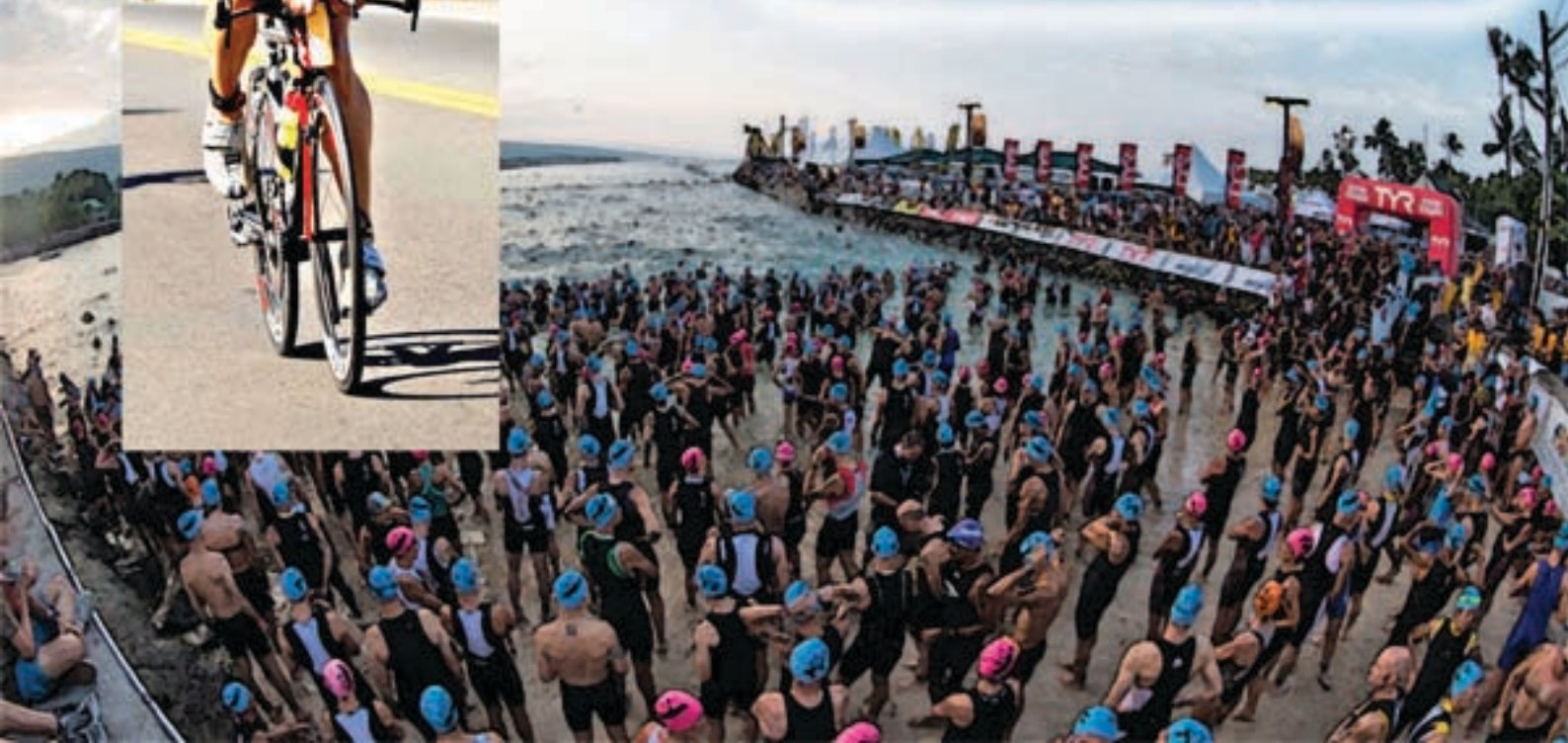


ALAN RYAN IRONMAN

SPONSORSHIP REQUEST

RESULTS
SPORTING BACKGROUND
MEDIA COVERAGE



ALAN RYAN **BORN: 1966**

ENNISCORTHY, Co. WEXFORD.

