

DUATHLON

'YOU'RE COMPETING AGAINST THE WORLD'*Forestview teacher preps for the World Duathlon*BY COREY FRIEDMAN cfriedman@gastongazette.com

If he couldn't race on two feet, Patrick Strothmann would try two wheels.

While training for a marathon in 2003, Strothmann tore the cartilage in his knee and later had surgery to repair the rip.

"The doctors told me I couldn't run as much, so I bought a bike," he said. "It's kind of a sad story, but at the same time, things happen for a reason."

After his knee healed, the Forestview High School teacher, swim coach and track coach began competing in triathlons and duathlons. This April, he placed ninth in his age group in the USA Triathlon-sanctioned Duathlon National Championships in Richmond, Va. The top-10 finish qualified him to participate in the World Duathlon Championships in Rimini, Italy, this September.

"I really enjoy competing, and this is a chance to see the world and not just compete against people locally — you do that your whole life. But here, you're competing against the world," he said.

The duathlon consists of a 10-kilometer run, 40K bike race and 5K run to the finish line.

Strothmann competes locally as part of the Studio 7 Multisports team. He has competed in triathlons in the Carolinas, Ohio and Virginia and has placed in the top 10 every time.

He hopes to bring his wife, Kari, to Italy for the duathlon. Friends have planned a kids' swimathon to raise money for the couple's transportation and lodging. They hope to get between \$6,000 and \$8,000 from the event.

Children and teens will collect pledges and swim continuously for varying amounts of time during the four-hour swimathon, which will also feature a raffle, silent auction, live music and food and drinks.

"He's so influential in the community and highly thought of that it's been very easy" to raise money, said organizer Greg Swaim. "Everyone is really excited for him. People have jumped in with \$5 here and \$10 there. A number of local businesses have donated gift certificates, and they're going to be placed in a silent auction that evening."

The swimathon is scheduled from 4 to 8 p.m. July 17 at Southampton Racquet and Swim Club on Kendrick Road.

"It's all aligned around the children that he's coached in the past and he's coaching presently," Swaim said. "It's a family event."

Strothmann competed in cross-country and indoor and outdoor track while studying at the University of North Carolina Charlotte. Now a full-time teacher and coach, he said time constraints make it difficult to train for a worldclass competitive event.

"It's tough to find the time, but my New Year's resolution was to get focused and regroup and make another run at this, so that's what I've been doing," he said.

Having his wife by his side during the duathlon's an imperative for Strothmann. Before the cartilage in his knee had healed, he ran a marathon with one wobbly leg so he could propose to Kari at the finish line.

"It was very monumental," said Kari Strothmann. "It caught me off guard. He said he would get down on one knee, but that knee hurt too bad."



Photos by Mike Hensdill/The Gazette

Forestview High School track coach Patrick Strothmann is trying to raise money to compete in the World Duathlon Championships this summer in Italy. Above, he flies down Kendrick Road on his bike. Below, he does his road work along the same stretch of south Gastonia.





Want to help?

- Swimathon for Patrick Strothmann, world duathlon competitor
- 4 to 8 p.m. July 17
- Southampton Racquet and Swim Club, Gastonia
- Raffle, silent auction, food and drinks
- For more information, call Gene Barzach at Southampton, 704-867-8081