

Mini: Organizers expect large turnout

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The race is set to start at 11:30 a.m. July 4 in front of Monmouth City Hall, where entire families and individuals of all ages are expected to participate.

Because July 4 fell on a Saturday this year, Cable is anticipating a big field — and plenty of support from people already lined up to see the parade. He said that is one of the best aspects of the Mini-Marathon.

"The cheering crowds along the way and the weather is usually just perfect," Cable said.

For those who like to do things at the last minute, there's still time to register for the race. Online registration is available at www.electicedge.com until noon on Thursday.

On-site registration will be available on Saturday from 7 to 10:30 a.m. outside Monmouth City Hall

on Main Street.

The cost is \$15 for adults and \$5 for children 10 and younger in advance and \$20 for adults and \$10 for children for race-day registration.

Age categories range from 9 and younger to 80 and older, so the Mini-Marathon is an event anyone can experience.

"We've got kids as young as 8 and 9," Cable said. "It's such a relatively comfortable distance and is all downhill, so we've had runners into their 80s."

Cable ran in the inaugural Mini-Marathon and several years afterward. That ended when he became the coordinator, but Cable would like to have the event so well-organized that he could join the field one of these years.

"It's a nice little course and just within my distance," he said.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer file

The Monmouth-Independence Mini-Marathon attracts runners and walkers of all ages.

Cause: Triathlon a great accomplishment

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Sure, it was "just" a short one, but let me tell you: combining swimming, biking and running back to back is tough.

Maybe you have to be a little bit nuts to enjoy pushing yourself physically. My muscles ached. I felt my full weight. I lost my breath and then found it again. As I crossed the finish line, I was pleased with my time, and

more pleased with the fact that I didn't feel dead. Quite the opposite.

It all started as a casual throw down to sports editor Lukas Eggen. Hey, Lukas, I said across the newsroom, I'll train for that triathlon if you will.

A brief moment of silence followed before I heard, "Um, OK."

And that was it. We were committed to doing this

thing. Our fellow reporter Jolene Guzman promised to show up to take pictures — she can't swim, so couldn't join in the fun this year (though she said she'd learn to swim so she can do it with us next year).

Couch to triathlete, that was essentially the goal. Was it possible?

Lukas and I both found out that it is, and in eight weeks or less.

My bike had been propped up against the garden shed for two years, and hadn't been ridden since 2002. I didn't own a helmet.

So off to Veal's Bikes Plus I headed for a tune-up — and some other improvements — and to get a helmet.

I jumped in the water and started swimming laps. I hated swimming. I still don't like it or enjoy it, but somewhere in my training I

stopped hating it.

Once my bike was ready, it was just a few weeks before the event. Lukas said we were supposed to be brick training — combining two or more of the three events into one workout.

Just for fun, I rode 10 miles and ran one and thought I might die.

But I didn't. And that's one of the things I am most grateful for

during this experience. I have run half marathons before. I have hiked out of the Sierra Nevadas in one day when it took us four to hike in. I have done things I didn't think possible, but training for and completing my first triathlon ranks among the top five toughest physical things I have endured.

I can't wait to do it again next year.

Independence Sprint Triathlon



PHOTOS BY JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

TOP LEFT: Melissa Huber and her son, Gabe Huber, look to finish the 15-mile bike ride strongly during the Independence Sprint Triathlon.

TOP RIGHT: Riley Olson finishes his bike ride during the Independence Sprint Triathlon on Saturday morning. Olson finished the triathlon in 1 hour, 45 minutes and 1 second.

LEFT: James Dunning sprints toward the finish of the sprint triathlon. Dunning placed first overall at the Independence Sprint Triathlon, finishing with a time of 1:07:06.

The sprint triathlon raised money to make improvements at the Independence Pool House. Organizer Brian Joynt said the event raised more than \$1,000 for improvements. This year's event featured 25 individual finishers and one relay team from the Monmouth-Independence YMCA.

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Survive: Finishing leaves smiles all around

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Once we started the bike ride, I realized the triathletes I was attempting to keep up with were on a pace far faster than I had ever done.

My adrenaline gave way to my legs getting much more tired than they should have been feeling. I realized I had my own battle — find a way to finish.

The bike ride did offer one solace. Sprinklers were going off near the road in one of the fields. There was

no way I was missing this chance to cool off.

The first splash hit me and I felt a refreshing coolness.

What I failed to notice was there were six or seven more sprinkler heads, resulting in my eyes opening just in time to get multiple blasts of water in them and the hope that I wasn't about to steer off the road. When I finished the bike ride, my legs were tired but I was hopeful.

Only 3.1 miles separated

me from the finish.

For the briefest of moments, I felt a surge of energy and determination enter my body.

Unfortunately that surge left as soon as I started to run.

My legs felt like weights. I called on the spirit of my cross-country days to help. What can I say, desperate times call for desperate measures. Unsurprisingly, that didn't work.

If the spirit of my cross-country days still exists, it

was laughing at me.

I didn't so much finish the run as I did survive it.

But, despite being exhausted, turning the final corner toward the finish brought another new feeling — exhilaration.

There is nothing quite like hearing a crowd cheer for you. Upon crossing the finish, there was an immense sense of pride coupled with the thought that I need water now or I might fall over.

Unofficially, my time is 1

hour, 56 minutes and 40 seconds, a mark I'm more than happy with.

More importantly, the feeling when you finish is unlike any other, almost addicting. And it left me wanting more.

Organizer Brian Joynt did a great job putting on the event and ensuring there was enough water and food for participants after the race.

He raised more than \$1,000 to help restore the Independence pool house.

Training for this sprint triathlon has been hard. Saturday's race was more physically draining than pretty much anything I've ever done. Yet, it was also extremely gratifying to finish and the sense that you've just entered a spot in a club that not many people get to experience.

And while the experience led me to question whether I was still a sane human being, leaving the triathlon left me with one last thought — let's do that again.