

**Danskin Chicagoland Triathlon
Pleasant Prairie, WI
750 meter swim/20k bike/5k run
July 9, 2006**

Reported by Lauren Jensen, *Team Sport Beans/NTTC*

The Danskin Women's Triathlon is always a special event. This year 3620 women swam the 750 meters, cycled 12.4 miles, and ran 3.1 miles. That is a huge field for any sprint race, especially when you consider the fact that it was all women. Even more amazing is the fact that over 150 women competed who are cancer survivors.

Race morning came early with my alarm going off before 4 a.m. in order to get down to Pleasant Prairie, WI in time to get set-up and warmed up for my 6:59 a.m. start. The excitement of thousands of women, many of whom were doing their first triathlon, was enough to get my heart rate up to 120 bpm even before the starting gun fired.

I started fast on the swim, and swam very hard for ~200 meters. The glare of the sun was so strong I swam more by instinct than by sight since it was impossible to see the swim finish shoot. After a few minutes I realized that I was alone, so I stopped and treaded water for a moment to see where I was. Darn, I was off course! However, the rest of the women in the Elite wave were off course in the other direction. I self corrected my path and fortunately found the lead kayak to follow the remainder of the swim.

My timing chip had fallen off in the water, so I ran through transition efficiently while communicating (OK - shouting) to the timers that I had no chip. My Aquaman wetsuit peeled off quickly and soon I was onto my Javelin Torgiano for the 20K ride. Thanks to The Bike Shop in Glen Ellyn, IL for helping me figure out a new position that is much better for my back. It felt GREAT to ride without back pain. (Thanks, Chris!)

I raced following the lead motorcycle - a police officer cleared the way as I rode. It was fun riding past the Jelly Belly factory since I race for ***Team Sports Beans/NTTC*** and Jelly Belly Candy Company is our Title Sponsor. It gave me a mental boost into the strong head wind as I thought "Sports Beans Power". (OK, I am a bit strange, but I actually did think that!)

By the run, I had built up a solid lead, which was good for two reasons. First, I had put in a HUGE Ironman training week going into the event and I was glad I did not have to redline the run. More importantly, the Danskin event is so full of positive energy. With a safe lead I enjoyed the chance to share high fives with many of the excited women who were waiting for their swim wave to start - what a blast!! Soon there were more high fives to share at the finish as I crossed the line with over a 5-minute lead.

Then my favorite part of the Danskin event began. I went back into the water to be a "swim angel" and help some of the first timers complete the swim. WOW - I did not realize how many people actually talk with each other on the swim. Next, I rode as a sweep athlete with the final cyclists. I was VERY inspired by Tracy who stopped a few times on the bike to lose some breakfast and then kept going. IMPRESSIVE! Finally I walk/jogged with the final finishers and met some more great, motivating women. It was fun to finish first and last. Many of the women told me that I had motivated and inspired them by my race. Little do they know that their enthusiasm actually inspires me more than they will ever know. This special race always reminds me of why I love racing triathlons so much and how much we can accomplish if we just put our minds to it.

(Editors note: ***Team Sport Beans/NTTC*** Club Team member Cheryl Roberts finished 13th overall, while winning the 40-44 age group. Way to go, Cheryl!)