

North River **PEOPLE****Rock/Creek racer takes triathlon title**

BY KATY MENA

COMMUNITY NEWS ASSISTANT EDITOR

He has met many challenges in his relatively short life. Beating a grave illness, maintaining an enviable GPA and keeping a great attitude along the way are just a few of the things that make Josh Wheeler so fantastic.

Now he's had to go and throw yet another piece of excellence into the mix.

Winning the 18 to 24 age division in the Ford Ironman 70.3 Florida Triathlon, the triathlon enthusiast proved his prowess in the physical challenges of running, swimming and cycling all in a 4:30:44 time frame.

"It was a very hard race," said Mr. Wheeler, who was enthusiastic despite what he knew would be a draining performance. "I went into it knowing I was going to go all out for four hours."

Go all out Mr. Wheeler did from the time he set out for Florida until he crossed that final finish line.

Rising above the incredible heat and humidity that came courtesy of the sunny Florida day, he cared for himself while challenging his body to the limits.

"There were definitely parts of the race I wanted to drop out myself," said Mr. Wheeler, who at one point passed a champion from a previous race who had thrown in the towel in the face of scorching weather.

Having studied and trained for months leading up to the Florida race, Mr. Wheeler refused to give into the undesirable weather.

"When I wasn't training I was studying, and when I wasn't studying I was training," said the Appalachian State student, who managed to polish off the school year in winning form as well.

Having grown up around the mountains and rivers of the Tennessee Valley as the son of Rock/Creek Outfitters owner Dawson Wheeler, it should come as no surprise that Josh has been so successful in his outdoor pursuits. Facing constant tests along the way, he has risen to the oc-



Rock/Creek racer Josh Wheeler won his division at the Ford Ironman.

casation time and again, making those who know him exceedingly proud.

"(I'm) beyond inspired," said Dawson Wheeler, in awe of his son's strength. "Josh has taken some adversity... and focused in on triathlons and marathons and half marathons and at this point put himself as one of the elite racers at an amateur level in the Southeast. It's inspiring."

With plans to compete in the November Foster Grant Ironman World Championship 70.3 in Clearwater, Fla., Josh Wheeler is prepared to motivate both himself and others with another performance.

"That's what all my races from here on out are geared towards," said Mr. Wheeler, ready to succeed every step of the way.

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Above: Josh Wheeler, left, enjoys the rewards of cooling off in the Florida surf. **Right:** Josh Wheeler performs at the Ford Ironman 70.3 Florida Triathlon.



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North River NEWS

Rock/Creek and Patagonia announce \$3,100 grant for Lula Lake Land Trust

STAFF REPORT

Chattanooga-based outdoor retailer Rock/Creek, along with apparel and equipment manufacturer Patagonia, announce the latest in a series of grants for conservation projects carried out on Lookout Mountain by the Lula Lake Land Trust.

In a continued commitment to provide local, low impact access to the outdoors, Rock/Creek, in conjunction with Patagonia, announces a \$3,100 donation to the Lula Lake Land Trust. The grant money awarded supports a growing trail network aimed at linking the Land Trust's protected land with Cloudland Canyon State Park.

"The Lula Lake Land Trust is fortunate to work with Patagonia and Rock/Creek because of the dedication shown by these two businesses to this organization," said Adelaide Bratcher, development head for the Lula Lake Land Trust. "Without the help of Patagonia and Rock/Creek, new trails, accessibility to the public, and events like this upcoming trail run would be impossible. We at Lula Lake cannot thank Patagonia and Rock/Creek enough."

Patagonia have donated \$9,225 to the Lula Lake Land Trust's efforts. The most recent donation goes to the development of the High Point trail. On Dec. 20 the newly created High Point trail will be the venue for Chattanooga's longest trail run. The inaugural run of the historic Lookout Mountain 100k trail race will be presented by Rock/Creek and Vasque, and will benefit The Wilderness Trail Running Association (The Boonies). In addition to the 100k main event, the day will also feature a 10K race for those interested in participating in a shorter run. More information about the Lookout Mountain 100k Trail Race can be found on the event website: <http://www.rockcreek.com/lookout/>

"Lula Lake Land Trust has a long history of land conservation on Lookout Mountain," said Dawson Wheeler, co-owner of Rock/Creek. "We're proud to be involved with their visionary project linking the front of Lookout with Cloudland Canyon. This corridor links two key wilderness areas and opens access for hiking, trail running, and other low-impact uses." Grant awards are not the

only method by which Rock/Creek supports the Lula Lake Land Trust. Rock/Creek further assists the non-profit organization by working directly on the trail system. Members from The Boonies and Rock/Creek employees take weekly trail building trips to the area. Once completed, the High Point and Cloudland Canyon Connector trails will open up 1,000 acres of pristine public land to low impact recreational uses. The protected area is in the heart of the ancient Appalachian mountains and encompasses one of America's most diverse ecosystems. Users of the trail will be able to experience a unique system of flora and fauna.

Lula Lake Land Trust was established in 1994 by the will of Mr. Robert M. Davenport. Since the Trust's inception, it has focused on preserving the natural beauty of the rock creek watershed through education, research and conservation. The trust protects species such as the threatened Virginia Spiraea, a flowering shrub that is classified in the rose family. Virginia Spiraea was previously known to exist in only one other area of North Georgia.



Junior Olympic hopeful

Jordan Mauney executes an inward one-and-a-half pike off the 3-meter board at the East Junior Olympic Spring Nationals in Rockville, Md. Jordan is a member of the Baylor Diving Club and is training for the regional Junior Olympic Summer Nationals competition in Moultrie, Ga.

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Olympic action comes to Red Bank

Olympic boxers from the Dominican Republic Roberto Navarro, Felix Manuel Diaz, Juan Carlos Payano and Wiston Mendez, from left, practice throwing punches at Henry Luken Arena in Red Bank. The men will be boxing in the 2008 Olympics in China. See story on page 12.

PHOTO BY KATIE WARD



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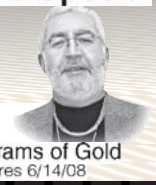


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