



July 12, 2009

Maine accountant takes men's crown

Professional triathlete uses Endurathon as tuneup for a full Ironman later this month.

By *IVY FARGUHESON*

MUNCIE -- Professional triathlete Mike Caiazzo had never won a half-Ironman race before coming to Muncie on Friday, but that all changed when he left town Saturday afternoon.

The 32-year-old hedge funds accountant from Westbrook, Maine, swam, biked and ran his way through heavy rains Saturday morning to win the 30th annual Muncie Endurathon in 4:01:22, his first victory in a 70.3-mile triathlon.

The 1.2-mile swim was rather smooth for most of the 1,150 participants in the event held at Prairie Creek Reservoir. But before 10 a.m., while Caiazzo was ending his 56-mile bike segment and beginning his 13.1-mile run, the rain that was predicted to hit the area finally did.

The leader wasn't phased a bit.

"The rain helped because I was afraid that it was going to be very humid," he said.

"I've never run (this race), but I heard good things about it ... so I decided to come out and see what it's about. It's a good race."

Caiazzo's running career began in high school but he truly enjoyed the racing life while an undergraduate student at Duke University. By 2002, he began competing in triathlons and he hasn't looked back since then.

Not considered a strong swimmer by his own admission, Caiazzo was in the top five when transitioning between the swimming and biking segments of the race.

He was happy with his placement at that time, given his strong biking and running skills, and believed he could win the race early along the 56-mile bike course.

"I have two little kids at home, so I don't actually train very much, maybe ten hours a week," he said. "I work a lot, too, so I guess I just get lucky."

A member of U.S. Pro Tri, an American professional triathlon team, Caiazzo's professional hobby has been rather successful as of late. Last month he finished ninth in the Rev3 half-Ironman race in Connecticut and fourth in the Eagleman half-Ironman in Maryland.

Caiazzo finished eight minutes ahead of U.S. Pro teammate Ryan Bates of Copley, Ohio, who completed the race in 4:09:13. Muncie native Luke Beasley was the third man to cross the finish line with a time of 4:10:57.

His win on Saturday also gives him added confidence for his next race, the Lake Placid Ironman on July 26.

For the next two weeks, Caiazzo will continue his tapering schedule before he travels to New York for one of his biggest races this year. But he'll also relish his time in Muncie where he became a first-time champion.

"My team is based in the Midwest and I had definitely heard about this race before," Caiazzo said. "This was a good warm-up for me. I got a little speed work in, too, so we'll see how it goes (in New York)."