

INSIDE TRIATHLON

Chris Lieto Outduels Ben Collins for Nautica South Beach Elite Win

By: Timothy Carlson - IT senior correspondent



Riding across Miami's causeways and running past South Beach's art deco hotels, four-time Ironman champion Chris Lieto blazed past current Ironman world champion Chris McCormack and first-year pro Ben Collins on the bike to win the inaugural Nautica South Beach Triathlon Sunday. Lieto's 1:16:15 finishing time for the half-mile swim, 18.3-mile bike and four-mile run earned him the Nautica title by 45 seconds over runner-up Collins.

"The course was beautiful," said Lieto. "The bike went out through the bay and jumped from island to island, went over the causeway and took a loop downtown before coming back to South Beach. On the run, the people were out and partying. All in all, it was great to put myself in a race situation in such a great place early in the season."

Collins, the 2007 age group overall ITU world champion, blasted out of the warm azure Atlantic waters in 10:48, 22 seconds ahead of McCormack and 27 seconds ahead of Lieto. Renowned cyclist Lieto made quick work of Macca, passing the Ironman Hawaii champion at Mile 2, then took down Collins by Mile 7 of the scenic bike over Miami's gracefully curving white causeway, arriving at T2 a minute and a half ahead of the chasers.

On the run, Collins showed his decision to turn pro was no mistake setting fastest run against his two esteemed competitors with a race-best 21:21 for the four miles and a 1:17:00 finish. With plenty of time in hand after his sizzling bike, Lieto could well afford to hand back 25 seconds on the run and still hold on for the win. McCormack, still in early base training phase for his 2008 campaign, ran a 21:36 to come in third with an overall time of 1:18:57.

"Chris got a little revenge on me for October," joked McCormack. "He and Ben Collins just carved me up today. This was a nice race to get the cobwebs off to begin my racing season. But as it was, there was nothing I could do when Chris blew by me on the bike."

McCormack praised Nautica South Beach promoter Michael Epstein. "This event was really well received (it was sold out at 1,000 entries). Like his other races which

benefit great charities, making St. Jude Children's Research Hospital the beneficiary makes this race for a very good purpose. I think that's reason his races are so successful. I've felt my career to this point has always been selfish, all about myself. So now I like to support events I believe in. I'd like to become Macca the activist, supporting things for the sport and for other people, opposed to just winning races."

In a less hotly contested race, 2002 ITU world champion Leanda Cave of Great Britain cruised to the elite women's win in 1:27:17, 13 minutes ahead of elite women's runner-up Michelle Garner of Miami.

Equally dominant was the former star of ABC's *The Bachelor*, Navy Lt. Andy Baldwin who won the celebrity men's division by half an hour in 1:35:03. Coming in third in the division was celebrity chef Rocco DiSpirito, who finished in 2:05:36, just six seconds behind celebrity runner-up Mark Joyella. DiSpirito was unabashedly upbeat about his finish. "I saw Andy had his new one piece race suit, and mine was a two-piece," joked third-year triathlete DiSpirito. "And I didn't shave my legs, so that must have been the difference."

"Nautica put on a great race and it's going to grow to Nautica Malibu proportions or even greater," said Baldwin, a Navy physician with a strong age group triathlon record. Of the course, Baldwin said "The water was really beautiful and the run was very picturesque running two miles out and back in front of the Art Deco hotels." As for his race, Baldwin said he was satisfied with his performance despite being unable to train to his usual standards. "I had been on assignment for two months in the Pacific, working from a barge diving to recover military personnel lost in combat," he said. "But coming to South Beach and helping Nautica help raise money for the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital made it all worthwhile."

But perhaps the most creditable performance of the day was turned in by the celebrity women's team. Multiple Olympic swimmer Dara Torres turned in a 12:31 swim, model and pro triathlete Katya Meyers then finished the bike in 48:52 - 22.3 mph - actually faster than Cave's split. Then former tennis star Anna Kournikova, who throughout her career was the target of unmerciful media scorn because her celebrity beauty outmatched her tennis results, finished it off with a 28:59 time for the four-mile run. Kournikova's 7:15-per mile pace put her just five minutes back of world champion Cave, 56 seconds slower than Baldwin, and faster than elite runner-up Michelle Garner.

The celebrity women's relay also outpaced Baldwin - 1:32:25 to 1:35:03 - and finished just 8 minutes back of Cave.

Nautica South Beach Triathlon
Miami Beach, Florida
April 13, 2008
0.5mi S/18.2mi B/4mi R

Results

Elite male

1. Chris Lieto (Danville, CA) 1:16:15
2. Ben Collins (Lake Forest Park, WA) 1:17:00
3. Chris McCormack (AUS) 1:18:57

4. Marcus Ornellas (BRZ) 1:19:20
5. Miguel Tellez (Sunny Isles, FL) 1:25:58

Elite female

1. Leanda Cave (GBR) 1:27:17
2. Michelle Garner (Miami, FL) 1:40:09
3. Kassianna Rosso (Miami, FL) 1:41:14

Celebrity Male

1. Andy Baldwin (Honolulu, HI) 1:35:03
2. Mark Joyella 2:05:30
3. Rocco DiSpirito (New York, NY) 2:05:36

Celebrity Relay

Female

Swim - Dara Torres 12:31.2
Bike - Katja Meyers 48:52.8
Run - Anna Kournikova 28:59.5
Total: 1:32:25

Male

Swim - Anthony Cistaro 13:38.2
Bike - Eric Etebari 1:15.8
Run - David Chokachi 38:43
Total: 1:54:44

Overall age group

Women

1. Amy Plotkin (Miami, FL) 1:40:49
2. Sandra Forero (North Miami Beach, FL) 1:41:29
3. Nadine Crane (Shirley, NY) 1:43:07

Men

1. Chris Davy (Parkland, FL) 1:29:42
2. Wes Smith (Miami Beach, FL) 1:29:58
3. Rafael Reig (Aventura, FL) 1:30:31