Ironman Triathlete
(3.8km swim 180km Cycle 42.2 Run)

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www.chaosireland.com

In October 2012 I finished third at the Ironman World Championships in the over 45 age group. I am the only Irish person ever to achieve two podium finishes at the World Championships. My first was back in 2009 in the over 40's and my latest in the over 45 age group - the two largest and most competitive divisions in Ironman racing. Having come so close this year, my ambition is

and how it could be mutually beneficial. I would be grateful for all offers of assistance, be it gear, training or help with flights and accommodation. Anything to enable me to race to my full potential and bring further success to Irish athletics internationally and to improve my domestic performances would be hugely appreciated.



The success I have enjoyed in the sport has been primarily down to hard work and the help and support of my wife Eimear and two very accommodating young children. It's not a cheap sport. I have been doing it on a shoestring and unlike many of my competitors I am completely self funded. While others are away in places such as Lanzarote at warm weather or altitude training camps, I am on my bike in the sauna of a local hotel. I do however get a great kick out of the challenge of producing some world class results with the limitations on training time and facilities I have access to. With the right support, I can only do even better.

I have qualified for the Ironman World Championships five times out of my last five attempts and have raced there three times. My first experience of the event was in 2007 which happened to coincide with my wedding.

I completed my first Ironman in 2005 at the age of 38 and to date I have raced thirteen iron

to return to the World Championships in 2013 and climb the last two steps on the podium. If I succeed Ireland would have its first Ironman World Champion.

I am looking to share my journey with determined companies and brands that are passionate about success. I am only too happy to talk to all interested parties about a sponsorship package

RESULTS

Ironman World Championships 2012
3rd place podium M45 age group.

Ironman World Championships 2009
5th place, podium M40 age group

Other Major International Races
3rd M45 age group Ironman Regensburg 2012
1st M45 age group Challenge Barcelona 2011
4th M45 age group Challenge Roth 2011
1st M40 age group Ironman UK 2008

distance triathlons, all of which I have finished in under ten hours. I have a PB of 9hrs 9mins which I achieved at 45 years of age. I set an Irish Ironman / Long Distance Triathlon record in 2008 at 42 years of age.

These races attract large fields often numbering over 2,000 competitors including many professional international triathletes and Olympians. I have always managed to finish well up the overall and age group standings.

Prior to triathlon my sporting background was limited to playing rugby at school in Skerries Co. Dublin. I hung up my boots shortly after leaving school in 1984 and took very little exercise until I came to triathlon by accident in my mid thirties. I found a sport that I enjoyed and that helped me lose some weight. It has been an interesting and rewarding ten or so years. I have discovered just how forgiving the body can be after many years of inactivity and mistreatment. I now do things that I would have thought impossible in my twenties. Distances that were once considered a long drive are now a nice little training ride.

I never thought I would achieve anything in this sport. It has always been about a healthy lifestyle and fun. Nobody was more surprised than myself when I broke the Irish Ironman record, when I became the first and only Irishman to stand on the podium in Hawaii or when I was the first veteran to finish at both Challenge Barcelona and Ironman UK (15th place overall, 5th amateur & a top ten overall bike split).

Every season I include a number of shorter races primarily as training sessions and would often be the top veteran to finish. I have been in contention for an overall podium position on

Recent Non Ironman Race Results

1st Overall Bunclody Duathlon 2012
2nd Overall Waterford Duathlon 2012
2nd Overall Tri-Athy Double Olympic 2011
2nd Overall Skerries Sprint Triathlon 2011

many occasions. This season I won the Bunclody duathlon and was second at the Waterford duathlon. Because of injury these were my only two domestic races in Ireland this year.

