

GIVE IT A "TRI"

Triathlon Season in Muskoka

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'Tis the season for triathlons in Muskoka! Just this past weekend hundreds of athletes, young and old took to the water, then hopped on bikes, only to round out their efforts by jogging to the finish line. Port Sydney played host to a children's triathlon, while a few miles away, Gravenhurst saw the adults rise to the challenge. Both events were a huge success, with loads of laughter, sportsmanship, wonderful spectator support, and excellent race courses manned by numerous dedicated organizers, sponsors, and volunteers.

Not to miss out on the excitement and the challenge of a triathlon, I decided a few days prior to the Gravenhurst event to take the plunge myself. Self admitted, rather under prepared for the test of a triathlon, I took to the Muskoka River to dust off my high school swim goggles, and to Beaumont Drive to ensure my old running shoes still fit. A mere 5 days before the race I began my short pre-triathlon training (which by the way is not recommended). As someone who spends numerous hours a week on a bicycle, I was fairly confident my body would survive the 750 metre swim, 28 kilometre bike ride, and 7 kilometre run. More training definitely would have been an asset; as I awoke early race day, my legs were still quivering from my last ditch attempt at training.

At last 8:00am rolled around, and the triathlon got underway at Gull Lake Park in Gravenhurst. Swimmers, swimmers everywhere! Lots of little white swim caps dotting the water, and multitudes of highly trained, buffed triathletes swimming the calm, clear waters of Gull Lake. The water was fabulous, too bad I don't swim in a very straight line without trusty lane markers to guide the way...oh well, swim completed and onto my bicycle.

The 28 kilometre bike ride out Muskoka Beach Road to Bracebridge and back was splendid. Over the hills, past the lake, through the trees, and back again. The best part of the ride was watching the super fast, experienced (and trained) triathletes speed by me already embarked on their return trip to the transition area back on the shores of Gull Lake. It is really quite something to see these athletes in action. The fastest cyclists of the lot were moving at an average speed of 38 kilometres per hour!

Bike completed, and onto the run. Ouch! (Did I mention running is not my strong point?) Your legs sure feel odd switching from the spinning motion of cycling to the rhythm of running, an action my legs are only acquainted with on the rarest of occasions. After a brief moment of questioning my judgement in starting the triathlon, my pace quickened and I enjoyed the run out Muldrew Lake Road and back. I was heartened to see the Opera House as I turned the corner off of Bay Street to make a "Chariots of Fire" dash across the finish line. Triathlon Completed! One hour and fifty-seven minutes later, I was pleased to say I survived my first triathlon, complete with smile.

I highly recommend challenging yourself to a triathlon. It was an experience I won't soon forget, and I'm even looking forward to trying another, maybe even an ironman (after I train just a little bit more). A few pieces of information to pass along to all you folks thinking of trying a triathlon... In my short quest to prepare for last weekend's event I discovered an invaluable beginners guide to "Getting Ready for Your Race". This guide was found on the MultiSport Canada website (the organizers of the Gull Lake Triathlon www.multisportcanada.com). I found the guide very informative, including a gear recommendation check-list, what to expect on-site race day, as well as a step by step discussion about each of the stages (swim, bike, run) and the transitions. Don't miss this web help first timers!

It is no wonder triathlon organizers and racers are flocking to Muskoka. With beautiful lakes, boasting great water quality and swimming temperatures, and scenic roads to cycle and run on, Muskoka is an absolutely ideal location for triathlons. Over the past few years Muskoka has seen a growing number of triathlons take place all across this stunning region.

And not to worry, you too can still join in the fun! This weekend Bala will play host to the annual Bala Falls Triathlon on Sunday June 25th with a 750m swim, a 30km bike ride, and a 7km run (www.trihard.ca or (416) 797-5204 for more information). On Saturday August 28th and on Sunday August 29th, Parry Sound will host two triathlons. Saturday's event is a sprint triathlon (750m swim, 25km bike, 6km run), and Sunday's event for the truly fit is a Half Iron Man (2000m swim, 90km bike, and 21.1km run). Both events will take place at Waubano Beach, further details and registration are available on-line at www.multisportcanada.com. Give it a Tri! Happy Spins!

TRIATHLON RACE DAY CHECK-LIST

SWIM:

- Bathing Suit
- Goggles
- Wetsuit
- Swim Cap

BIKE:

- Bicycle
- Helmet (Mandatory in all events)
- Bike Shoes
- Sunglasses
- Water Bottle
- Spare Tire and Tools
- Cycling Shorts
- Cycling Top
- Socks
- Race Bib number Belt or safety pins

RUN:

- Running Shoes
- Socks
- Shirt
- Hat

TRANSITION ITEMS:

- Towel
- Sun Screen
- Extra Water and Fuel

HELPFUL WORDS OF WISDOM:

- Have Fun!
- Hydrate (water and sports drinks) and fuel (carbohydrates and Hammer Gel) your body before, during and after you race
- Be courteous to other competitors and volunteers
- Smile and think positive!