

Lowrey attains national title

By Tim McGovern

Triathlons come in three grueling parts, a swim, followed by a bike ride, and polished off with a run without a rest in between.

As a member of the Chaska High School swim and track teams, Katharine Lowrey is at home in the water and on her feet.

But the triathlon veteran still is learning the two-wheel skills.

"I don't really have a favorite," Lowrey said of the triathlon legs. "Biking is probably my third-best, but I'm learning as I go along."

The triathlon world had better watch out, because Lowrey is well on her way.

Lowrey won a national title at the USA Triathlon National Junior Olympic Festival in Colorado Springs on Saturday, winning the girls' Youth Elite race.

At 14 years old and a member of the Chaska High School swim and track teams, Lowrey is already a grizzled veteran of triathlons, having competed in them since she was eight.

"It's grueling, but a lot of fun," she said.

The field in Colorado Springs was a mix of triathletes and single-sport enthusiasts.

"Some are cyclists and some are on swim teams, like me," Lowrey said. "A lot of them run track, so they're in the same situation I'm in."

Lowrey said that running with the Hawk track team is a great kickoff to the summer slate of triathlons. Lowrey said she swims, bikes and runs in six or seven triathlons in a summer.

"I really like having track right before the triathlon season starts," Lowrey said. "Then, you're really in shape for the run part, which is usually the hardest."

Close race

The run is what lifted Lowrey to the national title, as she outkicked her closest competitor, Hannah Rae Finchamp of Altadena, Calif., by just seven seconds to finish in 35 minutes, 36.6 seconds. Jenny Brown of Waukee, Iowa took third place in the 36-competitor event, which featured a 375-meter swim, a 10K bike ride and a 2.5K run course.

Lowrey said she and Fin-

champ have had close races all season, and Saturday's race was no different.

Lowrey took a big lead over Finchamp after the 375-meter swim, which is a bit shorter than the 500-meter races Lowrey swims in high school meets.

"It's grueling, but it's fun," Lowrey said.

Lowrey definitely has the swim technique locked in, as she swims year-round with her club, West Express. Lowrey just finished the club season at the state meet a few weeks ago.

The swim portion of triathlons is often in a lake, or as Lowrey points out, sometimes in the ocean. The close competition is often more treacherous than the water.

"It was gang start; just a pack of girls running into the water," Lowrey said. "Everybody gets kicked and smacked around. Everyone's goal is to get out of the pack."

Racing a bicycle requires very specific skills, which Lowrey admits are works in progress. Finchamp made up 41 seconds on Lowrey's lead after the bike race.

"I just have to learn how to get the right technique and get

it exactly right to get extremely good," Lowrey said.

Lowrey had a seven-second lead going into the run. After the swim and bike ride, a triathlete's legs are a bit wobbly at the start of the run.

"You feel the burn on the bike, then you get off and your legs feel like Jell-O," she said. "It just makes it all the better when you cross the finish line and think, 'I did it and I'm done.'"

And she did it, holding off Finchamp at the finish to break the tape as a national champion.

As usual, Lowrey will not sit still for long. Official practices begin next week for fall sports, and Lowrey will be in the pool with the new Storm Hawk cooperative team.

As a new national champion in a three-discipline sport, Lowrey has some options for her athletic paths. But for now, all three work for her.

Better yet, all three at once.

"I really like track and I really like swimming, but I also really like triathlons," Lowrey said. "Hopefully, I can keep going and do whichever one turns out better or what I like the most."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Chaska's Katharine Lowrey won a national triathlon title with a first-place finish Saturday at the USA Triathlon National Junior Olympic Festival in Colorado Springs, Colo.