

# Triathlons can be gruelling

by Ashram Mustapha

You've probably seen the 140.6-mile Ironman competition on ABC's Wide World of Sports, but just how popular is a sport involving hours of swimming, cycling, and running?

The triathlon is an infant sport when compared to its three components. Swimming, cycling, and running, in their modern forms, have been around for over 100 years, but modern triathlons are just over a decade old.

Unlike any other sports, triathloning began with a big competition and worked its way down to more moderate sizes.

The first Ironman was held in February 1978 and involved 50 competitors. The winner crossed the finish line in just under 12 hours.

The 1985 Ironman Triathlon saw 1018 competitors and was won in just under nine hours by Dave Scott.

But how many sane people with a family, a full-time occupation, and a limited sports background would want to even enter an event that covers over 140 miles?

That's the question Carl Thomas, former vice-president of marketing for Speedo International, considered when he developed the United States Triathlon Series (USTS).

In 1982, the first USTS races consisted of a 2K swim, a 35K bike ride, and a 15K run. Just two years ago, the standard distances were changed to 1.5K, 40K, and 10K respectively. Most competitors take two to four hours to finish.

But why these distances? 1500 metres is the longest Olympic swimming event, 40 kilometres is the international time trial cycling distance, and 10 kilometres is the most popular distance in the world for road races.

Triathloning is short on tradition,



A future triathlete? Who knows.

but it is long on novelty, innovation, and fresh solutions. At first, the best triathletes were elite cyclists.

Although strong cyclists have a competitive edge (since cycling is the longest event), the best triathletes nowadays are 'triathletes'. Most triathletes train an average of 8 times a week in the off-season and 12 times a week during the competitive season.

In Alberta, the competitive sea-

son is from February through August. This year, 8 triathlons are being held province-wide, with 2 being held in Edmonton.

If you are interested in trying a triathlon, but are unsure of how to train, or if you are already a triathlete and are interested in learning more about training, then contact the Edmonton Triathlon Association who will be conducting a triathlon clinic at the Kinsmen Aquatic Centre May 23rd and 24th.

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