MEDIA & SPONSORSHIP POTENTIAL

The popularity of triathlon as a sport has grown exponentially in Ireland over the last few years. Triathlon Ireland, the governing body of the sport had 800 registered members in 2007; that number has grown to over 7,000 in 2012. Similarly the number of clubs has grown from less than twenty to over seventy. Twenty thousand people of all ages, gender and ability participated in a triathlon in Ireland last year. Race size ranges from 150 participants to 5,000 participants. Internationally the sport has seen a similar jump in popularity. USA Triathlon track a surge in its membership numbers which surpassed 150,000 annual members in 2011 and 326,732 one-day memberships.

In general triathletes come from high socio-economic backgrounds. The sport attracts driven, focused individuals who are able and willing to pay the price in time and money. They would be frequent credit card users, technology savvy and health conscious. The largest cohort are males aged between 30 and 45 years of age. Female participation in the

SPONSORSHIP BENEFITS

- Sponsor logo on kit.
- Sponsor logo and link on website.
- Credit of sponsors in media interviews where appropriate.
- Announcement of partnership by means of press release to target media and inclusion on website.
- Inclusion of sponsor in results press releases.
- Promotion of sponsor to Triathlon community.
- Association of sponsor/brand with a healthy, positive pursuit.
- Partnership with Ireland's only Ironman World Championship medal winner.

sport has seen considerable growth in recent years too and women now make up about 35% of all participants. No participatory sport comes close to this demographic except for perhaps yachting and equestrian.

The Ironman World Championships held every year in Hawaii is the oldest and most prestigious race on the triathlon calendar. The overall Ironman World Championship Crown would be considered by many, particularly in America, as more significant than an Olympic medal in the shorter distance Olympic version of the sport.

With live internet streaming of all Ironman races and some terrestrial/satellite television coverage world wide, the sport commands a large audience in the UK, Europe, Australasia and America. The live internet streaming of the Hawaii race has a significant Irish audience and my achievements in Hawaii are well known in the triathlon community here and in the UK.

Consequently I have considerable profile and some influence among triathletes in Ireland. I have received a lot of media attention over the years for my racing and training exploits. I have been the subject of articles in national and regional newspapers and have also appeared in UK based triathlon magazines. Part of a video I produced about my first Ironman race was

included on DVD with copies of 220 Magazine, the UK and Ireland's leading multisport publication.

I have been interviewed on national and local radio and a leading world wide Ironman podcast based in New Zealand. I have featured on many triathlon and sport related websites here and abroad and have also written a number of well received articles about my triathlon experiences that have been published on popular Irish triathlon websites. Included here are some articles from press and internet coverage in which I feature and links to a few more. I give talks to triathlon clubs on training and racing long distance. I also post race reports and occasional training articles on my own website and blog www.chaosireland.com For the second time in recent years I received a *Fingal Independent Sports Star* of the month award and was shortlisted for the *Outsider Magazine* person of the year award 2012.

I am hopeful that my future racing, results, training and talks along with an expanded social media presence will continue to attract more new and traditional media attention. I suggest there will be many opportunities for sponsors to be acknowledged and have their products showcased on a national and international stage.



About Me

I live in Wexford with my wife Eimear, my three year old son Luke and my one year old daughter Emily.

A geologist by profession, I have worked in Ireland and Australia in the mining and mineral exploration industry. Since the children arrived I have swapped what was a very enjoyable but extremely family unfriendly career in geology for a new one as a stay at home dad.

I do some freelance graphic design and typesetting work. I am also currently working on a series of paintings based on my Ironman experiences and I intend having an exhibition of these paintings sometime this year.

In the past I have produced/edited a couple of triathlon themed videos for various clients.

When not changing nappies or doing some design job I also try to sneak in as much training as I can get away with.

For someone of my “sporting” background to stand on the top of the podium at Kona would be an incredible achievement. Obviously it’s still a bit of a dream but with the right help I believe it is possible. I hope that you can recognise the great potential that partnering with the Republic of Ireland’s only medal winner at the Ironman World Championships could bring and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with you in greater detail. I would commit to work hard to promote your brand to the best of my ability in an honourable and sporting manner.

