



Weather upends athlete's race plan

BY ELIRA BENAVERI
Correspondent

CLERMONT — Dave Harper of Clermont had to switch gears last week after organizers made a decision to postpone a 340-mile Missouri River race through Missouri from Kansas City to St. Charles until Aug. 12-15.

The race was originally delayed 24 hours due to flood advisories.

But that was extended due to the threat of adverse weather conditions and potentially dangerous situations paddlers could find themselves in on a flooded river at night full of debris, with trees and logs in the water collecting at bridge pilings.

So water officials overseeing the race made the decision to postpone by a month. Competitors were also given an option to defer until 2015.

"I cannot arrange crew, work and all the details to go back in five weeks, so have opted for the 2015 race," said Harper, an ultraendurance athlete who has five Ironman triathlons, hundreds of standard triathlons and 80-plus ultramarathons under his belt.

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Harper, his wife, Tamara Harper, and their three children — ages 14, 16 and 20 — had just driven 1,200 miles when, immediately upon arrival, they had to begin changing everything.

After the initial shock wore off, the family spent a day visiting a few museums and other points of interest, ate some great barbecue and headed back to Florida without wetting a paddle.

"I can only move forward and turn this to my advantage," Harper said. "Rather than feeling that loss that I felt when I realized I wouldn't be able to compete, I will be so much stronger and faster in 2015 than I could have ever been this year. It's on our calendar, the crew is excited about it and I feel like I've been given a one-year opportunity to prepare for a stellar performance."



TOM BENITEZ/STAFF FILE PHOTO
David Harper trains in Clermont recently for a Missouri race.

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