

BRATS come in all ages

By Bill Shaw

The Facts

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Happy Memorial Day. The frolic-in-the-sun, hit-the-road-if-you-can-afford-to-buy-gas season begins.

“Awesome,” a female voice said from behind me.

“Awesome?” I said. “Why?”

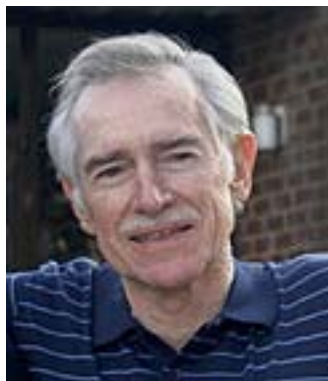
“Because of the age on your leg,” she said.

We were finishing up our 300-yard swim, 15-mile bike routes and three-mile runs in the first mile of the three-mile anchor leg of the College of the Mainland-Bay Area Triathletes (COM-BAT) Triathlon. In a

triathlon, we are body marked with our race numbers on our arms and legs and our ages on one of our calves.

“It’s great for a 68-year-old to be finishing a triathlon,” my fellow triathlete, a 35-year-old, said as she overtook me and continued her run.

I was one of the five BRATS (BRazosport Area TriathleteS) who rose early and headed for Texas City for the COM-BAT. I finished my 24th triathlon, but I was not the oldest. Cliff Wilson, 73, a veteran triathlete, went the distance better and faster than I did in 1:37:19 and won third in the male 70-74 age bracket.



Devin Theriot, Brazoswood track and cross-country coach, was the fastest of the five in 1:13:22; he placed eighth in his 40-44 age group. Kelly Colosimo finished in 1:27:55, ninth in her 40-44 age group, and Susan Lorms finished in 1:32:26 to place first in her 60-64 age group. I finished in 1:53:28, sixth or seventh in my age group.

For Susan, Kelly, Cliff and me, the COM-BAT was our second triathlon in six days. On Sunday, May 20, we traveled to Pearland for the Silverlake Sprint Triathlon, a 400 meter, open-water swim, a 10-mile bike route and a 5K run on a glorious morning perfect for a triathlon.

We had a BRATS rookie with us. Susan convinced Rene Miles, basically a cyclist, to try her first tri.

Kelly finished the Pearland contest fastest in 1:11:02 for ninth in the toughest and most competitive of the female age groups, the 40-44 bracket. Susan finished in 1:14:42 for first in her 60-64 age group. Rene finished in 1:16:45 for 15th in the female 40-44 group. Cliff Wilson finished in 1:22:44 for second in the 70-74 age bracket, and I finished in 1:37:14, second in my 65-69 bracket by default because no other triathletes my age showed up for the open water swim.

If we keep working on Rene, she will be running and tri-

ing with us more. However, we must keep it a secret from the bicycle club lest her fellow cyclists disown her for associating with runners. (Whoops! The secret is out. Well, cyclists don’t read this column anyway.)

Triathlon training provides runners good cross-training activities and works on more than the running muscles. Marathon training became too difficult and too time-consuming for me, so I accepted the tri-challenge at 61.

Swimming and cycling also provide runners with alternative activities to stay in shape when we have injuries. (In fact, my physical therapist wants me to stop running for a while to heal a hamstring injury.) Swimming and cycling will help keep me from descending into a dark-blue funk and making myself and everyone around me miserable.

Injured, bored or ready for a new challenge. Hit the pool, climb on a bicycle and become a triathlete. You will amaze yourself and discover the limitless possibilities of a more varied exercise regimen.

Footnote. Run for the Cure registration on Saturday, June 2, in West Columbia is going slowly. The 5K course is one of the best in the area. It begins near the old swimming pool in West Columbia and makes a loop around the Varner Hogg Plantation. Register online at www.active.com, call 979-491-2181, e-mail teresa.holland@conocophillips.com or register on race day beginning