

Sports Week

Section 2
August 5, 1998

Olympic connection adds interest to this year's triathlon

By RONALD BARTIZEK
Post Staff

BACK MOUNTAIN - Thanks to the Wilkes-Barre Triathlon, the Back Mountain has a direct link to the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia. That's because the local event is a qualifying race for the Olympic debut of the event.

The Wilkes-Barre Triathlon will be held Sunday, Aug. 9, starting at 8 a.m. at Sandy Beach at Harveys Lake and ending at the Penn State campus in Lehman.

This year's event will offer a choice between traditional and "Half Ironman" distances. Most competitors, including professionals, will compete in the standard event, which consists of a .9 mile swim, a 25 mile bike segment and finishes with a 6.2 mile run. The Half Ironman uses a 1.2 mile swim, a 50 mile bike segment and a 13.1 mile run.

After participating in the race eight times, Chris Hackett of Shavertown plans to tackle the Half Ironman this year. "It's a great race, probably one of the best around," he said.

While he has run marathons and standard triathlons, Hackett has never attempted the longer distance. "I've had to increase the volume of training," he said, which includes trying to ride 60 miles on a bike three days a week.

The swim, though, will be his greatest challenge. "That's the part I struggle through," Hackett said. "The race begins for me after I get out of the water." Hackett, 35, was the top local finisher last year, with a time of 2:22:32.

Professional athletes are the featured performers, but this is truly a volunteer event. Dave and Lisa Daris have been involved since the first race, known as the Back Mountain Triathlon, in 1982. Begun as a fundraiser for the cancer society, the race was a strictly amateur event the first few years, until professionals were invited later in the decade.

"We were among the originators," Dave Daris said, noting that only a handful of people were involved at first.

"It's a great race, probably one of the best around."

Chris Hackett
Shavertown

"I think it has showcased the Back Mountain, and the whole area," said Daris, who drives the lead vehicle for the bike section of the race, keeping the roadway clear. He was also called into service to announce the finishers last year.

With the Olympic link and increased prize money, 30 professional racers have expressed interest so far, double last year. But money isn't the only thing that brings world-class racers back each year; they like the hospitality.

Lisa Daris has been in charge of lining up host families for visiting professional racers for the past four years, and she has no problem finding places for them to stay. "We have a list of about 50 host families who have done it in the past," she said, and about half of them are usually available.

Professionals spend anywhere from a couple of days to a week in the area. Since some host families are participants, they welcome the chance to train alongside a pro for a few days.

"I don't think this race is unusual in its dependence on volunteers," said Lisa Daris. "I think we are unusual in how many we get." She said nearly 200 people will help out in planning, organizing and running the event. "Volunteers enlist their friends," she said, so that if one person has agreed to staff a water station, for example, a neighbor will come along to help out.

Neither Dave nor Lisa has ever competed in the triathlon, but their children, Eddie and Megan, participate in the "Future Triathletes" one-mile run, which will take place Saturday at Penn State. Registration for the race, which is for children 8 to 13, begins at 9 a.m. The race begins



POST FILE PHOTO

Athletes will bike 25 or 50 miles through the Back Mountain, depending on which of two race distances they compete at.

at 10:30 a.m.

Jim Harris III, a former race director, mentioned Sonny Smith as one of the premier volunteers. "He is the backbone of this," Harris said. Smith takes care of construction and take-down of the extensive facilities on the Penn

State campus.

A triathlete since 1985, Harris says his competition days are over, but he is still involved with the Pocono Northeast Triathlon Association, Inc., organizer of the event. This year Harris is in charge of media relations.

Harris said more professionals are coming this year to earn qualifying points for the Olympics, and because the prizes are larger. "The link to the Olympics attracted another sponsor, who helped increase the prize money to \$20,000," Harris said.

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Dave Daris
Race volunteer since 1982

The new sponsor is InterNutria, a company that makes a drink called "Race Day." With their help, first prize for the professional men and women will be \$3,500 each.

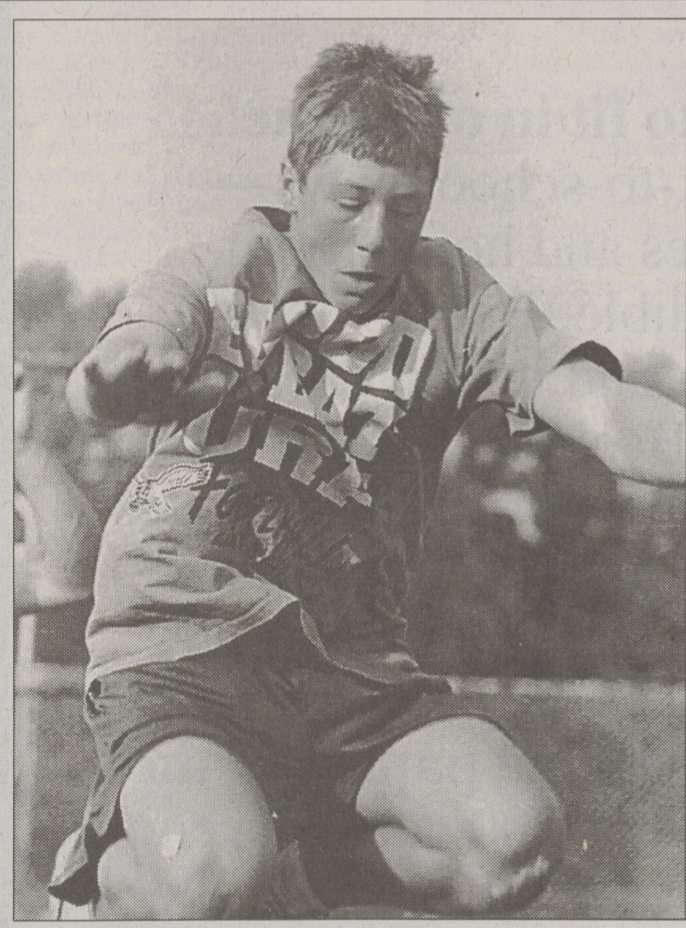
Besides the pros, members of the United States resident Olympic team will dive into Harveys Lake Sunday morning. They live and train full-time at Colorado Springs, Colorado. "Once triathlon is accepted for the Olympics, you get money," Harris said. That funding pays expenses for athletes who are training for Olympic competition.

