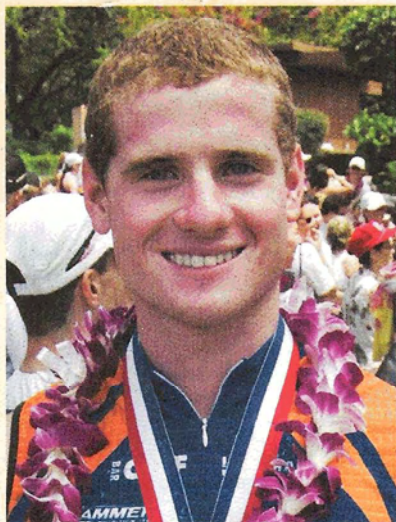


usat members

# IN THE NEWS



**BEN COLLINS:** What started out as a hobby has become a full-time pursuit for Ben Collins. And it hasn't taken long for the 21-

year-old to make a name for himself on the age group triathlon scene. In just his 10th triathlon and fourth at the Olympic distance, the Haleiwa, Hawaii resident grabbed a second-place overall finish and won the men's 20-24 category at the 2006 Age Group National Championships at Smithville Lake in July.

After opening his career with four events in 2005, Collins's 2006 season has been nothing but stellar, including a third overall at Lavaman in April and a first overall title at the Honolulu Triathlon age group race in May. He also tried his hand at the half-Ironman distance, winning his age group and finishing 24th overall at the Honu 70.3 in June.

A three-time All-Ivy League swimmer, who holds the Columbia University record in four events, Collins has his sights set on a World Championship in Lausanne and a good result in Kona later this year. Further down the

road, he is hoping to move to ITU-style events and to make a name for himself at the international level.

"I love competing," says Collins. "Most of all, however, what got me hooked on triathlon over any other sport I tried is that triathletes are a wonderful, caring, supportive, and fun group of people. Socializing with my peers before after and even during a race is a focal point to my memories of every triathlon I've done so far. I mean, where else do you see people waiting around the finish line for an 85 year old man to finish a race, nearly three hours after the leaders?"

In addition to training and racing, Collins works full time in robotics engineering. He also enjoys coaching a triathlon clinic for Team Jet Honolulu and taking advantage of all that his "tropical island playground" has to offer, including surfing, dirt bike riding, and kite boarding, and checking out Honolulu's concerts and festivals.