

Ironman veterans win inaugural Lake Tahoe event

An Australian and a Swede won the inaugural Ironman Lake Tahoe on Sunday.

Chris McDonald earned his sixth Ironman crown with a finish time of 8:55:14, while Asa Lundstrom earned her second title with a time of 9:58:53. Both the men's and women's pro races were not determined until late in the race.

While the day started in the dark and finished in the dark for some, it wasn't snowing or raining like the day before. The route did impact motorists, with it taking some people three hours to get from Zephyr Cove to Truckee because of road closures and congestion.



Cyclists pedal hard during the inaugural Lake Tahoe Ironman on Sept. 22.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

In the men's race, emerging out of the settled mist on Lake Tahoe, Romain Guillaume (FRA), Joe Gambles (AUS), Paul Ambrose (AUS), Maik Twelsiek (GER) and Matt Lieto (USA) came out of the water within 13 seconds of each other.

On the bike, Twelsiek took control of the men's race as he

forged his way to the lead late in the first half of the bike. Gambles appeared content to shadow Twelsiek until McDonald (AUS) and Guillaume forced the pace. Coming into transition, Twelsiek carried a tentative 1:30 advantage over McDonald, while Gambles slipped to well over six minutes off the leaders pace over the late miles of the bike.

Hitting the run, Twelsiek looked strong and held the lead throughout the first 13 miles, however the German succumbed to McDonald's relentless pressure from behind just before mile 14. Twelsiek hung on to second with his 8:57:53 clocking, while Gambles finished third with his 9:02:55 clocking.

In the women's race, veteran Dede Griesbauer (USA) celebrated her 42nd birthday by dominating the swim and carried a 4:50 advantage over Catriona Morrison (GBR) and over six minutes on Angela Naeth (CAN), Jeanne Collonge (FRA), and Lundstrom (SWE).

Griesbauer relinquished the lead to Lundstrom after 25 miles, with Morrison, Naeth and Collonge biking strong and closing the gap to the front of the race. The field jockeyed for position behind Lundstrom throughout the remainder of the race but it was Lundstrom who dismounted her bike first, with Collonge following her into T2 a half minute back, while Naeth found herself coming off the bike in third in her first Ironman, 4:12 off the leaders pace.

Lundstrom initially built up over a two minute advantage over Collonge in this first three miles but the lead didn't last long as Collonge ran her way into the lead at five miles. The battle between the two waged on for the remainder of the run that saw Collonge's lead expand at one point to over two minutes. Lundstrom's perseverance proved to be her asset as she clawed her way back to the front of the race, and had eliminated all but 20 seconds as the women's race reached 24 miles. Collonge surrendered the lead to Lundstrom in the final mile of the run, and went on to claim the victory. Coming into

the finish line chute in second, Collonge finished with a 9:59:43 time, just 51 seconds short of the win. Closing the podium was Morrison with her 10:03:38 finish time.

The race included a two-loop, 2.4-mile swim in Lake Tahoe at King's Beach. Athletes went through a lakeside transition before starting a two-loop 112-mile bike course that traveled along the lake into Tahoe City before following the Truckee River past Squaw Valley and into the town of Truckee. From there, the course turned south back toward Lake Tahoe, had a short loop in Martis Camp, continued past Northstar and climbed to Brockway Summit. After a descent back down to Kings Beach, athletes completed a second loop, and then a final, flat 17 miles to finish the bike course at Squaw Valley. With a transition at Squaw, runners proceeded along the Truckee River bike path into Tahoe City, and continued south along the shores of Lake Tahoe to a turnaround in Homewood and finishing at the Village at Squaw Valley.

The event offered a total professional prize purse of \$75,000 and 50 coveted slots to the 2014 Ironman World Championship, taking place on Oct. 11 in Hawaii.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report