

## Ben Collins, Jennifer Garrison take USAT Nationals overall

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By Timothy Carlson

PORTLAND, Oregon - Stay at home mother Jennifer Garrison repeated her 2006 triumph and pre-med student Ben Collins improved a notch from his 2006 runner-up finish at the Smithville, Missouri nationals to take the overall titles

Saturday at the USA Triathlon Age Group National Championship Triathlon near Portland, Oregon.

Garrison, 29, from Naperville, Illinois, had a flawless race, following a close duel on the bike with fellow 25-29 competitor Bree Wee of Kailua-Kona Hawaii with a women's fourth-best 40:20 run on the steep hills around Henry Hagg Lake to hit the line in 2:09:36. Wee faded to a 28th-best 42:28 run, giving Garrison a 2 minute 10 second margin of victory for both the 25-29 age group category and for the overall.

"This means a lot," said Garrison, who is now one of a few women multiple overall winners, trailing only the inimitable Donna Kay-Ness of Connecticut. "Everybody puts a lot of time and hard training into it and I'm really happy."

Garrison vows she will take a year off from competition to have a second child to join two-year-old son Noah. "I didn't want everyone to get mad at me," quipped Garrison, who said she would take on the challenge of the half Ironman distance when she returned to competition.



Jennifer Garrison

Ben Collins, who spent two years in Honolulu as an engineer designing underwater robots and honing his swim skills into a triathlon career, took the 20-24 honors by 2 minutes 57 seconds over runner-up Daniel Agnew of Edmond, Oklahoma. But the current Lake Forest Park, Washington resident had a much tougher time for the overall, eking out a 17-second margin of victory over 25-29 winner Jesse Thomas of Eugene, Oregon and 26 seconds over 30-34 winner Chuck Sloan of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Collins arguably won his title with a blazing 17:49 1500-meter swim,



Ben Collins - 1st Overall

then held on with a solid 1:00:47 bike and a survivor's 36:40 run to hit the tape in 1:57:08.

Thomas and Sloan made valiant rallies at Collins on the run. Sloan, a 3:59 miler at Oklahoma State with an 8:25 personal best in the 2000 Olympic Trials in the 3,000-meter steeplechase, fought back from swimming off course in the blinding early morning sun with a race-best 33:06 10km run - passing fellow 30-34 rival competitor Christopher Martin with 200 yards to go on the hilly and demanding run to win his age group title by two seconds in 1:57:34.

Thomas, from Eugene, Oregon, disposed of 25-29 rival John Ryan by 51 seconds, but his second-best overall run of 33:17 fell just 17 seconds short of the overall title.

"I think I had the race of my life out there," said an elated Collins. "It was a dream to take the national title."

Collins was particularly elated to have a virtually mistake-free race. Last year at the ITU age group world championship in Lausanne, Switzerland, he had a 2 minute lead after a typically fast swim and a strong bike when he crashed on a downhill and broke his collarbone. Last year's age group national champion Marc Bonnet-Eymard then took the world overall title.

Just two weeks prior to the 2007 Nationals, Collins over swam the course and lost time when he biked off course to take second place at the big Hy-Vee age group race in Des Moines, Iowa.

"I'd just finished final exams two days before and didn't have good focus," said Collins. "I was in a better frame of mind today."

On Saturday, Collins had a close call on the bike. He said that an age group woman competitor veered into him as he was overtaking a string of slower age group competitors on the two-loop, 12-mile course. "She was going slowly and suddenly rode into me," said Collins. "I managed to keep going but she crashed hard and fell."

The woman was taken away in an ambulance with an apparent broken collarbone.

"I felt badly, but I told myself there was nothing I could do and kept riding," said Collins. "I'd had the same injury last summer and knew she must have been in a lot of pain. So I kind of lost my focus until two 35-39 men - probably on the first lap - went by me and I told myself. 'Wait a minute. I need to go harder.'"