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‘I put my bike in a sauna to train for Hawaii’



Some members of Team Ireland from left Sharon O'Hara, Ivan O'Gorman, Alan Ryan, Mick O'Brien, Martin Muldoon, Owen Martin, Rob Cummins and Liam Dolan

Bizarrelly, Alan Ryan prepared for Saturday's World Ironman Championships in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, by cycling in a sauna. It paid off as he was the top Irish performer at the US venue, finishing third in the over-45 category.

The almost 2,000 competitors had to contend with stifling hot temperatures, in excess of 30C, and strong winds. But Alan — from Skerries, Co Dublin, and now living in

Enniscorthy, Co Wexford — made light of the elements with an awesome performance.

Over the killer distance — 3.8k swim, 180k cycle and 26.2-mile run — he clocked 9:33.34 to take the bronze medal, behind Denmark's Preber Jacobsen (9:17.22) and Switzerland's Daniel Weil (9:25.18).

Afterwards, Alan (46) explained his rather quirky preparations to *FTT Magazine*.

“My wife Eimear and I have two small children and one of them, Luke, is a three-year-old who demands a lot of attention,” said Alan, who also has a daughter, Emily (1).

“So I try and get as much out of every training session as I can. A lot of what I was doing was concentrated, indoors on a static bicycle.

“A lot of my training was done after hours, late at night or very early in the morning.

“To try and simulate the temperature in Hawaii, I would do it in a hot room and make sure the heat was on.

“As we got closer to the event, I got permission from Kelly's Resort Hotel in Rosslare to put my bicycle in the sauna to simulate 30C temperatures.

“And it really did pay off, I think, particularly on the run because you're not moving as quickly, so you are not generating as much breeze as on the bike.

“I felt being in the sauna in Kelly's was exactly the same, but I didn't think I had trained for that kind of a result.”

The remaining members of the strong Irish team were as follows: Martin Muldoon (9:29.51), Ivan O'Gorman (9:39.15), Owen Martin (9:44.00), Mick O'Brien (9:47.18), Liam Dolan (9:53.44), Matt Molloy (10:09.27), Neil Feerick (10:36.53), Rob Cummins (11:31.54), James McLaughlin (12:07.57), Kate Lahart (13:14.49) and Sharon O'Hara (14:04.43).

EOGHAN YOUNG-MURPHY

Triathlon triumph for Alan in the Ironman

WEXFORD was well and truly put on the map at the recent Ironman World Championships in Kona, Hawaii. Enniscorthy resident, Alan Ryan, took his place on the podium when he finished third in his age category, the 45 to 49 years age group.

Alan completed a 3.8 km swim in 73 minutes, a 180 km bike ride in just over five hours and the marathon at the end in just three hours and ten minutes, giving him a total time of nine hours, 33 minutes and 34 seconds.

The competition in Hawaii was Alan's second Ironman race in less than six months and his 13th Ironman race overall.

In June he raced in Regensburg, Germany, when he qualified for the Ironman World Championships in Kona.

Alan has had to train very hard to get to the level which he has achieved. Being the father of a young family, most of his training is either done early in the morning or early at night to allow him to spend time with his children. One of the ways in which Alan prepared for the competition in Hawaii was to put a bike into the sauna at Kelly's Resort Hotel in Rosslare in order to help him prepare to race flat out for ten hours in very humid conditions and temperatures of up to 30C.

Alan is a member of Wexford Triathlon Club, whose members train most days of the week. Details of the club training schedule for October to December can be found on club website at www.wextriclub.com.

Fingal Independant Alan's Iron will shines through

SKERRIES man Alan Ryan did himself and his country proud by achieving a podium finish at the recent World Ironman Championships in Hawaii - for the second time in a row.

