

Sports

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Contributed photo

Stanhope native Jason Jaksetic will try to qualify for the Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii today at the Lake Placid Ironman Triathlon.

Stanhope's Jaksetic still going strong

By VERN MILLER JR.
Herald Sports Writer

The limits we live within are creations of our own minds.

To think that something can't be done makes it so.

But to try makes it possible.

When Jason Jaksetic first heard what was required to complete a triathlon — a 2.4-mile run, 112-mile bicycle ride and 26.2 mile run — he asked how many days athletes were given to complete the race.

"At that time, I didn't think finishing a triathlon was humanly possible," the Stanhope native said.

Three years after believing it couldn't be done, Jaksetic will not only be competing in

COMMUNITY: TRIATHLONS

today's Lake Placid Ironman triathlon, he's hoping to qualify for a spot at the Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii.

As his body endures the ravages of Ironman competition, Jaksetic's mind will travel a separate journey of its own, pushing through pain and fear to a place where anything is possible.

While Jaksetic has readied his body with a weekly 20-30 hour training regiment that includes four miles of swimming, 40-80 miles of running and 200-500 miles of bike riding, mental conditioning holds the key to finish or failure.

When his body screams "enough," Jaksetic looks at the pre-race messages he has written

on his hands, touchstones that bring clarity, focus and a will to carry on when all else dictates surrender.

When "RF" comes into view, Jaksetic knows surrender is not an option.

Thoughts of Rich Fritzky, a 55-year old father of 12 who has battled the devastating effects of Neisseria Meningitis since last October, has been a motivational catalyst for Jaksetic since he first learned of Fritzky's illness.

The 24-year old challenged himself to run 100 miles over seven days in November, raising money to help the Fritzky family as Rich fought for his life.

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COMMENTARY: HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