Sloan's nail-biting duel with 30-34 rival Christopher Martin was the closest of the day. "Going into the last mile, a spectator told me two guys were right there in front of me," said Sloan. "One guy with a blue outfit and yellow trim (Phillippe Kozub, 33, of Bethesda, Maryland) is close and the other guy is not so far ahead."

Sloan used his track speed to quickly pass Kozub, and then saw Martin, the 2005 Best in the US overall winner, climbing the last grinding hill ahead. "I just kept going after him," said Sloan. "I was pumping my arms going up the hill. Next thing I know, I came down the hill into the transition area and I caught this guy and saw a 30-something number on his leg. 'That's the guy!' I knew at the end of the race I had rally good foot speed. He fought hard to the end, but I had him."

Sloan's closing 33:06 10km erased Martin's 3:53 lead off the bike and gave him a two second margin of victory in 30-34. Not bad for a man who took up triathlon just two years ago at the urging of fellow former Oklahoma State track star Gregory Roualt, who won the Hy-Vee amateur triathlon in Des Moines two weeks ago but could not contend at Hagg Lake because he had run out of vacation days.

Masters competitors made a big impact at the Nationals. The 40-44 winner Brian Bich of Duluth Minnesota finished just 1 minute 40 seconds behind overall winner Collins and took 7th place overall. Women's 40-44 winner Tracey Orcutt of Seattle finished in an impressive 2:13:06 and placed 4th woman overall.

Women's 75-79 winner Sister Madonna Buder finished in 3:50:37 just six weeks after breaking her arm at Wildflower - 22:40 ahead of runner-up Molly Hayes of Tehachapi, California. Buder has now won 7 national titles and 12 world championships.

Men's 80-84 winner Charley French of Ketchum, Idaho, finished in an amazing 3:03:42, 1 hour and 15 minutes ahead of runner-up Robert McKeague of Villa Park, Illinois. In 2005, McKeague earned the distinction of being the oldest man to finish Ironman Hawaii - at age 80.

### **2007 USA Triathlon Age Group National Championship**

Henry Hagg Lake - Portland Oregon

June 20, 2007

S 1.5 k/ B 40k/ R 10k

## **Top 10 overall**

### **Women**

1. Jennifer Garrison (Naperville IL) 2:09:36
2. Bree Wee (Kailua Kona HI) 2:11:46
3. Stacey Richardson (Chapel Hill NC) 2:12:41
4. Tracy Orcutt (Seattle WA) 2:13:06
5. Leah Larson (Boulder CO) 2:13:21
6. Katie Ellis (Phoenix AZ) 2:13:30
7. Rachel Ross (Honolulu HI) 2:13:44
8. Cindi Bannink (Middleton WI) 2:13:44
9. Shannon Donley (Anchorage AK) 2:14:11
10. Mary Miller (Boulder CO) 2:15:00

### **Men**

1. Ben Collins (Lake Forest Park WA) 1:57:08
2. Jesse Thomas (Eugene OR) 1:57:25
3. Chuck Sloan (Oklahoma City OK) 1:57:34
4. Christopher Martin (Lawrenceville NJ) 1:57:36
5. Phillippe Kozub (Bethesda MD) 1:58:13
6. John Ryan (Louisville CO) 1:58:16
7. Brian Bich (Duluth MN) 1:58:48
8. Mark Harms (Madison WI) 1:58:54
9. Craig Greenslit (Berthoud CO) 1:58:56
10. JJ Bailey (Des Moines IA) 1:59:04

### **Age group winners**

#### **F - Up to 19**

1. Ashley Morgan (West Point NY) 2:23:43
2. Allyson Green (Bettendorf IA) 2:25:25

#### **M - Up to 19**

1. Shea Wilfong (Colorado Springs CO) 2:L02:39
2. Eric Lagerstrom (Gresham OR) 2:11:16

#### **F 20-24**

1. Leah Larson (Boulder CO) 2:13:23
2. Katie Ellis (Phoenix AZ) 2:13:30

#### **M 20-24**

1. Ben Collins (Lake Forest Park WA) 1:57:08
2. Daniel Agnew (Edmond OK) 2:00:05

