

Hundreds hit waves, road in triathlon

Lehigh resident first to finish scenic Captiva event

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Written by

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Blanca Edwards participates in the bike riding portion of Sunday's inaugural Galloway Captiva Triathlon held at South Seas Resort on Captiva Island. Edwards finished first in the female 45-49 division. / SARAH COWARD/Special to The News-Press

As the rising sun peeked over the palm fronds Sunday morning, speckling the Gulf of Mexico with glimmering light, hundreds of swimmers rushed into the waters off of South Seas Island Resort for the first leg of the inaugural Galloway Captiva Triathlon.

After a quarter-mile swim, water-logged athletes sprinted through sugar sand and the still-cool air to their bikes for a 10-mile ride along Captiva's winding roads, miles of which were closed to traffic Sunday as almost 700 triathletes swarmed the island.

Next came the run - a five-kilometer jaunt along the resort's nine-hole golf course, with views of the shimmery Gulf to keep them company.

"It was absolutely beautiful," said Estero's Blanca Edwards, the first female competitor to cross the finish line, winning the women's 45-to-49 age group in a time of 1 hour, 6 minutes and 32 seconds. "The run was magnificent. It feels like you're right out there with the ocean and nature. It's really nice. You get to relax a little, kind of."

Overall winner Justin McMurrer of Lehigh Acres seemed relaxed when he finished in a time of 52:14. Caroline Humphreville, 24, of Naples won the women's title in 1:03:32.

This wasn't McMurrer's first triathlon. In fact, it was his eighth this year, including the 25-year-old's first Iron Man event which he completed late last month in Louisville, Ky. McMurrer will be competing in his second Iron Man in Panama City Beach in November.

"This was a nice recovery from my last race three weeks ago. It kind of got me out of the funk I was in after that," McMurrer said. "And, you know, running on a top local golf course was pretty nice."

For hundreds of Sunday's competitors, the event was their first-ever triathlon. For every veteran riding a top-of-the-line bicycle and calculating the cost of any wasted movement, there seemed to be a first-timer or two sporting a bikini or board shorts, calmly strolling through the transitions, their only goal being to finish.

Count Durwood Avery among Sunday's veterans. The 70-year-old raced his first tri back in 1983. He has competed in more of these events than he can count, and he credits them for keeping him off of medications and away from his doctor's office.