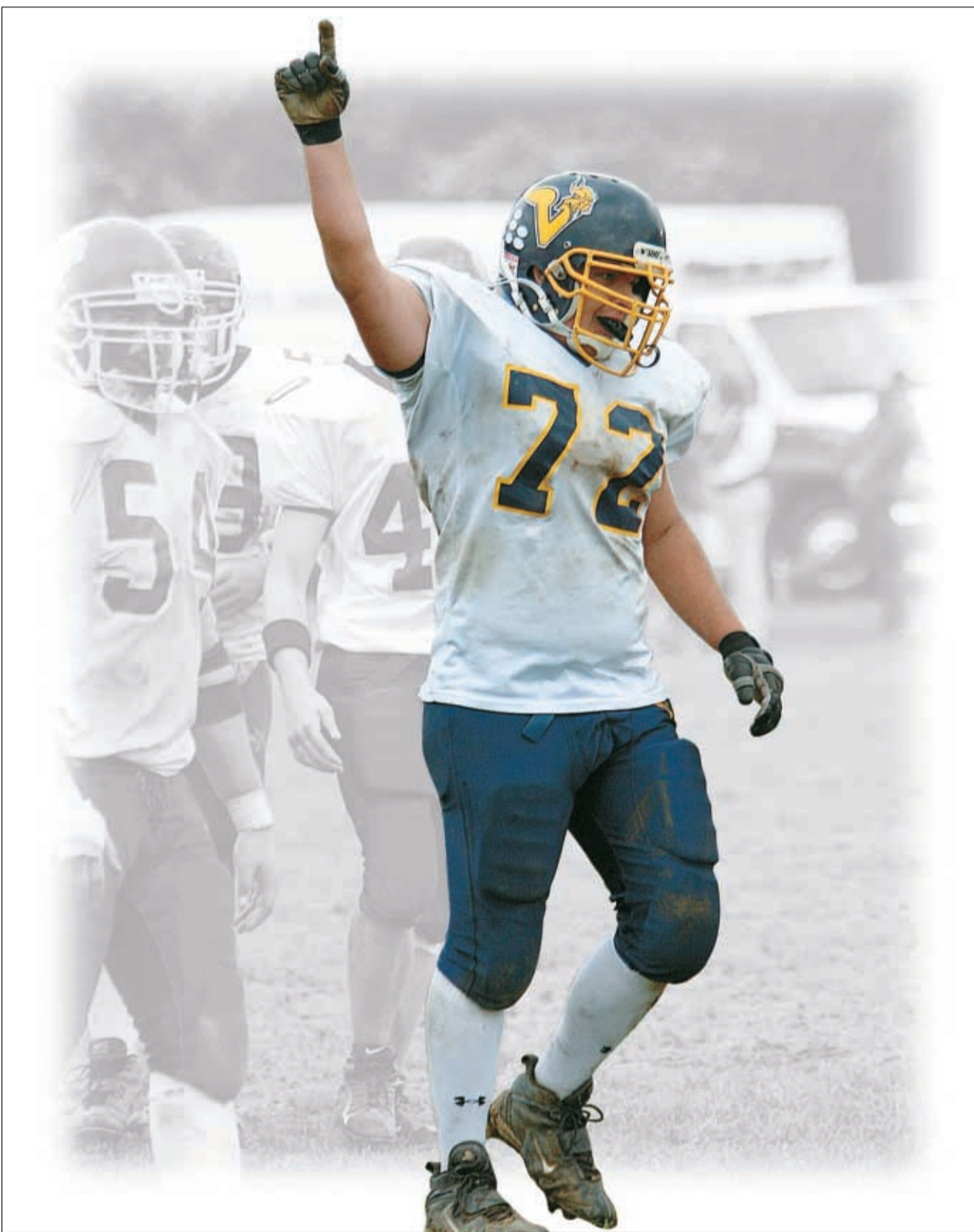


Photo by Randy Mills/allproshots.com

Vernon's John Fisher won't suit up for Vikings' football team this season, but he will be remembered in the hearts, prayers and thoughts of all his teammates.

Our Captain

Vernon selects fallen player as leader for upcoming season

John Fisher won't be at Vernon's first football practice this month, or any that follow. Despite starting the last two years at offensive tackle, Fisher won't play one down of what should have been his senior season.

Physically, he can't be there.

But every other way, he will.

Fisher, the team's starting offensive tackle, died July 13 after four days in a coma — the result of a car crash in Vernon. The accident occurred before the second week of captain's practice, which Fisher was supposed to lead.

But he is still guiding the Vikings, whether or not he will ever call a coin toss or lead a stretch. It's a decision made by his teammates, and a dedication to a 17-year-old with a "smile that will always stand out," said wide receiver Sean Lennon.



STEFAN BONDY
Assistant Sports Editor

"Everything we do now is for No. 72," he said.

It has been an emotionally challenging preseason for Vernon.

In the days after the accident, while Fisher was in a coma, they prayed.

In the days after his death, they mourned and remembered.

But through the pain, Vernon found a profound connection. It often happens that way. Those that suffer together, bond together. And eventually, they overcome together.

"It has really brought the team close. I noticed that immediately," coach Chuck Tepper said. "Before he died, they all got together and leaned on each other. Like true brothers.

"You find out a lot about people in tough times."

Thousands of people reportedly showed at the wake last Sunday — a testament to Fisher's character. Tepper said Fisher will remain on the roster, and a No. 72 sticker will be on every player's helmet. There are also plans to honor Fisher before the first home game.

But for now, as the Vikings prepare for a highly anticipated season, they only have memories.

"We tell stories to each other about John and we joke and laugh about them," Lennon said. "It's the kind of person he was. He would have wanted it that way."

Lennon was Fisher's best friend, a bond that started in second grade and became "more of a brotherhood."

The two spent this summer together in the pool or on "Walmart Adventures," which simply involved walking around stores and having fun.

During a speech at Fisher's funeral last week, which most of the team attended, Lennon chose to recount some of their light-hearted moments.

"I think our friendship uplifted everyone," he said. "I took the more comical approach because that's what John would have wanted.

"We did everything together. We didn't care what other people thought."

Lennon, a senior, was one of the first to hear about the accident after getting a call from Fisher's girlfriend. His first reaction was shock, then confusion. There is no standard response for unexpected tragedy, and Lennon didn't know what to think or feel.

See BONDY, Page B3

BASEBALL: CAN-AM LEAGUE

Tornadoes drop loss on Sussex

By NICK SABATELLO
Herald Sports Writer

AUGUSTA — The Worcester Tornadoes touched down on Skylands Park Saturday causing widespread damage.

There were no casualties; the only thing the Skyhawks lost was the game.

In one of their most lopsided losses of the season Sussex was beaten by Worcester, 14-4.

