

# Men, women obliterate race's records

## Llerandi slices more than 2 minutes off old record, despite gash in foot

By BOB LINNEMAN  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Not even a bloody gash on the bottom of his right foot could stop Nate Llerandi from winning Sunday's Santa Cruz County Sentinel Triathlon in record time.

The 24-year-old from Boulder, Colo., believes he cut his foot upon emerging from Monterey Bay after the 1-mile swim around the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf, the triathlon's first leg. He said it bothered him during the 23-mile bike ride to Davenport and back, and it nearly prevented him from even attempting the 6.2-mile run to finish the race.

"It was really hurting," said Llerandi, who finished in 1 hour, 42 minutes and 26 seconds — shattering the old mark of 1:44:47 established by Brad Kearns in 1991. "I almost didn't start the run. But I guess my body's pain killers kicked in so I kept going."

Kearns, of Auburn, finished second in 1:43:15, more than a minute off his old record but not enough to catch Llerandi. Defending champion Andy Kelsey of Menlo Park, who was instrumental in luring his good friend Llerandi to Santa Cruz for the race, was third this year in 1:45:19. Kerry Classen of Mission

Viejo (1:46:21) and Mike Mosier of Eureka (1:46:48) rounded out the top five.

Carol Montgomery of Del Mar won the women's race in impressive fashion, finishing 12th overall in 1:50:16, also a course record by nearly 5 minutes. Mark James of Soquel was the top local men's finisher in 1:50:07 and Krista Whelan of Santa Cruz was the top local woman in 2:01:42.

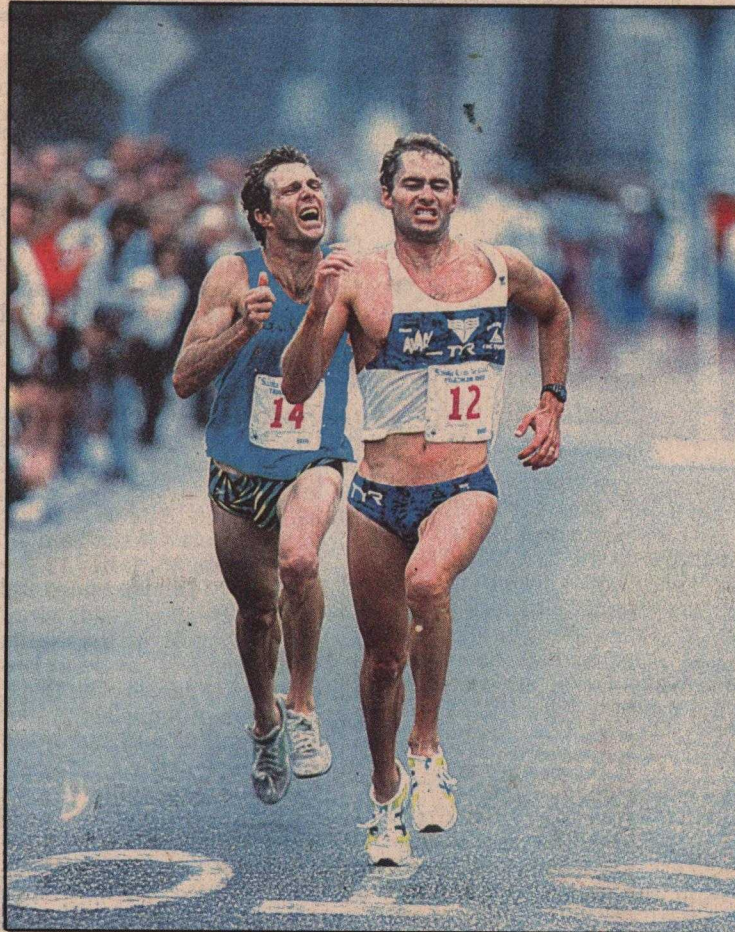
Llerandi is one of the sport's bright young stars. Five weeks ago he defeated world champion Spencer Smith of Great Britain and American Mike Pigg, the world's top-ranked triathlete, at the Chicago Triathlon, the biggest race in the sport with some 4,000 participants.

"He's a giant killer," said Kearns of Llerandi. "I'm ecstatic for him. He destroyed the record."

Llerandi, a former swimmer at Kenyon College in Ohio, was first out of the water, followed closely by Kearns. The two fought back and forth over the bike portion with Kearns gaining a slight edge entering the run.

Kearns hammered the first mile of the run in 4:36 in an effort to shake Llerandi. "He was running so fast the first mile and a half,"

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Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Peter Kain of Palo Alto surges past Scott Miller of Del Mar to finish eighth in the male pro division.

