

# Athletes strive to be 'Fittest in Sisters'

By Jim Cornelius  
News Editor

Athletes ranging in age from kids to over-50s tested themselves in a grueling series of trials on Saturday morning at the Sisters High School track. At stake was the title "Fittest in Sisters," but what drove most of the athletes wasn't a first-place finish, but the feeling of having



PHOTO BY EMILY GREEN

Zach Imel on his way to winning the Level 5 Summer Games.

taken on a tough challenge and come out the other side.

The event is billed as the Level 5 Summer Games, and it was staged by Ryan Hudson, owner and coach at Level 5 Fitness in Sisters. More than 30 athletes competed.

"What's really cool is we've got nine kids," Hudson told *The Nugget*.

The event, in its second year, also drew five "masters" competitors — people over 50 years old.

The athletes competed in categories based on age and level of experience. The trials consisted of a 400 Triathlon — 400 meter row; 400 jump ropes; 400-meter run — a clean-and-jerk barbell lifting ladder and other workouts involving box jumps, kettlebell swings and other actions that tax both strength and aerobic capacity.

Scores are cumulative, so the athlete who does the best overall across the range of challenges will prevail.

Jennifer Banning successfully defended her women's title and Zach Imel dethroned McKibben Womack to take the men's title. Henry Banning was the top youth athlete, while Conrad Kiefer and Shayla Curtis took honors

among intermediate men and women respectively. Ray Stoneback was the top masters men's competitor and Vicki Moschetti was the top masters woman.

Several athletes turned in remarkable performances in individual events. Leigh-Anne Durham was blazing-fast in the 400 Triathlon, turning in a time of 5:47. Tim Green topped the leader board in the event with a time of 5:36. Sisters High School senior Logan Schutte made a 275-pound lift that is a personal record and a SHS gym record.

Caitlin Wyman, Leigh-Anne Durham and Jennifer Banning all pushed up 143 pounds and Hudson Jones and Henry Banning lifted 99 pounds among the youth lifters.

Hudson scheduled the event very early on Saturday morning to beat the high-90s heat of the day, but conditions still taxed the athletes.

The Level 5 Summer Games are based around the Crossfit-style "workout of the day" (WOD). It's a form of exercise that has become wildly popular because it's never boring and repetitive, it produces results, and people



PHOTO BY CEILI CORNELIUS

Jennifer Banning, left, was overall women's champ. The event started with a 400-meter row.

who participate develop a strong camaraderie forged among people who have endured something tough and made it through.

Ray Stoneback, 55, has been working at Level 5 for a year. His very first exposure to this type of program was competing in last year's summer games. That's not exactly easing into things.

"I thought it was for beginners," Stoneback explained with a grin. "When I showed up and saw all the Level 5 guys, my heart fell into my stomach. But it was fun. I was exhausted."

Yes, for folks who dig into the program, "fun" and "exhausted" go hand in hand.

"Every time I go into the

WOD I have butterflies," Stoneback admitted. "But you finish it, you feel really good about yourself. You're ready for the day."

Stoneback also enjoys the work because he shares it with his wife.

As he watched some of the top Level 5 guys warm up for the first event, he reflected on the value the fitness program offers to those with the grit to push through.

"I wish Crossfit had been around 30 years ago," he said.

The event Saturday was a fundraiser event for the Womack Family for medical expenses for their three-month-old daughter. Half the entry fees went to them in a total of \$600.



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