"We'll bounce back," Skyhawk manager Brian Drahan said. "It was a blowout loss, but we'll be OK."

By the end of the four-hour storm Sussex's bullpen had been depleted, their batting averages had plummeted, and they had fallen two games under .500.

With the loss they fall three games behind first place Quebec.

It was bad news from the beginning for the Skyhawks (2-4), which entered the game on a two-game winning streak.

Starter Chris Tierney left the game with an apparent injury after facing one batter.

Then Derek Hawk came in and pitched three innings, giving up six runs on two hits.

By the end of the game right-fielder Josh Ury was on the

mound.

Drahan chose Ury out of the eight other candidates who volunteered to take the mound.

"All the pitchers want to hit, all the hitters want to pitch," Drahan said. "He was effective, but he will be a little sore tomorrow."

The Skyhawks' defense didn't make it any easier for the pitchers, making three errors.

As bad as the Sussex played, the Tornadoes were the opposite.

Worcester's Ricardo Cordova, who made his debut with the Tornadoes on Thursday, was at the center of the funnel cloud, going 3 for 5 with six RBI, three runs, including a home run.

Cordova's homer made the score 5-0 and the defending CAN/AM league champions pulled away with six runs in the seventh inning to make the score 10-1.

The one bright spot for Sussex was catcher Abraham Ayala, who went 3 for 4, two nights after his game-winning RBI single opened up the second half of the season.

Mike Greenhouse will start for the Skyhawks today at 5 as the team looks to wrap up the series victory.

GOLF: 135TH BRITISH OPEN



AP Photo

Sergio Garcia doffs his cap as he walks off the 18th green after finishing the third round of the British Open Saturday.

Woods lets Garcia back into British

By PAUL NEWBERRY
The Associated Press

HOYLAKE, England — Sergio Garcia has been chasing Tiger Woods for almost seven years.

He'll get another chance to catch him in the final round of the British Open.

Woods' shaky putter kept him from pulling away Saturday — and no one took advantage like Garcia, who surged into contention with an eye-opening 65 that provided another glimpse of his enormous but unfulfilled talent.

Now, they'll play together in the last group Sunday at Royal Liverpool.

Tiger vs. El Nino. "I'm looking forward to it," Garcia said. "I did what I had to do to give myself a chance."

Woods did what he had to do to keep the lead, but a 1-under 71 was his highest score of the week and included a trio of three-putts on the back nine. He did manage to sink a 3-footer for birdie at the par-5 18th, which sent him to the final day one stroke ahead of Garcia, Chris

Leaderboard

Tiger Woods	67-65-71	— 203	-13
Sergio Garcia	68-71-65	— 204	-12
Chris DiMarco	70-65-69	— 204	-12
Ernie Els	68-65-71	— 204	-12
Jim Furyk	68-71-66	— 205	-11
Angel Cabrera	71-68-66	— 205	-11
H. Tanihara	72-68-66	— 206	-10
Calciacchia	71-68-68	— 207	-9
Adam Scott	68-69-70	— 207	-9
A. Romero	70-70-68	— 208	-8

DiMarco and Ernie Els.

