

Sentinel Triathlon: It's all about fun



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel photos

ABOVE: Rob Giglio of Moraga picks up an entourage made up of his son Spencer, 9, and family friend Reilly Webster as he nears the finish line along West Cliff Drive at the 25th annual Sentinel Triathlon on Sunday. **BELOW:** Competitors are reduced to form and color during the bicycle segment on Delaware Avenue during the 25th annual Sentinel Triathlon on Sunday.

Event raises thousands for youth athletics

Triathlon (Santa Cruz Sentinel)

By J.M. BROWN

SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

SANTA CRUZ — While most triathletes were peeling off their wetsuits to don sleek cycling jerseys and wraparound shades, competitors Heidi and Mark Boynton were slipping into pink tutus and white tiaras as they waited to mount their bikes.

The statement: "If you're not going to win, you've got to at least look good," laughed Mark Boynton, one of 837 competitors who finished Sunday's 25th annual Santa Cruz Sentinel Triathlon.

That kind of light-hearted, block-party spirit permeated the easygoing race as athletes, spectators and organizers hugged and cheered their way through four thrilling hours of swimming, biking and running.

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■ Couch's strategy for the women's title.

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On the Net

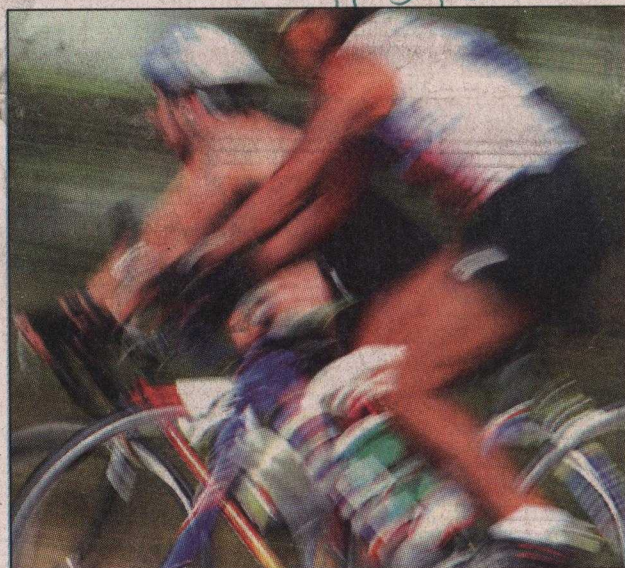
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Some competitors tackled all three, while others, like the Boyntons, partnered with team members to compete in relay fashion.

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Triathlon

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The water was a calm 57 degrees, the breeze was light, and the skies were overcast but offered occasional slivers of sunshine. Following Saturday's chilly rain, "It's the most beautiful weather we could have had," Director Kem Akol said.

The West Cliff Drive event, which raised at least \$50,000 for high school and college athletic programs, operated "just like a Swiss watch," Akol said, with the exception of two incidents that ended in hospitalization. A male athlete suffered appendicitis, and 82-year-old Margerine Meyer, the mother of former women's winner Marguerite Meyer, broke her pelvis after being knocked over by a hurried spectator.

Still, volunteers and participants alike said the laid-back tradition of the race — not to mention its idyllic coastal setting — keeps them coming back year after year.

"It's so gorgeous here," said three-year volunteer Jim Desmond of Scotts Valley, who performed crowd control along with his 17-year-old son Patrick. "It's just such a beautiful venue."

For 10 years, the Boyntons have been competing just to have fun and raise cash for youth athletics. The two always wear goofy costumes, like bows in their hair or pig helmets, to support the festive mood.

"You've gotta always do something," Heidi Boynton said as she waited for her swimming partner, Chelsea Schlunt, to run in from the ocean.

Standing barefoot in the bike lane as he cheered friends on, swimmer Chris Hauth of Mill Valley said he likes Santa Cruz's triathlon because it comes at the end of the triathlon season and "has a lot more of a local feel" than other races.

Sentinel Triathlon winners

OVERALL AND MEN'S DIVISION WINNER

John Dahlz

Time: 1:54:18

South San Francisco

WOMEN'S DIVISION OVERALL WINNER

Kelly Couch

2:03:41

San Mateo

RELAY TEAM DIVISION WINNER

Team Bay Area All Stars

2:00:58

San Francisco

TOP LOCAL FINISHERS

■ Martin Spierings

2:03:19 - 6th place overall/
6th place men's division

Santa Cruz

■ Katrin Tobin

2:11:39 - 31st overall/3rd
place women's division

Santa Cruz

"I see it as just another fun event — Go, Cindy! — and everyone is relaxed and fun-spirited," he said, as his wet-suit dripped on the pavement. "That's why this is such a great race."

Hoping to raise a couple hundred bucks for the Santa Cruz Breakers soccer team's November trip to Florida, Georgia Chronopoulos sold hot coffee and sprinkle-covered doughnuts to spectators. "The energy here" and willingness to support young athletes makes the race a natural venue for fundraising, she said.

Karen Hockemeyer of Santa Cruz, who with brother Phil came to support sibling Steve, said the only real sense of competition is among athletes who are "competing against themselves" to better their own times, or simply finish.

"Most people are here just to see if they can do it."