## Montgomery leaves the field behind in a successful defense of her title

By STEVEN CHAE  
Sentinel correspondent

SANTA CRUZ — When Carol Montgomery trains, she usually goes by herself, with only her pounding heartbeat to accompany her.

It turned out to be good practice for Sunday, as Montgomery rode away from the pack early in the 11th Santa Cruz County Sentinel Triathlon. Montgomery, the defending women's champion, crossed the finish line in 1 hour, 50 minutes, 16 seconds, destroying the previous women's record by nearly 5 minutes.

Montgomery, who finished 12th overall, trailed Walnut Creek's Wendy Ingraham after the first stage of the race, a 1-mile swim around the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf. Despite Montgomery's fumbling with her shoes at the swim-to-bike transition area, Ingraham had a sinking feeling her lead would be short-lived.

"I wanted to at least try to keep Carol close on the bike," said Ingraham, 29, of Walnut Creek, who eventually finished in second place behind Montgomery in 1:54:21. Then, rolling her eyes in an expression of either exasperation or awe, she added, "But no way, I never even came close."

Montgomery, who specializes in middle-distance triathlons such as Sunday's race, said she knew she'd have an advantage over the other pros who prefer the longer distances offered in events such as Hawaii's Ironman.

The difference, Montgomery said, was she can train focusing primarily on her speed instead of endurance.

"I came in wanting that course record, so I went out hard from the start. I knew the shorter course would benefit me more so than the others," she said.

Montgomery, 28, who originally hails from Vancouver, Canada, and now resides in Del Mar, said the overcast conditions at the start also gave her additional confidence. "Last year was much warmer," she said. "I just run a lot better when it's cooler. It reminds me of home."

Third place went to Lauren Alexander of Los Gatos in 1:57:58, while Holly Nybo of Mountain View was fourth in 2:00:28. The top local woman was fifth-place Krista Whelan of Santa Cruz in 2:01:42.

The top amateur finisher was Tory Valentine, 26, of San Francisco in 2:02:34.

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# Men

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Llerandi said. "He was trying to break me mentally. I was going 'Oh, God, when is he going to slow down.'"

Eventually, he did. Llerandi finally caught Kearns, one of the sport's strongest runners, and finished feeling fresh, despite the foot wound. "I was running hard," Llerandi said. "But if I had to, I could have run harder."

While he is considered one of the best in triathlon, Llerandi wants more. "I want my own identity," he said. "I don't want to be compared to other people all the time."

If he continues to race the way

he did Sunday, he'll be the one other athletes are compared to.

A morning of cool fog made the course ideal for record times. The ocean was calm and wind was not a factor at all in either the bike or the run. Both Llerandi and Kearns believe the bike portion of the race is where they were able to make the best time.

"I think we did it all on the bike," Kearns said of the record-breaking times. "All of a sudden there was Davenport. It was like 'wow, here already,'"

Kearns said the foggy conditions were a pleasant change from a race in Acapulco last week, where it hot, muggy and he got sick.

"Then I come to Santa Cruz and swim in the nice, clean water," he said. "It's so much nicer for athletes to compete in these conditions."

Llerandi, who picks up \$1,000 in prize money for winning, was impressed with the course and how the race was run. "I like it," he said. "The hills weren't that tough, just enough of a nuisance to break your rhythm. It'd be nice to if they could block an entire lane for cyclists. But it's well marked, you can't get lost. I really enjoyed it."

As for his sliced foot? "I think it'll be OK," he said. "I don't think I'll need stitches. It'll just be a pain in the butt for a week."

# Women

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For pro Terry Schneider of Watsonville, Sunday was another day of disappointment as a flat tire ended her race just five miles into the 23-mile bike ride. "It's really hard to watch," a crestfallen Schneider said as she stood near the finish, watching the runners flow in. "I'm really frustrated, I've already had three flats in the past few weeks. I guess I need to re-evaluate my equipment," she said.

"I felt I had a chance for a per-

sonal record, I had a real good swim," Schneider said. "Whether I could have won, I don't know. Carol really had an exceptional race."

The previous course record of 1:55:06 was set by Sue Latshaw in 1991. Latshaw, who now lives in Boulder, Colo., did not compete in this year's race.

To men's runner-up Brad Kearns, "exceptional" doesn't even come close.

"She's unbelievable. Scary, be-

yond belief," he said, noting that in races of this length, top women usually finish about 11 minutes behind the men's winner. Montgomery was less than 8 minutes behind Nate Llerandi, who set a course record of his own Sunday.

"Carol's record ought to hold up for eternity," he said.

On this day, the only one bold enough to argue would be Montgomery herself.

"Just wait till next year," she said.