

Nice day for a run

1,100 compete in ninth annual Sentinel Triathlon

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SANTA CRUZ — It was a record-breaking day in the ninth running of the Sentinel Triathlon as 1,100 competitors swam, biked and ran under cloudy skies. New course records were set in the men's, women's and team divisions.

The men's winner was Brad Kearns of Cool, who finished in 1:44:47.

The women's winner was Susan Latshaw of Oakland, with a time of 1:55:06.

Some participants set out to better their own times. Others performed against competitors. But those attempting the 1-mile swim, 23-mile bike ride and 10K run for the first time had one goal in common: finishing.

For Leon Baumgarten, 46, of Mill Valley, finishing was easier said than done.

Baumgarten, who swam without a wetsuit, was one of five people who suffered hypothermia after the first-leg swim around the Santa Cruz Wharf.

"When I got to the beach and saw that 99 percent of the people were wearing wetsuits, I thought I probably made a big mistake by not having one," said Baumgarten. "I finished the swim in 35 minutes but I didn't realize how cold I was until I entered the transition area. I felt really weird."

The paramedics treated Baumgarten, and 45 minutes later he pushed forward on his bike for the second leg to Davenport and back. As he began the second leg, the pros were finishing the triathlon.

"I was by myself the whole way. I kept thinking, this is so embarrassing," he said.

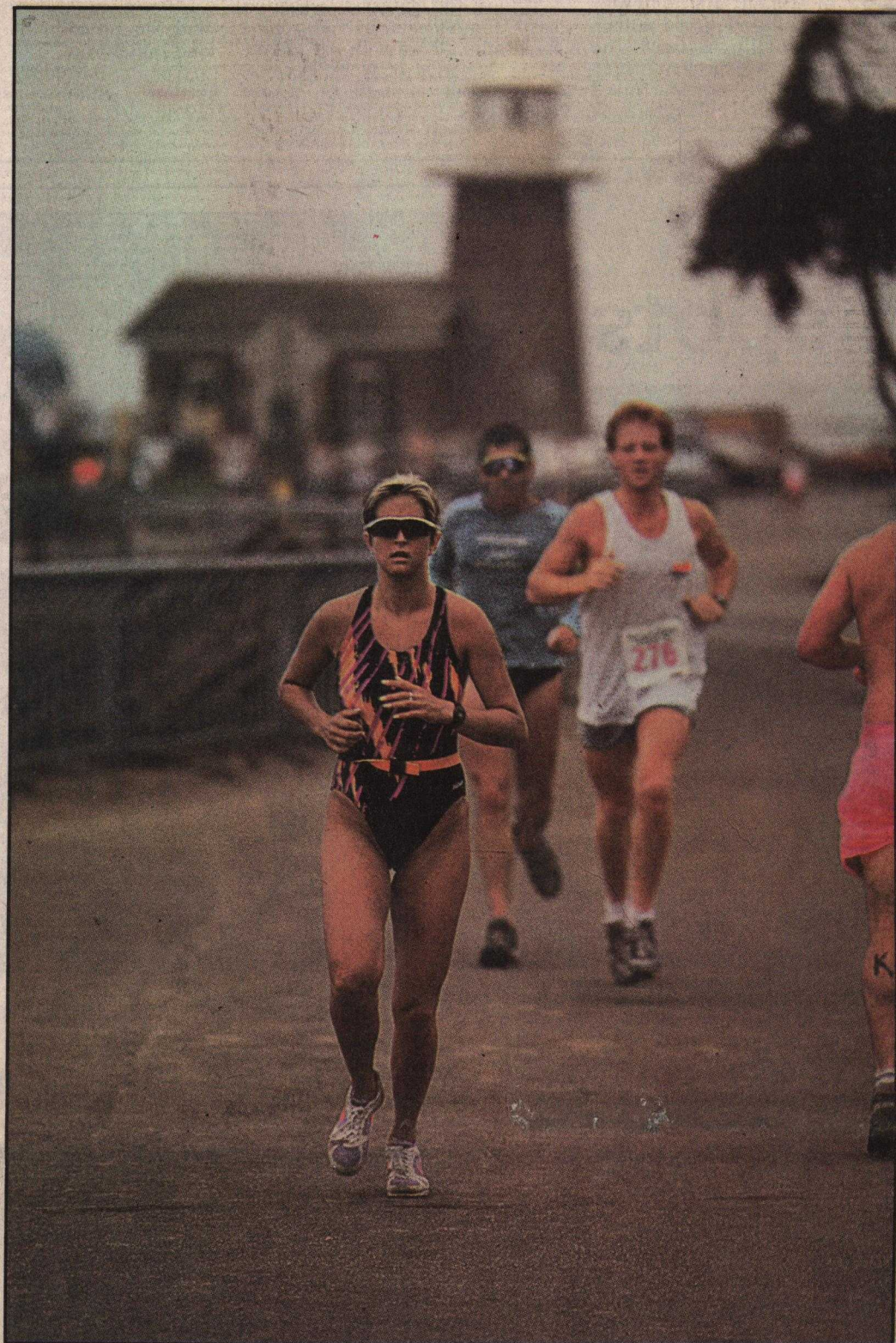
Baumgarten said a friend and the paramedics stayed with him until the very end, four hours later.

Beverly Walter, 40, of Sunnyvale, was the last woman to finish. Despite a short wetsuit, Walters suffered mild hypothermia. She was kept warm for half an hour before continuing the race.

"It's really interesting to be last," said Walters, about her eighth triathlon. "You get police escorts and lots of encouragement."

Dave Denton of Los Gatos, who finished his first triathlon, was just happy he survived.

"I've done 10Ks before and I ride a bike," he said, "but I've never put together that many different sports events for that long a period before. I'm ecstatic I finished and I'll probably do it again."



Triathlon competitors head for finish line Sunday. For more on race, see page B1.

Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel