



Triathletes run, ride and swim their way to victory

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The day starts early with the filling out release of liability forms. Somebody writing numbers on one arm and a leg. After a few verbal instructions are given, a group of yellow-capped competitors hit the chilly morning water to begin a ten-mile trek that includes swimming, mountain biking and running. Welcome to the Sunday morning of a triathlete.

Nineteen competitors participated in the Lake Wilson Rollercoaster Tri(athlon) on June 4. Some compete in two and three person relay teams, some challenged the course as individual competitors.

Triathlons, or Tri's as they are commonly referred to, challenge competitors with three different disciplines, swimming, mountain or road biking, and a foot race to the finish.

The Rollercoaster Tri is an off-road event covering seven miles by bike on Wilson's infamous Rollercoaster bike trail. With a combination of steep climbs, quick descents and winding trails that hug the rolling hills around Lake Wilson, it is a challenge in itself. Individual competitors will hit it after climbing out the lake's open waters in the quarter-mile swim, and finish off with a 5K – 3.1 miles – run afterwards on the vertically challenging Dakota walking path along Wilson's south shore.

Most triathlons offer competitors the option of competing as individuals, or as part of a relay team. The Rollercoaster had eight challenging the entire course while others formed four teams of two or three relay racers.

"I can't wait until I can do all three," runner Angie Shellito, Stuttgart, said as she surveyed the field of competitors and the open water. "I will have to work on my swimming though."

Shellito drew teammates Greg Copeland, Wilson, for the swimming leg and mountain bike racer Kim Ellenz of Tipton for the bike leg. While all are experienced in their disciplines, Shellito and Ellenz were newcomers to the team relays of a Tri. The group of three finished the event in one hour, 25 minutes and 57 seconds for fourth place.

Gary Dutton, Salina, – formerly of Hoisington – was the oldest competitor in the individual category at age 49.

"The hilly terrain of this race makes it unique," Dutton said. "It's so much fun, but it is a tough race."

Dutton is very familiar with the vertically-challenging terrain of the bike leg. "I've been mountain biking for about 12 years, not that steady though."

He said the swimming and running were disciplines that he had never competed in, but used them mostly for cross training.

"The swimming is good when I have an injury or something and can't ride or run," Dutton said.

Dutton's cross training efforts paid off Sunday as he

came out of the swim leg in fourth place.

Once in his more familiar discipline of mountain biking, Dutton moved up to second place finishing less than a minute behind the lead relay team of Emma Eeles, Wilson and Tanner Marshall of Great Bend. Marshall raced the last two legs of his two-person team.

"Tanner is a strong runner and biker," Dutton said.

Marshall proved Dutton right opening up a lead of just over five minutes between himself and Dutton during the run to claim a decisive win for his two-person team finishing at 1:09:80. Eeles completed the quarter-mile swim with a time of 5:37 for third out of the water. Dutton claimed first in the individual category finishing at 1:14:35.8.

"That run was tough," Dutton said. "I wasn't feeling that great. I've had a calf problem that has bothering me for the last couple of years."

Dutton finished seven minutes ahead of the second soloist and just under a minute ahead of the second-



place relay team.

Justin Ringler, Sylvan Grove finished second in the individual category at 1:21:56.2. P.J. Stiles and Kevin Ayers rounded out the top four in individuals finishing at 1:28:08.5 and 1:32:41.4.

Race promoter Karen Copeland said this was the fourth year for the event, which is now part of a three-race series that includes a

Triathlon promoted by Town and Country Racquet Club on July 9, and another event by Copeland at Lake Wilson this fall. Copeland also promotes two running events during the year.

The Rollercoaster Tri was sponsored by the Golden Belt Bicycle Company in Great Bend, which also sponsors and promotes the Fat Tire Festival at Lake Wilson each May.



TERRY SPRADLEY/Great Bend Tribune

Top: Swimmers start the event with a quarter-mile swim in the open water of Lake Wilson. Some of the racers opt for being part of a relay with each member doing a different discipline while other will finish the swim and go on to the seven-mile bike ride and the 5K run.

Above left: Relay teams have no problems with transitions from one skill to the next, but the individual racers spend a little more time as they change from swim gear, to bike gear, to running gear.

Above: Gary Dutton runs the final asphalt section of the course after running the Dakota walking path on the south shore. Dutton won first in individual division.

Left: Kim Ellenz hammers through the single-track trail on the second leg of the triathlon. An experienced mountain biker, Ellenz was part of a three-person relay team in Sunday's race.

Rollercoaster Triathlon results

Place	Name(s)	Time
1.	Emma Eeles/Tanner Marshall	1:09:27.80
2.	Gary Dutton	1:14:35.80
3.	Chris Thomas/Brian Pedigo/Jeff Strobel	1:15:29.00
4.	Justin Ringler	1:21:56.20
5.	Kolten Cook/Karen Copeland	1:23:56.20
6.	Greg Copeland/Kim Ellenz/Angie Shellito	1:25:57.90
7.	P.J. Stiles	1:28:08.50
8.	Kevin Ayers	1:32:41.40
9.	Matt Geier	1:52:55.10
10.	Guy Gaskill	2:00:25.90
11.	Wade Bangerter	2:18:07.70
12.	Casey Robinson	3:00:00.00



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