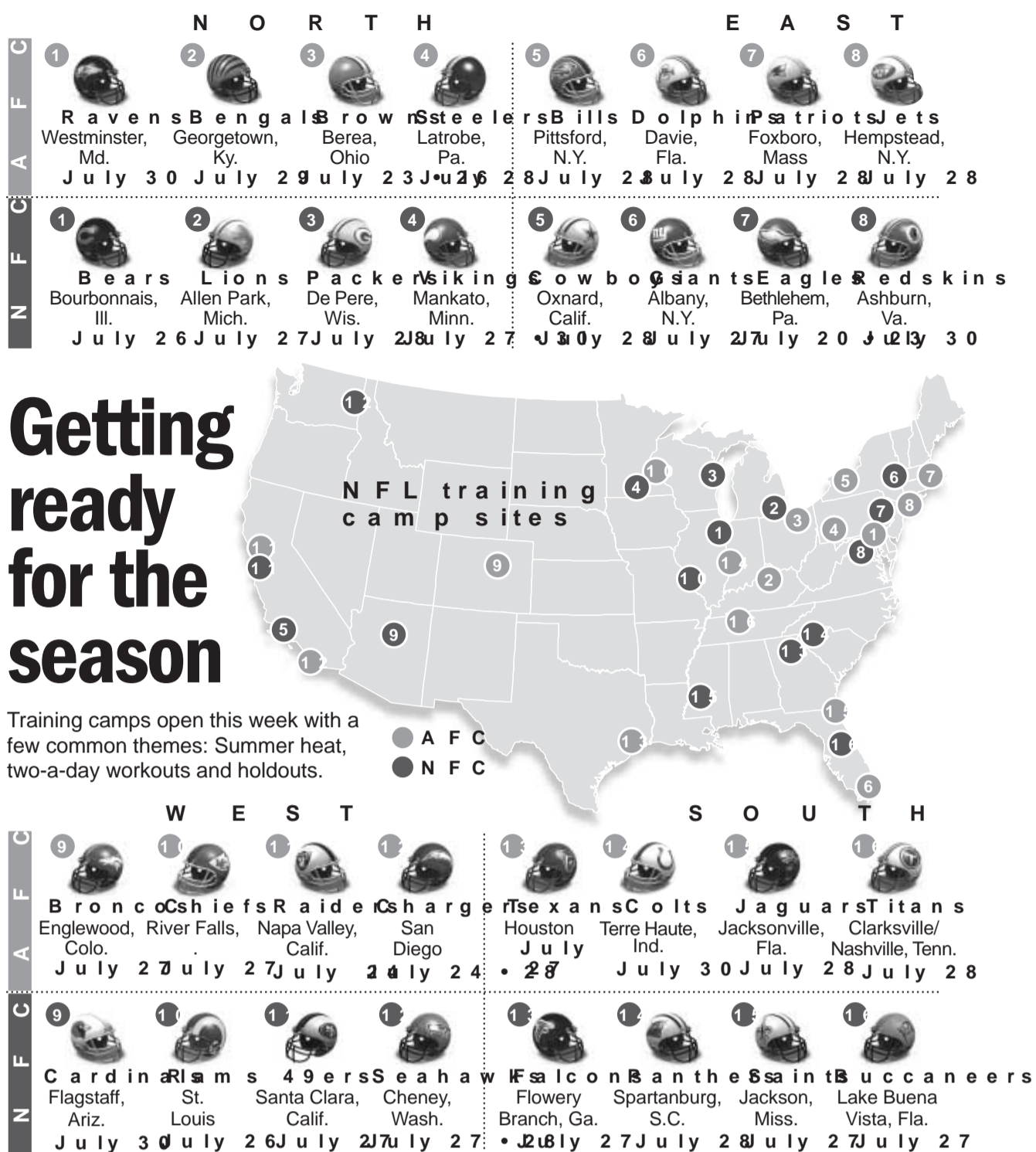
"I didn't putt very good at all," said Woods, at 13-under 203 after 54 holes. "That's very disappointing. But the positive is I'm still in the lead."

Woods and Garcia had a memorable Sunday duel at the 1999 PGA Championship, when a then-19-year-old Spaniard known as "El Nino" dazzled fans with his youthful enthusiasm and looked to be a rival-in-the-making for the world's greatest player.

But Woods held on for a one-stroke victory at Medina and now has captured 10 major championships. Garcia is still after his first.

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FOOTBALL: NFL TRAINING CAMPS



Getting ready for the season

Training camps open this week with a few common themes: Summer heat, two-a-day workouts and holdouts.

“I know I would not have been able to deal with the severity of my training, or races, if not for the deep life lessons I learned during the 100 miles for Rich.”

Jason Jaksetic on his inspiration while competing, Rich Fritzky

final event of the season. April saw Jaksetic earning a fifth-place age group finish and podium spot in the Arizona Ironman.

He started May with a disappointing placement in the New Jersey Devilman Half-Ironman, but rebounded two weeks later with a first-place age group, fourth-overall in the Queens Biathlon in NY.

He finished first in his age group and sixth overall at the June 4 Belleplain Triathlon and first age/ninth overall a week later at the Harriman Triathlon.

“By the end of June I had reached a new personal level both mentally and physically,” Jaksetic said. “But at the beginning of July I couldn’t get out of bed. My big work for Lake Placid was done three weeks ago.”

