

Brazosport triathlon ought to be a dandy

By Bill Shaw

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Amid the sounds of the cicadas and the songs of the summer birds, listen — you hear the splash of swimmers, the whir and click of cycles and the clomp, clomp of running shoes. It's time to train for one of the premier athletic events of the area, the 26th annual Brazosport Relay Triathlon on Saturday, Sept. 6.

Four-member teams of swimmer, two runners and a cyclist compete for age-group awards or just for the fun of it. Sometimes families organize a team for the sake of physical fitness.

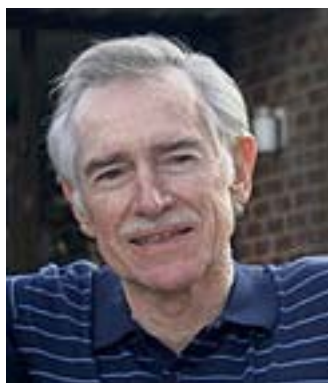
Teams compete for the top three overall finish awards in male, female and mixed (male and female) divisions. In addition, the top three teams in male, female and mixed divisions determined by the total age of team members — 72 and younger, 73-160, 161-200, and 201 and older — also receive awards. Corporate teams vie for male, female and mixed awards, but there are no age groups.

The Lake Jackson Recreation Center serves as the contest venue. The competition begins at 6:45 a.m. with a 1,000-meter swim (1,100 yards) and continues with two 5K (3.1 miles) run relay links around the center and down into the Bottomlands Trail and back. The cyclist

finishes with an out and back 15-mile anchor leg on Highway 332. After the teams finish the contest, the participants get together at the MacLean Park pavilion for entertainment and refreshments.

The contest benefits the Brazoria County Association for Citizens with Handicaps, a United Way Agency.

I have participated in the run since 1985 as a runner or a cyclist. Originally, the contest began at the Clute Municipal



Pool, and a single runner romped a 10K (6.2 miles) to the old Dow Park on Highway 332, and the cyclists

rode around the lake. The contest then was on Labor Day weekend, and it was a hot run in the August or September heat.

Though some teams participate in the event strictly for fun and camaraderie, others are fiercely competitive. Last year's fastest overall team, the Hooters, a mixed team of three medical students and an engineer from Houston, finished in one hour, 28 minutes and 33 seconds. The team finished six minutes short of the contest record with team splits of 14:03 in the pool, 19:27 and 16:59 in the 5K runs and 38:04 on the cycle route.

"We're out to break the record next year," said cyclist Luke Gillman. "We're going to

get in better shape and break it."

A Dow Chemical team, Older But Wiser, took top honors in the overall male competition in 1:32:29 with swimmer Ronnie Paul (13:20), runners Jerry Gipson (20:36) and Bob Bowden (20:40) and cyclist Al Ochoa (37:53). A Dow Chemical team with the same members except with Gerold Smith as second runner posted the 1:31:54 corporate male team record in 2004.

Just for Fun, a Tomball team, finished first in the overall female competition in 1:52:01 with a swim of 16:20, runs of 29:14 and 24:51 and a cycle ride of 41:36, 19:58 off the female team contest record.

Houston triathlete Matilda Guerra broke the individual female contest mark by 2:30 in completing all four segments of the event solo in 1:53:34, with a swim of 19:01, runs of 25:52 and 26:05 and a bike ride of 42:36.

The top individual male triathlete, Emile Raschle of Lake Jackson, finished in 1:50:44, with segment splits of 18:28 in the swim, 49:34 in the 5Ks and 43:59 on the bike. He fell 16:51 short of the individual male contest record.

It's time to get your team together. Entry forms are available at all recreation and fitness centers, or you can register online www.brazosportrelaytriathlon.org. Don't miss out on the fun.

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