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TRI CLUB: 7OAKS TRI CLUB

7 Oaks Tri Club has plenty to scream about. Not only is it a fun and friendly club which offers plenty of swim, bike and run training for its 130 members, but it also has two quality races each year. The sprint events which take place in April and September are the main stay of the club but are open for anybody to enter. In fact, the races are so popular they recently won an award for the best event with under 500 entrants.

HISTORY

The club was formed in the mid 1980s by Robin Merchant and Rob Searle in conjunction with the 7Oaks triathlon event. The club and the race have both steadily evolved since. A dedicated committee was formed and this remains one of the club's greatest strengths today. A large number of members are actively involved in working with both the club and the race and this has created a great community.

THE CLUB TODAY

Based in Sevenoaks, Kent, the club attracts members from the surrounding areas and is affiliated to the British Triathlon Federation and Triathlon England. There's a healthy mix of members, both male and female of all abilities, from complete newbies through

to seasoned triathletes. All ages are involved, the youngest just 12 and the oldest in their 70s. Whether it's surviving a first triathlon, stepping up to middle distance, qualifying for the GB Age Group team or completing Ironman, the club has it covered.

7Oaks prides itself on recognising and celebrating the success and efforts of all of its members, not just the high achievers. For those lucky enough to have qualified, the club has received a bursary to help with costs towards travel to world championship races. Collectively, the most successful group of the club are the women's 50-54 age group with three ladies who regularly stand on the podium and qualify to represent their country.

TRAINING AND FACILITIES

When it comes to training there's plenty on offer. There are four coached pool sessions and a professional swim coach to offer advice. All swim sessions are emailed to members, so they know what to expect or can do them on their own if they can't make it. From May to September the club also has one outdoor swim session per week at Haysden Lake.

When it comes to cycling, there are three or four rides each weekend. These cater for all abilities and cover a multitude of distances. There is also a coached fortnightly turbo session for members to sweat



it out. The club has a resident cycle coach on hand who helps with cycling drills and handling techniques. A run track session, where the club teams up with Sevenoaks Athletics Club, coupled with informal run groups, ensures 7Oakers don't neglect their third sport.

THE RACE

Each year 7Oaks Tri hold two successful sprint distance races. These involve a 400m pool swim, a hilly 25km bike and an 8km run. The undulating run takes place in scenic Knole Park known for its deer population.

The club prides itself on giving value for money and provides racers with one of the best goodie bags on the circuit, along with a quality finisher's medal, both of which the hardworking marshals receive too. The races sell out quickly so signing up early is advisable.

All races numbers have names printed on the front to help cheer entrants along and each number is also put into a prize draw. This year the prizes include a laptop, bike box, wetsuit, training camp holiday and compression gear. Age group winners receive additional prizes.

The club also designates several events across all distances as club championship races. This year this includes the Swashbuckler Middle Distance race in the New Forest and the Crystal Palace sprint event. ▽

For more information about the club and its races, see 7oakstriclub.co.uk

