

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Cyclists Prepare For Final Iron Man 70.3

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FORT CHRISTIANVAERN, CROIX -- After decades of bringing the U.S. Virgin Islands thrilling cycling experiences, the final Iron Man 70.3, set to begin here in moments (6:30 a.m.), comes to an end with today's race. Above, cyclists prepare for the competition.

The competition, which sees hundreds of cyclists descending on Fort Christianvaern, begins with a 1.2-mile (1.9 km) swim, a 56-mile (90 km) bike ride, and a 13.1-mile (21.1 km) run — covering locations on the east, west, north and south sides of the island. There are relay and sprint races as well.

Cyclist Ben Williams from Texas, participating in the race for the first time, said he's here to have fun, and has been enjoying the experience so far. "This is my first time so I'm

here to have fun and be part of the event," Mr. Williams, who stayed on St. John for a week before coming here, said. He spoke of positive energy among cyclists, and the hospitality of locals -- all of which have made the experience eventful and exciting, he said.

The winner of the 2015 male competition was Matt Chrabot, then 32, from Colorado Springs. Mr. Chrabot was visiting St. Croix for the second time; he won the sprint competition in 2005, and said he came back for the island's hospitality and because he's very good at racing in the sun.

"Coming from winter and snow in Colorado, you kind of have to prepare yourself somehow," he said.

Mr. Chrabot received \$10,000 for his victory, stating back then that he would be paying bills with the funds -- including a mortgage on a home he'd purchased.

The 2015 female first-place medalist, seemingly effortlessly running to the finish line, said the race was anything but easy.

"The race was challenging, and it was really different than any other race that I've done, so you've got to pace yourself," Lauren Goss of Boulder, Colorado said, adding, "I felt pretty slow on the bike and pretty slow on the run, but I just didn't die. It's survival on this course."

Ms. Goss, 27, said it was her second time winning a 70.3 race having competed in about 8. The champion also revealed that she'd been on a losing streak all 2015, so the St. Croix win meant a lot.

Cyclists are currently swimming to Hotel on the Cay, where they are to swim back, hop on their bikes and race the course.

We'll have videos and pictures later today, and a story on Monday morning