

TRIATHLON MANIOTBA YOUTH TEAM PROGRAM

Triathlon Manitoba Youth Team Yearly Update 2008/09

Starting in August 2008, the Head Coach, Dave Lipchen, and the parents of the Triathlon Manitoba Youth Team started the process of building a position profile for a full-time Head Coach for the Triathlon Manitoba Youth Team Program. In November 2008, a peer-selected parent committee along with the Head Coach presented the new position to the board of Triathlon Manitoba. This was accepted with full support by the board. The new position and program started in early December, 2008.

In three weeks the Head Coach along with coaches of the Dolphins swim team in Selkirk and the Provincial Rowing team put together the 1st annual multi-sport Christmas training camp from December 29 -30, 2008.

The number of athletes at the end of the Winter Session had reached 30+. This is the largest number of youth athletes to date starting into the summer portion of the program. As such, the team had a strong Tour de France presence when training at Birdshill Park.

The Race Season started with a Team trip to Thief River Falls where the team's 21 athletes represented more than 25% of the attendance at the race. Owing to this, the Race Director expanded the age categories to allow all members of the team to compete. The team was outfitted with their uniforms, illustrating a coherent and well-organized youth program in Manitoba.

By mid-Summer, the team had grown to 45 athletes, attending between 1-5 workouts per week and dependent on each athlete's schedule. Four assistant coaches aided in providing expertise in swim training (Chris Graham, Chelsea Wardrope) and management of the different training plans within the team (Rachel Tessier, Richelle Ready). The groups are KOS (ages 10-12), MAN/SASK (ages 12-15) and Sprint (ages 16-18). Each group is emailed a specific training plan, in which distances are based on abilities.

The KOS team had many breakthroughs, from swimming in open water with no assistance to outright winning their age categories in the races. Many of the KOS athletes were in their first year with the Youth team and by the end of summer were very strong triathletes that could compete with older age groups with ease.

Duck Mountain, Saskatchewan was the venue of the MAN/SASK Championships, which is one of the Youth Team's goal races of the year. In our last practice prior to leaving for the race, we had a great team-building game of water football that the MNTC took part in. The team was highly successful at the race, and 2009 was our first time successfully defending our title of Markham Cup Champions. Both Manitoba and Saskatchewan had the largest teams competing to date (Manitoba: 17 athletes; Saskatchewan: 24 athletes).

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Our Sprint Team also had a great competitive year. The team dominated the age group standings in all of our provincial races. In Saskatchewan, our team went head to head with their Canada Games Team and a Manitoba athlete placed 3rd overall, ahead of one of their team members. Many of the Sprint athletes and some of the MAN/SASK athletes traveled to the Canadian National Championships in Kelowna, BC to compete in the age group Sprint Race. Four athletes on the team medaled and one went 2nd overall.

The summer ended with a wind-up race in Birdshill Park followed by a team party with the athletes, parents, and coaches of the Youth Team at the Head Coach's house, followed by a wild water balloon fight.

To top off the achievements of the Youth Team, ten athletes were approached by the MNTC Head Coach, Gary Pallet, to attend an information session. Six of these athletes were selected to start training with the MNTC in preparation for the Canada Games in 2013. Overall, this was a very successful year for the athletes of the Youth Team and the new program exceeded the expectations of all participants.

Future goals of the Youth Team are to expand the team to over 50 athletes by summer 2010. The Head Coach is currently planning the second Christmas training camp with athletes from Saskatchewan, allowing both teams to train together prior to competing for the Markham Cup. We also are excited to announce the comeback of the Lac Du Bonnet Triathlon Race in 2010, which the Youth Team will be hosting as part of the Grand Prix Series.

Special thanks to our 2009 sponsors: Triathlon Manitoba, Bikes and Beyond, Taking Charge Of Change, and the Tribalistic Triathlon Team. Each provided financial support for purchasing team cycling jerseys. Also thanks to all parents of the team for their overwhelming support and commitment. Direction from the Triathlon Manitoba board members was invaluable in the making the expansion of the program and team a success.

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