“But now is kind of a weird time, because training for a triathlon is dealing with what hurts the most, like spending more time in the pool if your legs are bothering you.”

While it may take a first or second-place finish in his age group today to qualify for Kona in October, don’t bet against Jaksetic.

His accomplishments in the sport are already well ahead of schedule for his age, with triathletes reaching their peak potential at 35-40 as they develop, literally, not only the size of their heart but their mental experience.

Jaksetic says he is only starting to learn and understand how his body works, the importance of rest, how to “think calmer” and race more tactically.

He has picked up the sponsorship of “Team Recovery,” a supplement manufacturer who provides a stock of their products, but no financial support.

All of Jaksetic’s travel expenses and event fees come out-of-pocket.

“I consider them an investment in the future as I develop and eventually turn professional,” he said. “I haven’t bought any new wheel rims for my car.”

In September, Jaksetic will make a return trip to the 540-mile Ultra Marathon Cycling competition, a 48-hour race he calls his “biggest heartbreak” after dropping out at 497 miles last year.

If he doesn’t qualify for Kona, he will take part in the American Zofingen, a Swedish trail running and road-bike race staged in the Catskill Mountains.

Competitors run five miles, bike for 90, then run for another 15 miles on an all-vertical trail where action is either five miles-per-hour uphill or 60-per downhill.

Tired yet? “Jason is truly unbelievable,” said Egan, his friend since fifth-grade who tracks Jaksetic’s hourly food and fluid consumption during Ultra races. “Sometimes it looks like he’s taking on too much, but he’s trying everything, not just triathlons, and is doing well at each.”

“Working with him the last two years has given me a great perspective on his amazing accomplishments.”

“I know I would not have been able to deal with the severity of my training, or races, if not for the deep life lessons I learned during the 100 miles for Rich.”

Since that time, Jaksetic has maintained a training schedule and competitive calendar that seems impossible to endure, especially when coupled with a full-time work schedule teaching music.

He trains six hours every morning, usually 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., before teaching bass and guitar at the Music Den from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., where he’s happy to have a job that allows him to sit.

Another workout after he gets home is not uncommon. The novice that attempted his first triathlon in 2003, classified himself as “clueless” in two events in 2004 and said that he began “really racing” in 2005, has undertaken a Herculean schedule in 2006.

Several weeks after running for Rich, Jaksetic finished a “fun run” marathon in Hawaii in 3 hours, 16 minutes.

While he said it was “way too soon” to be competing, he finished 34th out of 1,117 males in the 20-24 age group and 298 out-of-24,261 finishers.

He biked 300-400 miles per week in January preparing for the 24 Hour Ultra Cycle in Sebring, Florida on Feb. 19, his kick-off event of the season.

After leaving work at 9 p.m., Jaksetic and “wheel man” Joe Egan drove 21 straight hours to Florida, arriving six hours before the start of the race.

Jaksetic finished first in his age group, shattering the course record by well over 100 miles, cycling 387 miles in 24 straight hours, the last six with no food or fluids in his system after becoming sick.

The two then began the drive home, where Jaksetic slept for 21 consecutive hours.

“Twenty-four hour road racing is interesting, a pretty big mental battle,” he said. “Around hours 18-20 bad things can start happening. And of course the time you spend traveling to and recovering from a race is a big part of the challenge.”

In March, a 12th-place finish in his age group at the Ironman 70.3 California qualified Jaksetic for the 70.3 World Championships Nov. 11 in Clearwater, Florida.

The half-triathlon requires a competitor to go very hard, for a very long (four-and-a-half to five hours) time frame.

Despite claiming the 70.3 is a very tough distance for him, allowing him only an “outside shot” in his age group, Jaksetic will definitely make the race his

SOURCE: NFL

AP

Are you ready for some football?

Camps open with T.O. in Dallas and the usual NFL shakeup

By DAVE GOLDBERG
The Associated Press

Reggie Bush. Edgerrin James. Ben Roethlisberger. LaVar Arrington. And, of course, Terrell Owens.

For differing reasons, all will be in the spotlight when NFL training camps open this week. So will rehabbing quarterbacks Daunte Culpepper, Carson Palmer, Drew Brees and Chad Pennington. As well as Adam Vinatieri, the best clutch kicker in NFL history, who has moved from New England to Indianapolis, a team whose Super Bowl ambitions he helped thwart several times.