This will be the 14th time Kevin Augustine, 41, of Kingston Township, has participated. He does about eight triathlons a year, and has been successful enough to garner two national sponsorships, from Power Bar and Merlin Metal Works.

Augustine picked up the help because he's a consistent high finisher, with two overall top 10's and a third place so far this year. "My swim and bike are the best," he said. He tries to ride 125 miles a week, run 25 miles and swim three to four miles a week for training. A believer in frequent training rather than long durations, he works out "twice a day, every day."

As a member of the 1998 Power Bar Elite Triathlon Team, Augustine gets free Power Bar products and some gear. Merlin Metal provided a custom titanium frame for his bike. "They cut the cost considerably," he said, and fit it to his needs. In addition, he has local sponsorships from Sickler Bike Shop, Wysocki's Athletic Center and Richards Automotive.

Why keep up this pace? "I can't see myself not doing it," Augustine said. "It's a stress reliever; it's healthy."



POST PHOTOS/JIM PHILLIPS

Shape up time

The Dallas football squad has been holding conditioning drills this summer, preparing for the fall season. At left, Luke Miller jumped and maintained his balance. Above, John Lorah, left, and Justin Tamanini put their shoulders into it.



Leary hits long ball

Sean Leary gets congratulated by Luke Marchakitus, Matt Shiskowski, Jason Demnicki, and others after hitting his first of two homeruns in the tournament in the first inning of Saturday's winners' bracket semifinal against Wyoming/West Wyoming, a game Back Mountain National won 11-0.

BMT Nationals head into fight for b-ball championship

By JEFF FANECK
Post Correspondent

Though the World Series of Major League Baseball is still a good two months away, a group of local 11-year-olds look to tonight's game at Back Mountain Little League field with as much, if not more, enthusiasm than the big-leaguers who will participate in the Fall Classic. The championship of the 10th Annual W.W. Kubis Memorial Tournament could be decided this evening. Back Mountain National will play the winner of last night's game between Avoca/Dupont and Pittston. Back Mountain earned a spot in the championship game by winning four consecutive games in the winner's bracket. If National should fall tonight, another game will be played Thursday at 7 p.m. at the field on Church Street in Dallas.

The Nationals last won the 11-

year-old-tournament in 1990, a team which included current professional baseball player John Oliver. Back Mountain American has won the tournament twice in its first nine years, in 1992 and again in 1995. If National should win either tonight or tomorrow evening, then it would make four championships in 10 years for the teams which co-host the prestigious tournament each year.

This year's team is very well-balanced and boasts a heavy offensive potential. The team has hit five homeruns in four games and each of the team's 14 players has scored at least once. Scoring 60 runs in four games has made things easy for manager George Gracely and assistants Marty Straub and Wayne Harvey. The first three games National played ended as a result of the 10-run rule, a luxury which only helps

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SPORTS ROUNDUP

SENIOR SOFTBALL Back Mt. 4, Milton 2

Back Mt. allowed Milton two runs in the bottom of the first inning courtesy of a pair of errors before the local girls settled into the game and took the lead for good in the top of the third to down Milton 4-2 Aug. 2. Back Mt. took advantage of Milton's misfortunes in the top of the first when Colleen Mahon scored on a misplayed hit to take a 1-0 lead before Milton responded with two of their own in the bottom of the inning. Back Mt. turned the tables in the top of the third as Mahon scored her second run of the game on another error. Amanda Stolarick sliced a single, scoring Julia Chiampi to put Back Mt. up by one before Stephanie Simonitis stole home to end the scoring. April Naugle was the winning

pitcher, giving up four hits and striking out one.

Warrington 4, Back Mt. 3

Back Mt., holding a 3-1 advantage in the final inning, seemed to have the game under wraps with Warrington facing two outs and no one on base but their counterparts rallied for three runs to take a 4-3 lead and held on to hand Back Mt. their first loss of the double-elimination Senior League State Softball Tournament Aug. 3. April Naugle, Colleen Mahon and Julia Chiampi each scored a run apiece to give Back Mt. the advantage before Warrington's comeback. Julia Chiampi was tagged with the loss, allowing eight hits and fanning three.

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9-10 girls place second

The Back Mountain All Star Girls 9-10 year old Softball District 16 placed second in their tournament. Pictured, kneeling, Nicole Malloy, Kasey Corbett, Erin Tanner, Kelsey Moody, Brittany Prater, and Devin Lacey. Standing, Brian Corbett, manager; Sara Sweptston, Sheree Horvath, Alyse Miller, Maggie Guntli, Sara Brown, Gina Martin, Alison Grant and Sophie Grossman. Back row, Rick Guntli, coach and Peggy Lacey, coach.