

## **Meet Robert Laseter**

Ocala Triathletes Club Member

As with many triathletes, Robert came to triathlon almost by accident. Growing up in Delray Beach, in high school he tried out for the swim team and was told he didn't know how to swim and instead did a couple of years as a US Cycling Category 4 (entry level back in the day). While he was fast on A1A, he proclaims he was terrible at the criterium events and that was about all you could race as a Category 4. (A criterium, or crit, is a bike race consisting of several laps around a closed circuit, the length of each lap or circuit ranging from 1 km to 2 km.) Running he said was a rarity.

In 1987, a local bike shop sponsored the "Fun-Tri-A-Athlon." Robert still has the entry form. It started 2 miles from his parent's home and he decided to give it a go. It was a rough surf, a windy bike, and a 4-mile run. He swore he'd never do it again. Six months later he was back at it and it's been his sport ever since.

In the 30 years since that first race, Robert has finished over 150 triathlons of all distances, countless 5 and 10K's, ½ marathons, and marathons. During that time he DNF'd 4 times (3 flats before he started carrying spares and a total bonk at the 2009 Great Floridian Triathlon (GFT 140.6). But, he recalls dropping out meant he got to see Molly Hatchet at the Clermont 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

He said if it's gone wrong in a race, it's happened to him. He's had goggles snap during the swim twice, and had his Piel wetsuit come off during a GFT swim. He even got hit with a drafting penalty once because he wasn't paying attention.

In his early years he's raced against Lance Armstrong, who was 16 at the time. Armstrong was at the Sprint Nationals in Aventura, Florida just back from his first stint in Europe as a Junior. Robert also raced with Scott Tinley, Mike Pigg, and Sheila Taormina. He's met Dave Scott. ("He's too cool.") And Bernard Hinault ("Not so cool.") While he's raced mostly in Florida, he has competed in triathlons in GA, TN, OH, UT, LA, the US Virgin Islands, and Sweden.

Robert has ridden 5 bikes: Cannondale, Kestrel, Mrazek (2x), and his latest, a late model Kuota he got off of Ebay. "Black bikes are the fastest, just saying."

In His Own Words - Favorite Races:

"While I'm a big fan of the Clermont Sprint Series and the GFT (8x finisher), my favorite races are anything where the surf is big (it's a South Florida thing) and the bike is technical (a holdover from bike racing)."

What He Eats:

"On long courses these days I make my own bars from the Lim "Feed Zone" cookbook, use Carboom gels, and am partial to any purple Gatorade, though Lime/Cucumber rocks too."

Most Embarrassing Story:

"Now here is where I can top just about any embarrassing race story you can come up with. For a long time it was about one of the Clermont sprints where the bike went out the Southlake Trail. I cut a guy

off so badly he nearly stopped only to have him relating the story behind me in the bathroom line at a race the next weekend. I did apologize – a lot.”

“This was almost transcended by being the first tire to blow in transition on race morning at 2009 IM Louisville and having Dave Ragsdale announce it to everyone.”

“But....you’ve heard of walking a mile in someone else’s shoes? I’ve run the 5K of a sprint in them. I wasn’t wearing my glasses or contacts, came off the bike, racked it in the wrong place, yanked on the shoes, got pissed that someone stole my IM finishers hat, headed out on the run thinking “I so have to get new shoes”. I was greeted at the finish line by an older gentleman who said “I think those are my shoes.” I looked down and they didn’t even look like mine. I apologized profusely, offered to pay his entry to next year’s race, and asked both the USAT official and the timers to DQ me (they didn’t, but I don’t count it).”

Robert also did the USAT officials certification at 2003 IMFL under the direction of Charlie Crawford and he’s an Ironman Certified Coach.

This year his schedule includes the Clermont Sprints, the Great Floridian Triathlon (140.6) and, possibly, a couple of south Florida events.

If you get a chance, say hi to Robert at our next event. He says his age is the same as the teeth in his big chainring – 55. He’s in the Lady Lake, Florida area and is married with children. His daughter Emma was just named an Ironkid!

