

## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Kids Triathlon—August 1, 2009 7:00 a.m

I woke up at 4:30 a.m. to arrive at the Sumner County YMCA a little before 5 a.m. The fog was so thick that I couldn't see more than 10 feet in front of me. Much to my surprise, many HEAT team members were already there and working hard. Chuck Carter was setting up the swim to bike transition chute, Jan and Javier Morales and Oliver Barry were working with Doug and Rachel Perry to set up transition. Andres Morales was riding his bike back and forth in the dark and fog!!! The volunteer tent was already set up and labeled with Charlene Alcorn manning her post and the YMCA staff had already unlocked their doors and began hauling garbage cans and equipment to the race and registration sites. Forrest Wise was doing a lot of heavy lifting to be sure we had our refreshments out and our registration area set up.

Everyone seemed to have their head down and working hard and I thought "I wonder what I should be doing"? Just then I spotted Mike Yarbrough pulling up with his bike. He and I discussed his role as lead biker and then jumped in my car to drive the little kids bike course. Much to my surprise, the cones and signs were already out and everything looked great. I can't imagine what time Mark Evans started working that morning but it must have been early because it looked like the course was ready to go. Sheila Yarbrough and Leigh Underwood arrived with dozens of boxes of shirts and food. Then Michele Coomer (with the bikes of her four children) arrived and headed to the registration site to report for duty.

Then came the famous timing truck with Doug Renfro and crew and the ACME mobile with Allen Curtis hauling all of our transition boxes. Leslie Hudson met Doug and began work to construct the finish line. When Allen pulled into transition, a swarm of people gathered around the trailer to quickly construct the boxes. Next was David Hardin from Bikers Choice with his Bike Support tent. By now, the fog was starting to lift and the sun was rising. It was a nice cool morning—perfect for a race.

The athletes started to trickle in at about 5:45 and Sheila and Team were READY! Charlene passed out the walkie talkies to the planning team and that made things wonderfully easy and gave everyone a sense of calm. Maurico was snapping photos of the race from every angle (transition, body marking, etc.) Larry Phillips started pumping tunes about 6 a.m. and that helped to further relax the kids and their parents. The volunteers began lining up to get their last minute instructions and then head out to their post. Mark Evans and Barry Bresnahan confirmed volunteer placement and educated those near the church about the multiple events going on that morning and where to direct traffic for parking. The police, EMS, and all the support teams showed up on time and ready to go.

Mark opened us up with a morning prayer and before I knew it, Marlene Hilligoss sent the first swimmer into the pool, just a little after 7 a.m. The crowd started cheering and my eyes welled up with tears, as they often do when I watch kids sports. It's one of the most inspiring things to me—little arms and legs working so hard to accomplish a goal. Good stuff! I started cheering too and my voice was cracking with emotion as the first swimmer emerged through the pool gate and into transition. David and Chuck were there to help the kids take off up the hill on their bike. Bob Hall was the first volunteer on the course and he was having a ball encouraging all of the athletes—especially his granddaughter, Sam, on her shiny new bike that she got just for the race!

The Fogbees, Barry Baird, Bill Sinks, Mike Yarbrough and several others began to circle the bike course to ensure that the kids were safe. Just when I sighed a breath of relief that we started the race without incident, Taylor Charles came flying around the corner and to the finish line! Now it was time for our famous finish line announcer, Andrea Baird, to strut her stuff! Sheila and Team shifted from registration to Finish line to distribute water and medals to our little triathletes.

The volunteers started to come back with a couple of scraped knees and a bunch of funny stories! The last finishers crossed the line and we sent the participants to the pool to swim while their parents gathered their gear from transition to pack it up. Leslie Hudson came from around the corner and said "We're ready". I said, "for what"? I thought I'd faint when she told me the race results were already produced. I had to tear Chuck, Mark, Doug Perry and the rest of the planning team away from transition, as they had already started tear down. Then, it happened.....Chuck got a hold of the microphone. Enough said about that...you were all there, you know what happened.

Anyway, it was a great race. Once everything was packed up I took my daughter and her friend to Sonic to sit outside at the picnic tables. One of the little girls who participated was there with her family. She and her mom had approached me earlier that morning because she was REALLY nervous and was afraid she wouldn't know where to go or what to do. I reassured her that she had trained hard and prepared well by attending all of the sessions in the Jon Hall Training Series and that she was going to do great. Anyway, as I got out of my car and sat down at the picnic table she turned around and looked up at me with her medal in one hand and a GIANT drink in the other and said "I GOT A ROUTE 44"!!!! She had a huge smile on her face and was so proud of her accomplishment.

That's what it's all about for me. I'm so grateful to be a part of the Hendersonville Endurance Athletic Team and I'm truly honored that I was asked to coordinate this year's event. It was a blast!