



## SPORTS

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# Australian wins area triathlon

Bennett can rest easy, winning finale by 21 seconds

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By **GREG TEPPER / The Dallas Morning News**  
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Greg Bennett admits that he wasn't exactly well-rested for Sunday.

"There was a lot of anxiety," Bennett said. "I probably didn't sleep for a week."

Nonetheless, Bennett surged to victory in the Toyota U.S. Open Triathlon Dallas, taking home the biggest purse in triathlon history.

The Life Time Fitness Triathlon Series, launched in 2006, boasted a high payout for its winners. The biggest prize was a \$300,000 Super Series Bonus awarded to anyone who could win all five of the Series' events.

Bennett did just that, taking home \$420,000 Sunday. He earned the \$300,000 Super Series Bonus, \$60,000 for winning the Dallas race and \$60,000 for winning the men's points title.

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"It's funny, because before the series started, everyone said that no one could have enough points to win the points title," the 35-year-old Australia native said. "Then after the first four races, we were all saying that nobody could win the \$300,000."

Finishing the 1,500-meter swim, 40-kilometer bike and 10-kilometer run in 1:44:41, Bennett pumped both fists in the air and hoisted the finish line tape at Reunion Arena in jubilation. He finished 21 seconds ahead of Filip Ospaly.

Bennett said he will use the money toward a house for him and his wife, tri-athlete and former SMU swimmer Laura Bennett, in Boulder, Colo. But his first purchase is more immediate.

"I'm probably going to throw a big party," Bennett said with a smile.

#### Olympics on mind of women's winner:

Sarah Haskins was thrilled to win the women's division of the Toyota U.S. Open Triathlon Dallas, but the 26-year-old St. Louis native now sets her sights on making the U.S. team for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"This is so different than the Olympics," Haskins said. "For one, you don't have to travel across the world. It's a

really different feel."

Haskins finished second among Americans at the World Cup triathlon in Beijing in September, putting her in position to qualify for the Olympic team with strong finishes at the next qualifying races in April and June.

"It's definitely a confidence builder for qualifying for Beijing," Haskins said.

### **Locals compete:**

The triathlon gave local runners like Ron Tribendis an opportunity to compete with the world's best professional tri-athletes.

Tribendis, a 29-year-old chiropractor in Plano, has been running triathlons for six years, and had high praise for the event.

"I've done Ironman competitions, and the organization here is as good as those," Tribendis said. "It's good for the area, good for the city of Dallas."

Tribendis finished near the front of the first pack of amateurs, and was thankful for the opportunity.

"It's pretty cool to see what you can do compared to the pros," Tribendis said.

### **Blind athlete sets record:**

Aaron Scheidies, who is blind, may have been the day's biggest winner, becoming the first disabled athlete to finish a triathlon in less than two hours.

"It's amazing," Scheidies said, still in disbelief. "This has been my goal for a long time, and I had to have a perfect race to do it."



REX C. CURRY / Special to DMN

Greg Bennett celebrates his victory in the Toyota U.S. Open Triathlon in Dallas.

It was the first time Scheidies has competed with partner Ben Collins. The duo was tethered during the swim, rode a custom-made tandem bike and ran the 10K side by side.

"This just puts a cap on my year," Collins said. "To come out here and help another athlete like this, it's just my way of giving back."

So what's next for Scheidies, now that his goal has been reached?

"We need to find the beer garden," Scheidies laughed.

### **Returning the favor:**

Australian Emma Snowsill enjoyed a large cheering section from Jimmie Tyler Brashear Elementary School in

Dallas, where the 26-year-old Aussie spoke on Sept. 26.

"She talked to the children about the importance of health," Deandra Whigham, the school's principal, said. "She taught them about the triathlon and everything that it takes to do it."

To thank Snowsill, 60 students and 25 teachers and administrators came out to support her, clad in red T-shirts and cheering loudly as Snowsill finished fourth, good enough to win the Toyota U.S. Open women's points championship.

"This is my first time in Texas, and to feel that you have your own set of fans is pretty fun and pretty unique," Snowsill said. "I usually only get that kind of support in Australia."