Ryan came fifth in his age group when he last competed in the World event in 2009, and on this occasion he performed even better to finish third in the 45-49 category. He travelled as part of a 12-strong Irish team to compete against 2,000 of the world's top long-distance triathletes and the general consensus was that this was the best group ever assembled from the Emerald Isle. That feeling was borne out on race day when six of the team managed to complete the race in under the 10-hour milestone, despite strong winds and high temperatures which made the event one of the most challenging in recent years. Racing in the 45-49 year old category, Ryan was the elder statesman on the Irish team and a relatively slow 3.8km swim had him exiting the water well down the field, 121st in his category and 1,200th overall, but crucially he remained composed and was able to claw himself back with a massively gritty performance in the bike and run sections. He finished the bike section 16th in his age division, having passed 105 of his competitors and nearly 1,000 people overall on the hot, windy lava fields of the 180km course, and carried that momentum into the final discipline. A 3hr 10min marathon split time, again achieved in extreme heat, resulted in an overall race time of 9hr 33min, moving him up to third place in his category and securing a place on the rostrum. Reflecting on his awesome achievement, Ryan said: 'I knew I was well back after the swim and had to really push hard on the bike if I was going to do myself justice. 'I prepared for the



Just how do you prepare to race flat-out for ten hours in temperatures that could well exceed 35°C and it might also be humid – very humid.



James Dooley of Kelly's checks to see if Alan still knows his own name.

blistering hot and humid conditions by training on my bicycle in the sauna of a local hotel and felt I was ready to suffer enough in the heat to work my way back up through the field to be in contention in my age group at the finish. 'But you never know how your body will react to such extreme conditions and effort.' This was Ryan's second podium placing at the toughest one-day endurance event in the world and he is still the only Irishman ever, in any age category, to win a podium spot at the Ironman World Championships. But he's not going to settle for that as he still has his sights set on becoming a world champion one day!

UK Based

www.beyondgoinglong.com

Alan Ryan – Ireland's Kona podium athlete

Irish age-grouper Alan Ryan, is a triathlete with a very special record. To date, he is the only Irishman from the Republic of Ireland who has ever stood on a Kona podium, and right now he is looking to go two places better by taking an age-group world title at Ironman Hawaii 2013.

Last week, I interviewed Liam Dolan, and afterwards I was sent many emails and tweets asking that I add Alan to the site, pointing out he is one of Ireland's greats in terms of character and achievement over the long distance. I found a wonderful interviewee, who had raced many of the worlds biggest tri's and is still super motivated whilst competing in 45-49 and provided a fascinating insight into his world of triathlon.

For full interview see

<http://beyondgoinglong.co.uk/?p=2464>

Links to other articles.

The Score.ie

Triathlon Ireland Website

Irish triathlon.com

Tri247.com

lifeandfitnessmag.ie

runireland.com

sportsnewsireland.com

www.worldirish.com

Irishman 3rd in Ironman World Championships in Hawaii

Wexford based Irishman Alan Ryan from Skerries in Dublin was the first Irish athlete to complete the 2012 Ironman World Championships in Hawaii today. With an overall placing of 133 Ryan came 3rd in his Category (45-49 age). With a swim placing of 123 in this category Ryan put up a steady challenge on the bicycle to take him to 16th place and finally the marathon saw him take the bronze position with an overall time of 9:33:34. For more see www.ironman.com.

www.thejournal.ie

Tri Talk: Ryan claims podium spot in Ironman World Championships

WEXFORD'S ALAN RYAN led Ireland's charge at the Ironman World Championships in Kona last weekend, taking podium honours when he finished in the third in the 45-49 years age group.

On a swelteringly hot day with winds topping 35mph, Ryan was prepared for the conditions having simulated the humidity by training in the sauna of a local hotel. The countless hours of training paid off as he completed the course in 9:33:34, just over 15 minutes behind category winner Preben Jacobsen of Denmark.

The swimming conditions were challenging with a considerable current making the return leg of the 3.8km swim tough going. Ryan exited the swim, his weakest discipline, in 1:13 and 121st place but soon went to work over the 180km bike and steadily made his way through the field as he averaged close to 36kph for a shade over five hours.

