

## Ironman Triathlon childhood dream

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Ever since a 6-year-old plunked himself in front of a television and watched athletes competing in an Ironman Triathlon, Ryan O'Hare has had the urge to join them.

The fact that these elite athletes plunge into lakes to swim 2.4 miles, leap onto bikes to pedal 112 miles and sprint off to run a marathon (26.2 miles) is no small feat.

On a bright sunny September day a couple of weeks ago, 40-year-old O'Hare competed in the Redman Triathlon in Oklahoma City, OK, winning his age group and placing sixth overall.

His time? 10 hours and 46 minutes.

"I felt pretty euphoric," O'Hare said about crossing the finish line.

The local veterinarian was first out of the water once the race started at 7:15 a.m.

"The swim was the easiest and it felt incredibly good," he said.

Dashing to his bike, O'Hare changed into a biking jersey, gobbled a banana and sped down the road.

"The bike was the weakest part when I did the half marathon and this time it felt good," he said.

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Until mile 75 when his body started to hurt.

Still, O'Hare kept pedaling and hydrating with water and Gatorade—eight liters of liquid— and eating protein bars and energy gel during the six-hour ride.

Once he coasted to a stop, O'Hare changed into running shoes and shorts and started the marathon.



“It didn't feel good for three miles because my legs hurt,” he said. “But then I forgot about it because it's all mental.

“At that point you know you've put in the training and you have to get through it.”

Throughout the ordeal, O'Hare said he never “hit a wall” or suffered a debilitating energy drop.

As he crossed the finish line, he raised his fist in a victory salute, walked for about 20 minutes and then treated himself to a massage.

Even though O'Hare had a good training base, he was still apprehensive about getting through the triathlon.

And he knew what the race entailed at a shorter distance having finished the Redman Half Triathlon three years ago.

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The next year, he planned to complete the full triathlon.

“But I hurt my shoulder throwing my kids in the air,” O’Hare said with a laugh.

So he waited it out and began training last May.

To keep up with veterinary work and spend time with his wife, Becky, and four children, O’Hare trained early in the morning and at noon at least six days a week.

During the last five months he logged:

72 miles swimming in Jeffrey Lake and a private lake

2,100 miles biking

632 miles running which included a marathon in Brownlee.

“The hardest part isn’t the triathlon but training for it,” he said.



Athleticism is nothing new to O’Hare who swam competitively as a child until high school when he then competed in football, basketball, wrestling and track. He also played football for a couple of years at the University of Wyoming.

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“I’ve stayed active and it’s habit as this point,” he said.

Although he plans to compete in more full and half triathlons, O’Hare is also interested in “Olympics” which are one fourth the distance of an Ironman Triathlon and include an 800-meter swim, a 28-mile bike and a 10K run.

To others thinking about completing a triathlon, O’Hare suggests starting with a lesser distance.

“And then getting out and doing it,” he said. “It’s all about forming an exercise habit.”

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