

## **The Quadrathlon From Oz**

*by John Farrow*

One vivid memory from the Mt. Taylor Quadrathlon keeps coming back like a bad dream, reaffirming in its own peculiar way why I am a runner and not a badminton player or something.

I had always been intrigued by the Quad as something different to do before the races begin in the Spring, and let myself get talked into doing both the bike and run as part of a pair. However, competitive cyclist I am not, as most of my cycling has generally been limited to tooling around North Valley ditch trails and not mountains of the Mt. Taylor persuasion. I figured that the bike should at least be manageable since it stayed on a paved road. But that paved road is one steep little puppy.

The course starts at 6,500' in elevation and meanders through beautiful downtown Grants, New Mexico, before heading out past the prison, where felons were shooting baskets behind layers of steel fencing and rolls of razor wire. There is even a nice little downhill stretch not long afterwards, but then things very quickly go straight up.

In fact, the last few miles are so steep that you can stand on the pedals and maybe get a revolution every minute or so. S-l-o-w motion. I must confess to getting off my bike and walking - not once but more than once - with hamstrings, quads, butt, lungs, toenails, eyeballs, you name it, all screaming to high heaven. And I would actually gain on people while walking my bike.

But then the nightmare happened. While struggling up a particularly long uphill section, a guy in Madras plaid shorts and house slippers (*house slippers*, I tell you!) came up from behind on the left and slowly drifted nonchalantly past, pedals spinning furiously, surreally like the Wicked

Witch pedalling past Dorothy's window.

This can't be happening! I'm being passed by a guy in Madras plaid shorts and house slippers and I can't do anything about it! This doesn't look like Kansas any more.

Finally I made it to the transition area and it was such a relief to get off the bike and start running, albeit above the oxygen line and with hamstrings turned to mush, that I didn't even notice how much various body parts hurt. I specifically looked for Plaid's team runner and passed him in the first quarter mile, thereby regaining a measure of self-respect.

By the end of the run, 9,300' up the mountain, the sun was intense and I was soaked in sweat. A thermometer said the temperature was 78E. This is Mt. Taylor in February? Dream on, Dorothy.

*ARR News*, July 1996

Albuquerque Road Runners Club