With pacing and energy management vital, Ryan had his tactics spot on and left enough in the tank to finish with a marathon time of 3:10.

A steely challenge

LIKE A lot of men my age I harbour a latent ambition to run a marathon at some point in my life, though every year I seem to concoct some reason to put it on the long finger. The very first marathon was run by an unfortunate soldier called Pheidippides in 490 BC. He was sent from the town of **Marathon** (what a coincidence) to Athens to deliver the good news of a Greek victory over the Persians. On arrival in Athens he exclaimed "Niki!" ("victory") and then promptly collapsed and died. One wonders then what exactly poor old Pheidippides would have made of the Ironman triathlon. Imagine if you will, standing on the starting line of a marathon having just completed a 2.4-mile (3.9km) swim and a 112-mile (180km) cycle. The first Ironman was contested in 1978 to settle a debate among a group of friends in Hawaii over who was the fittest athlete & 211 a runner, cyclist or swimmer. They came up with the idea of an endurance event

MICHAEL KELLY

It takes incredible determination and fitness to do the Ironman competition, which involves a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile cycle and then running a marathon.

“I wasn't that sporty at all. I was at an age where I knew it was a case of get fit now or you never will. I used to always feel guilty whenever I passed a sports shop because I knew I was doing nothing for my own health



Below and above: Alan Ryan before and after competing in Ironman competitions. The 42-year-old used to weigh 14.5 stone and now after having completed seven Ironman events - he weighs 10.5 stone.

which involved a combination of three existing events & 211 the Waikiki Roughwater Swim, the Around-Oahu Bike Race and the Honolulu Marathon & 211 one after the other. Some 15 men participated in the first race and 12 of them finished, led home by the world& 217s first Ironman, Gordon Haller, in a time of 11 hours and 46 minutes. It should be noted of course that the vast majority of triathletes are sane individuals of all ages and from all walks of life who keep fit and have fun doing far shorter distances in the three disciplines. A sprint triathlon for example constitutes a very manageable 750m swim, 20km cycle and a 5km run. But the Ironman is a different beast altogether with competitors typically spending 10-17 hours completing the event. It is generally believed to be the most difficult one-day sporting event in the world. The big question of course is what is the motivation for getting involved in such a physically gruelling sport The majority of Ironman and ultra-distance endurance competitors are males aged 35-45. Could it be that we men are trying to scoff at our advancing years

According to Enniscorthy resident Alan Ryan, competing in an Ironman is enjoyable despite the

hardship involved.

He says the feeling of achievement is immense. To be running down the stretch in an ironman being cheered on by thousands of people, that's just incredible for a regular guy like me.

Ryan is a shining example of the body for transformation even in middle age. The 42-year-old has competed in seven Ironman events thus far and his personal best is an astonishing nine hours and 17 minutes.

He was the first Irishman to qualify for this year's Ironman World Championship which takes place in Kona, Hawaii in October. This will be all the more remarkable when you consider that during his 20s and 30s he was unfit overweight and a smoker.

"I wasn't that sporty at all" he says. "I was at an age where I knew it was a case of get fit now or you never will. I used to always feel guilty whenever I passed a sports shop because I knew I was doing nothing for my own health."

Ryan started a couple of short triathlons in Ireland but it was while working in Australia that he first came across the idea of the ironman.

EVENING
Herald July 24th 2008

Ryan smashes national Ironman record

Veteran triathlete Alan Ryan is the new holder of the Irish Ironman triathlon record after clocking a time of 9 hrs 17 mins 12 seconds in the Quelle Challenge Roth, in Germany. It was a fifth sub-10 hour Ironman for Ryan.

Also in action were the previous record holder Trevor Woods of Cork, who set the old record of 9:18.40 in Austria last year, Mark Riseley of the 3D Tri club and Ryan's brother Fergus.

After a 3.8km swim which took 1 hr 5 mins in the wet, freezing conditions, Ryan first caught Riseley and then Woods on the second leg of the 180km cycle.

