

REGARDED as possibly the best young triathlete Guernsey has seen, Josh Thornton is going places in the multi-sport event.

Still only 13, young Thornton is showing a talent across all three disciplines and as well as the various triathlons also competes in stand-alone swimming, cycling and athletics events.

He swims for Guernsey Barracudas, cycles in the thriving Guernsey Velo Club and runs in GIAAC events, but it is when he puts them together that he has produced some eye-catching results.

Less than a fortnight ago, he competed in the adult novice triathlon at Beau Sejour and decimated the rest of the 44-person field, finishing more than a minute clear to win it.

And it is not the first time he has shone against senior opposition, as he has performed off-island on more than one occasion.

Thornton's stand-out performance of his still fledgling career was last September in the Hever Castle Race in Kent.

Part of the Castle Triathlon Series, that particular stage is the biggest children's triathlon in the world and Thornton's category had 195 competitors.

That was in the 13- to 15-year-old age group and despite being at the lower end of that range, Thornton finished in a magnificent eighth place.

Watching his progress over the past couple of years has been Guernsey Triathlon Granite Kids committee member Richard Stapley and he is thrilled by the teenager's progress.

The Hever event was raced over a 300m swim, 8km cycle and 4km run, with Thornton finishing the middle phase in fifth position when he got off the bike.

'Josh has taken us a bit by surprise with his performances and he has been absolutely brilliant in the last few months,' said Stapley.

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Guernsey Triathlon Granite Kids committee member Richard Stapley

and he was a couple of years younger than a lot of the others in the race.

'Now, we are expecting Josh to win all of the junior races he is in. That is how far he has come and he is also excelling in the adult races.

'To finish in the time he did in the novice triathlon [43 minutes exactly] is really quick, especially for his age.

'The next step for him is to try and get off-island as much as possible to compete in UK or European events and push himself on further.

'Josh is going away to a British Triathlon event very soon and I would expect him to be challenging right at the front of that.'

Another off-island event that Thornton has competed in was earlier this month in France, at a mixed adults' and children's race in Rennes.

He finished second overall on that occasion.

Longer term he is sure to have Island Games qualification on his mind, although his age means that next year's edition in Jersey is not one he will be eligible for.

Depending on whether or not Gotland holds a triathlon in 2017, he may have to wait until Menorca in 2019 to get his chance.

Whatever the case, Staples believes Thornton will excel when given the chance.

'Menorca would be perfect for him because Josh would be 18 then and at a great age to go there and do really, really well.

'There is no doubt that Josh is good enough to be competing in Island Games regularly in the future and also doing well on the British scene.

'In terms how good he is now, we have never had a triathlete this good at this age ever in Guernsey triathlons.

'Josh is a very special talent and will just keep getting better and better because he is dedicated, keen and wants to constantly improve.'

That positive attitude possessed by Thornton is an attribute that also stands out to Gary Wallbridge, president of the Guernsey Velo Club.

In last year's junior cycling inter-insular, Thornton played his part in a Guernsey win over Jersey, finishing as the third best Sarnian rider for his age group.

'Josh is a really keen young rider and absolutely fantastic to have in our club because he will always put everything into his races,' said Wallbridge.

'Quite often, he will almost be collapsed on the floor after a race because he has put so much into it and he has incredible heart.

'That dedication is his biggest strength and he has turned in some good results in the different junior races that we do on Wednesday evenings and Sundays.

'He is away with us on a trip to the UK next month for a South District regional event, so hopefully he will do pretty well there as well.'



Joshua Thornton competing in the Hever Castle Race.

HalfTIME TALK

This week triathlete **JOSHUA THORNTON** answers our questionnaire

Name: Joshua Thornton

Age: 13

Nickname: Choccie

School: Elizabeth College

Brothers or sisters: One brother – Max

What would you like to be in adult life: Happy

Favourite TV show: The Big Bang Theory

Favourite music: AC/DC

Favourite film: Superhero Movie

Favourite food: Rare steak and chips

Favourite teacher: Mr Le Lacheur

Sports: Triathlon, swimming, cycling, athletics

Position: Tucked in behind a big bloke on a bike

Clubs: Guernsey Triathlon Club, Guernsey Barracudas (swimming), Guernsey Velo Club (cycling), Guernsey Island Amateur Athletics Club

Best friend in sport: Josh Langmead

Sporting heroes: The Brownlee brothers (Alistair and Jonny)

Sporting hero locally: Richard Stapley

Local sportsperson to watch out for: Sam Culverwell

Least favourite professional sportsperson: Arjen Robben – for diving in football

Favourite local coaches: Debbie Le Noury, Sara Parfit, Gary Wallbridge

Favourite local sports arena: Beau Sejour swimming pool

Sporting highlight: Finishing second in the 2014 Rennes Triathlon

Sporting lowlight: Falling into the pool, before the whistle, at a Barracudas Open meet

Sports ambition: To beat my brother, Max, at the Island Games

Funniest moment in sport: Getting lost in the 2013 GHS 10-mile time trial championship

What would you like to do to improve our sport: Fill in the potholes please

Teams supported: Liverpool (football), Movistar (cycling)