silver in the 50-meter freestyle, then hurried from the award podium to anchor the 400-meter relay medley to capture a second silver medal of the night. I cheered as the American 400-meter relay team swam hard and enabled Michael Phelps to capture a record eighth gold medal in the 29th Olympiad.

I hope the excitement of the Olympics inspires area swimmers, runners and cyclists to get their teams together for the 26th annual Brazosport Relay Triathlon on Saturday, Sept. 6. The triathlon features four-member teams of swimmer, two runners and a cyclist and individual triathletes in a 1,000-meter swim (1,100 yards), two 5K (3.1 miles) runs and a 15-mile anchor cycle route. Area athletes posted impressive times in the contest last year.

Clute swimmer Cody Armstrong, 15, logged the fastest swim, 13 minutes and nine seconds.

Debbie Demeo, 35, of Houston logged the fastest female time, 13:53. Both fell short of the contest record marks, 11:29 by Mark Chamberlain of Lake Jackson in 2002, and 13:00 by Bonnie Garcia-Meitin of Angleton in 2002.

In the run relay legs, Jerry Hopkins, 23, of Houston ran the fastest male 5K, 16:59, a 5:28-mile pace. His teammate, Sarah Yoder,



ran the fastest female 5K, 19:27, a 6:16 pace. Their team, Hooters, finished first overall in the contest and first in the mixed-team competition. Both Hopkins and Yoder fell short, respectively, of the male record set by Cornelia Gariban of

Houston, 16:41, a 5:23 pace, in 1999, and the female record set by Melissa Hurta of Jones Creek, 18:40, a 5:59 pace, also in 1999.

Hooters — a mixed team (male and female) of three medical students and an engineer — finished in 1:28:33, 7:02 short of the contest record set by Brazosport-Houston team "Winners Ahead Stay Back 15 Feet" of swimmer Scott Cadorette (14:17), runners Melissa Hurta (18:40) and Cornelia Garibay (16:41) and cyclist Ruben Solis (32:53) posted in 1999. Hooters vowed to return this year to challenge the record.

Ruben Solis, 58, of Richwood rode the fastest 15-mile cycle anchor leg in 34:14 (26.29 mph); Heather Bell, 35, of Tomball posted the fastest female time, 41:36 (21.63 mph). Kenny York of

Angleton posted the men's contest record, 29:24 (30.61 mph) in 2002; Annie Hadow of Houston posted the female contest record, 38:40 (23:27 mph) in 2004.

Houstonian Mitilda Guerra, 32, broke the individual female contest record by 2:40 with a finish of all four segments in 1:53:34. The top male finisher was Emile Raschle, 54, in 1:50:44, 7:03 off the individual male record posted by Bill Bender of Missouri City in 2004.

Other team records remained secure. The team 21 & Under of Lake Jackson-Angleton with swimmer Mark Chamberlain (11:29), runners Robert Miche (17:50) and Santiago Sepeda (17:07) and cyclist Brian Dupre (38:13) posted the male team record, 1:24:29, in 2002.

Fast and Furious, a Brazosport-Houston team, posted the female team record, 1:32:03, in 2004 with swimmer Amie Ultecht (13:11), runners Allison Lecompte (21:00) and Melissa Hurta (19:11) and cyclist Annie Hadow (38:40).

Times and finishes don't matter, however, for many of us who participate in the BRT as I have since 1985. The contest is filled with fun, team camaraderie, refreshments and music and great memories for all participants.

I hope to see an enthusiastic gathering of triathletes on Sept. 6. Registration forms are available at fitness centers and online at www.brazosportrelaytriathlon.org.

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