Knowing he wasn't as strong a runner as this pair,

"It was talked about almost in hushed tones. People would whisper the word with great reverence," he says with a laugh. He completed his first Ironman in Klagenfurt in Austria at the age of 38. "The toughest thing for me was the marathon. It is an insidious type of pain that grinds away at the joints and hips. Mentally it is also very tough to keep focused and free of distraction for that amount of time. You have on the go for seven hours before you even start running."

The training regime for an Ironman starts about six months before an event. You have to put in the hours," he says. "You are training about 20 hours a week including a long cycle and a long run at the weekend. I might do a six hour cycle on a Saturday and a three hour run on a Sunday. Every day I am doing an hour of swim, cycling and running. "It gets me off the couch," he says with admirable understatement.

The impact of all this training on his physical health and appearance has been immense.

"Your whole body changes, including your face. I was 14 and a half stone when I started and am about 10 and a half now. My wife and mother think that I am too thin, they are always trying to fatten me up."

Ryan pushed on, emerging first from transition after taking five hours for the bike stage. With 10km to go of the marathon run, he sensed that Riseley was catching him and was about 100m behind.

He kicked hard and recorded a marathon split time of three hours, six minutes -- 18 minutes faster than he had ever run before.

personal best

Riseley came home eight minutes later in nine hours, 25 minutes and 10 seconds -- also a personal best.

Fergus Ryan, who started his swim later, finished in 10 hrs 11 mins 26 secs. Woods was forced to drop out.

Ryan, an artist and geologist from Skerries, ran his first race at the age of 35. In 2005, he finished Ironman Austria in 9:51.43 and returned for the next two years. In 2007, he travelled to Hawaii to complete the Ironman there.

Tribune Magazine



MEN OF IRON

Sporting challenges beyond endurance



Alan Ryan, right, against all the odds beat his younger brother Fergus, left, by 50 minutes in their first Ironman together. *WILL COOPER*

Alan and Fergus Ryan Ironman competitors

THE traditional marathon was once considered a pinnacle achievement in sport, and the preserve of elite athletes. Yet last year over 11,000 took part in the Dublin City Marathon, which indicates that running 26.2 miles is no longer beyond the confines of Joe Public's imagination and, as such, isn't enough of a unique challenge for an endurance athlete.

The Ironman competition is billed by *Forbes* magazine as among the top 10 toughest one-day endurance events in the world. Contrary to popular belief, it is not a weightlifting competition, but an ultra-triathlon. It starts with a 2.4-mile swim and, with 2,000 athletes competing to get ahead, it's more like a battle, with elbows and feet kicking and hitting. Once the swim is finished, there's no gentle transition, no opportunity to catch your breath. The competitors are pulling off their wetsuits as they run out of the water; a very quick change and they jump on the bikes, trainers already attached to the pedals. After what is for many at least a five-hour cycle, the athletes then jump off their bikes, and a full marathon begins. The time frame of 17 hours given to complete an Ironman means if you don't finish within that time, none of it counts.

Triathlon is one of the fastest growing sports in Ireland and Ironman is the ultimate goal for a triathlete. Eighy Irish took part in the 2007 Austrian Ironman, one of 15 official Ironman competitions worldwide. Three walked under the Irish flag at the parade of nations in Hawaii's World Championships, and among them was Alan Ryan from Skerries.

Three years ago, at the age of 38, the self-confessed "overweight, ex-smoking, TV sports fan" began training for his first Ironman competition. "I wasn't looking for a middle crisis," Alan explains, "but a trip to Killee a few years ago to watch my younger brother Fergus (33) do a triathlon somehow led to both of us entering the Ironman in Australia." The brothers don't come from a sporting family, although Fergus has always had a love of cycling. Alan, who had played a bit of school's rugby, decided he would make a comeback. He was put off for another 10 years however on learning of Irish rugby centre Brendan Mullins' retirement at 27 years of age. "I thought, 'What's the bloody point? By the time I get fit I'll be time to retire.'" When he went to watch his brother in the Kenmare triathlon and realised there were people in their 50s and 60s participating his interest was sparked.