Camps open with any number of intriguing story lines:

— The Saints’ return to New Orleans from Katrina-imposed exile. They will feature Bush, the explosive running back and all-purpose touchdown man from Southern California.

— James, who left Indy for suddenly free-spending Arizona, which is opening a new stadium this season.

— Roethlisberger’s return to Pittsburgh from a motorcycle accident.

— Arrington’s debut with the New York Giants after a less-than-amicable departure from division-rival Washington.

And then there is Owens.

Even with all the interesting plots as training camps open, it’s still likely to

be “all T.O., all the time” for a while, as it was last year when he was disrupting the Eagles’ camp.

Even before the 2006 camp started, he was sounding off — promoting his new book by saying he was misquoted by Jason Rosenhaus, his co-author (who also is his co-agent); once again bashing Donovan McNabb, and proclaiming (for the hundredth time) that he has been misunderstood and attacked for no good reason.

If T.O. has been vocal, his new coach hasn’t been.

It took 48 days from the day Jerry Jones signed Owens to a \$25 million, three-year deal for Bill Parcells to say anything about it. He didn’t say much and has declined to talk about it since.

“I support it and that’s the way we go, and I don’t view it as a gamble,” Parcells said. “It’s in my best interest that he’s successful. And it’s in his best interest that he’s successful.”

It may help that the Cowboys will train in Oxnard, Calif., 1,500 miles from home and three time zones away from Philadelphia. Most other teams are either home or close to it — the Saints are in Jackson, Miss.

Meanwhile, there are dozens of other plots, particularly those surrounding quarterbacks.

Four high-profile QBs, for example, are coming off serious injuries. Not only do their futures hinge on full

recoveries, but so do the seasons for their teams.

Two of them, Daunte Culpepper and Drew Brees, are beginning with new clubs.

Culpepper, who tore up his knee last October while playing for Minnesota, was traded to Miami, which hopes he can propel it ahead of perennial AFC East champion New England. Brees was dealt from San Diego to New Orleans, opening the way for Philip Rivers to start for the Chargers after sitting for two seasons. Rivers was chosen fourth in the first round of the 2004 draft.

Brees is coming off a serious shoulder injury, so there are questions about him even as he says he’s “ahead of schedule” in his recovery.

Carson Palmer led Cincinnati to its first playoff berth since 1993, then had a devastating knee injury against Pittsburgh in the postseason opener. If he can’t start, newly acquired career backup Anthony Wright would fill in until Palmer is ready. And the Bengals face a tough early schedule.

Chad Pennington of the New York Jets underwent rotator cuff surgery on his throwing shoulder for the second straight year and finds himself competing with Patrick Ramsey and rookie Kellen Clemens as the team opens camp under new coach Eric Mangini, a 35-year-old Bill Belichick protege.

Giants open training camp this week

By TOM CANAVAN
The Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD — As the New York Giants head to the University at Albany for training camp, it’s hard to know what to expect.

For some, the expectations are high coming off an 11-5 season that saw the Giants win the NFC East in Tom Coughlin’s second season.

For others, there is the memory of an embarrassing 23-0 loss to the Carolina Panthers in the opening round of the playoffs that seemed to show that the Giants are not yet ready to make a Super Bowl run.

“You got to put that behind you,”

quarterback Eli Manning said last week. “It was a game where we didn’t play well as an offense, I didn’t play well. Nothing really went our way. You hate to see that happen, but that’s just football sometimes. We have to put that behind us.”

The players report for the training camp on Thursday, with their first practice scheduled for Friday.

On paper, the Giants have made improvements.

Manning returns for a second full season as the starter, leading an offense that features halfback Tiki Barber, tight end Jeremy Shockey, receivers Plaxico Burress and Amani Toomer and a new big-play dimension in rookie receiver

Sinorice Moss.

The defense, which was ravaged by injuries late last season, has added LaVar Arrington at linebacker and revamped the secondary in free agency moves that should help bookend Pro Bowl ends Michael Strahan and Osi Umenyiora.

“I think last season was a big step for this team, particularly with a young quarterback and all the injuries that we faced,” said Strahan, who comes to camp after a very messy divorce trial. “We know what it takes now. We have an idea of what it’s going to take this year to go further. This year, anything less than winning it all is failure, because we have the talent to do it.”

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