

SPORTS

Second Backus Rainy Lake Triathlon set for Aug. 17

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The second annual Backus Rainy Lake Triathlon is set for Aug. 17 at City Beach, where registration will open at 8 a.m. with the start time set for 9 a.m.

Entrants will swim a quarter mile on Rainy Lake, bike 11 miles from City Beach to Jackfish Bay and back and then run 5 kilometers, starting and ending at City Beach on County Road 20.

The triathlon is open to ages 13 and up. Participants may enter as an individual, team of two or team of three.

Registration fees by Aug. 9 are \$50 per person, \$95 per team of two and \$120 per team of three. The early registration includes a T-shirt and a picnic lunch on the day of the triathlon.

After Aug. 9, the fees increase to \$60, \$110 and \$145, respectively. There will be no T-shirts for late registrations.

Triathlon organizer Ken Krueger said medals will be awarded to the top-three finishers in each category, which includes males and females in six age groups and on a relay team.

In addition, he said those entering the triathlon will also be eligible to win prize drawings, which include overnight stays at resorts, an aerial sightseeing tour and other prizes.

Krueger said another change for this year's tri-



From left, Molly Skifstad of Chisholm and Jen Erickson of International Falls approach the finish together as they complete the 5-kilometer run in last year's Backus Rainy Lake Triathlon at City Beach. They both finished in 1 hour, 20 minutes, 11 seconds.

athlon will be the use of timing chips. He noted the triathlon plans call for two groups of swimmers to leave at separate intervals with the chips being able to record the actual time from the start to the finish.

Last year's triathlon included 29 females, 16 males, one team of two and six teams of three. "Team Voyageurs" comprised of James Hummel, Steve Ma-

zur and Greg Drum had the top time of 55 minutes, 38 seconds. Jason Kabel of Fort Frances was the top male in 1:03:10, while Jenna Anderson of International Falls had the top female time of 1:12:16.

Registration forms for this year's triathlon are available at Backus Community Center or may be accessed online at www.rainylakeraces.com or



Levi Lucy came out of the water first in one group of swimmers finishing a quarter-mile swim in last year's Backus Rainy Lake Triathlon. Lucy was part of the three-person team with Ian Ducharme and Marco Griffith that placed second in 59 minutes, 32 seconds.

www.backusab.org.

Completed registration forms and fees may be sent to: Backus Community Center, 900 Fifth St., International Falls, MN 56649; or e-mail: hoasobczynski@backusab.org.

For more information, call Backus at 285-7225.



FILE PHOTOS

Steve Mazur of "Team Voyageurs" is shown finishing the 11-mile bike route in last year's Backus Rainy Lake Triathlon. Team Voyageurs had the top overall and three-person time of 55 minutes, 38 seconds.

Ponder still under pressure, beginning season three

MANKATO (AP) — The scrutiny Christian Ponder endured last season could pale next to what he'll encounter this year as Minnesota's quarterback.

Ponder improved statistically from his rookie season, and the Vikings won seven more games to make the playoffs. But those developments didn't quiet the questions about whether the former first-round draft pick fits the franchise's plans.

"I have more confidence," Ponder said. "It comes with experience. Last year, we were a playoff team. That gave everybody confidence."

The third year of Ponder's career will determine whether he's the answer or not. With Adrian Peterson



Christian Ponder

coming off a 2,000-yard rushing season, an offensive line intact from the year before and upgraded group of receivers, Ponder should

have more support than he did last season.

There is clearly plenty of pressure on him, particularly with Peterson in his prime at one of the game's most punishing positions and several defensive starters in the final year of their contracts. But Ponder brushed off the subject the way the Vikings want him to evade pass rushers this season.

"Well, you can say that about any quarterback in the league," Ponder said. "I think quarterback kind of dictates what the success of the team is going to be, and I'm not putting more pressure on myself. It's already a high-pressure job. This year is no different than any other year. My approach is the same."

Last season, Ponder improved his completion percentage from 54.3 to 62.1. He threw 18 touchdown passes and had 12 interceptions after totaling 13 of each as a rookie. His quarterback rating rose from 70.1 to 81.2.

But the Vikings still ranked next to last in the league with 171.9 yards passing per game while the offense was fueled by

Peterson's historic season. Hence the persistent skepticism about whether Ponder will be a long-term starter in the NFL.

"It's tough to be in that position because there's so much spotlight and pressure," said tight end Kyle Rudolph, who has developed a close friendship with Ponder. "It's not fair to single him out. There's a lot of moving parts with this team, and we all have to do our part for this offense and team to be successful."

Ponder, who missed the playoff game because of an elbow injury, helped the Vikings finish the season with four straight wins.

Over the first four games and the last four, the Vikings went 7-1. Ponder completed

64.9 percent of his passes with eight touchdowns and only one interception in that stretch. But in the middle eight games of the season, the Vikings were 3-5. Ponder's completion percentage was 59.8 with 10 touchdowns and 11 interceptions. In two of those games, he failed to pass for more than 65 yards. In four of those games, he threw two interceptions.

This offseason, the Vikings upgraded the backup spot by signing Matt Cassel as insurance against Ponder's struggles.

"I want to be the guy with the ball in my hand and a chance to win the game," Ponder said, adding: "The biggest thing is my decision-making. I want to play smart football."

During training camp so far, Ponder has done little so far to quash concerns. On one play, he'll zip a pass down the middle as a receiver breaks clear. On another, he'll sail a short throw well over the targeted out route. Most of his passes in team drills still travel less than 10 yards downfield, as the Vikings experiment with their playbook.

Wide receiver Jerome Simpson said it's not fair to place all of the burden on the quarterback. Simpson said Ponder seems more confident in his ability this summer.

"It's not a one-man team," Simpson said. "We all have to pull our weight and help him out."

Dancin' with Darcie

Late registration for 2013-2014 dance.

Tuesday, August 13th & Wednesday, August 14th 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Dance Studio - Room 112 Backus Community Center, 900 5th St.

- Dance lessons begin September 9
- There will be a one time registration fee of \$25 (non-refundable).
- First half dance tuition is \$115 for 45 min. class. \$125 for 1 hour class, \$155 for 1.5 hour class, Performing lines \$160 for 1.5 hour class. Second half of tuition due in November.
- Costume deposit due at time of registration.
- All shoes to be purchased from dance teacher in August prior to start with pickup on Tuesday, August 27, 5-6 p.m.
- Dance supplies available ... shoes, tights, leotards, used shoes, etc.

Call Darcie with questions 218-286-3581 or 952-913-1651

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