

# Thinking Triathlon at 80!

Jim Wightman

I think back to my pre-teen years and classify myself as a 'Sports Misfit'. I would learn years later that directions like "You, go long" in football and "You, play right field" in softball were signals that I was definitely deficient in the sports arena. So while my chemistry faculty colleagues were playing racket ball and tennis and softball, I relegated myself to staying among the test tubes. My older son, Bill Wightman at 39 years of age competed in his first ironman triathlon in 2000. We traveled 800 miles to Panama City FL to see him swim: 3 miles in the Gulf of Mexico; bike: 125 miles; and run: 26 miles in 13 hours. I convinced myself that the human body was not designed to take such punishment.

Why I went to see him and my younger daughter, Sharon, compete in a sprint triathlon 8 years later in Yorktown is still a mystery. A sprint triathlon is not near as daunting as an ironman triathlon (1/2 mi swim / 12 mi bike ride / 3 mi run). This time I noticed some older folk among the participants. Could I compete in such a race? HmMMMM?

I started training in the Weight Club in Blacksburg and swimming in the Tech pool in the winter 2009. Biking and running were done in Gloucester VA in the summer. In September at age 74, I completed my first sprint triathlon at Lake Anna VA. I did finish the race and I was FIRST in my age group [the fact that I was the only one in that group aside].

BUT, I was the OLDEST of all 600 participants!

In September 2013, I completed my 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive triathlon at Lake Anna with the same result – oldest participant in the race. I began training for my 6<sup>th</sup> triathlon in February 2014. However, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer in April. My radiation oncologist said I could do the race but I should expect slower times. I said, "Doc, I'm not worried about my times, I just want to finish the race." I decided to forego the triathlon this past September held at Claytor Lake.

After completion of a hormone-radiation treatment in October, I began training [swimming and exercise] in February for my 6<sup>th</sup> triathlon to be held at Claytor Lake on Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. I hope you'll consider registering for the race, and we'll see each other at the finish line.

PS: I'll be 80 in mid-May.

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