The brothers entered the Klagenfurt Ironman and decided to video-record their training. "The documentary *Stonemond* is the result. Training began on new year's day 2005 with, as Fergus differentiates, "far Alan falling off the bike halfway up Mount Leinster in Wickford and kicking it furiously in temper." This, Alan later tells a video diary, "cutting a more than generous roll of flesh from his middle, 'interferes with my cycling'."

The two brothers went about their six months of training in separate and very different ways. Fergus, along with two friends, sought the advice of professional trainers and hired experienced Ironman to coach them. "They had their fitness levels tested at DCU's Department of Sports Science, where they were hooked up to heart-rate monitors and various computers and machines. Their individual video diaries recorded early morning

sessions before work, training on cold, wet weekends, the organisational nightmare of washing and drying sports wear, and a strong degree of competitive awareness as to how one was faring against the other. They had no idea, however, what Alan was doing down in Emlinortilly.

As it turned out, Alan had a more maverick approach to the competition. Despite offers of advice and help from his brother, Alan was intent on doing his own thing. He set up a stationary exercise bike in the kitchen of his home and spent the winter there, pedalling for hours in nothing but his boxer shorts which, Fergus conceded, saved a lot on washing. On one particular day, the Six Nations was on so Alan set the bike up in front of the television and cycled his way through three back-to-back games, finishing six hours later in a puddle of sweat. While Fergus had tubes and wires coming out of his chest and arms at DCU, Alan went the less technical route and dropped a 50-cent piece into the talking scales at the local chemist. After four months of hard training both brothers decided to tackle Mount Leinster together, only for Alan to pull out at the last minute when he discovered that he had cop-

'Initially, it's just to say I've done an Ironman and that's that but it becomes a way of life, an addiction'

roded the handlebars of his bicycle with his own perspiration and needed to replace them.

However, from the sweaty, deeply chrysalis, a lighter, fitter and very determined Alan emerged. Fergus believes Alan started getting competitive around about the time he realised he could actually do it. As race day approached, Alan's focus and confidence is evident in the documentary. "Even though it's all 'go team' and American high-fiving beneath it we're all thinking, I want to beat that bastard!" His younger brother's race tactics were somewhat less aggressive. "It's funny," Fergus admitted, "I just wanted to finish and be done with the thing."

Against the odds, Alan finished his first Ironman at the age of 38, in under 10 hours, almost 50 minutes ahead of Fergus. Three years later Alan completed his fourth competition, the Ironman World Championship in Hawaii, an event only made more significant by his subsequent beach wedding to long-term girlfriend Eimear.

"Initially, you're going to do one for the experience just to check it up and say I've done an Ironman and that's that. But it becomes a way of life, an addiction, but a good addiction." The brothers have entered their next Ironman in Germany in July and training has already started. This time round Alan is starting off with more confidence. "I would even race Fergus. He enjoys cycling too much and neglects training for the other disciplines. But he's still young and should get better with age. When he improves, I'll enjoy beating him more."

W TAKE IT TO THE LIMIT

WHAT could a person to swim 24 miles, then cycle the distance from Dublin to Berlin, and finish off with a 56-mile marathon? Why, for that matter, would someone run six consecutive marathons in one week, or trek through harsh Antarctic terrain with nothing but a backpack and a canvas tent for shelter? What exactly is it that is motivating an increasing number of ordinary men and women to push themselves to the limits of mental and physical endurance?

Irish names are appearing on race lists all over the world for Ironman competitions, multiple and ultra marathons and extreme adventure challenges. Closer to home, the increasing popularity of events such as the Killybegs triathlon – also 'Head of the West' – the addition of an ultra-marathon option in the Comrades Marathon and high elevation rallies for programmes such as RTE's recent *Beyond Endurance* are all indicators that a sub-culture of endurance sport is breaking into Irish main stream.

So what constitutes an "endurance" sport? Location is one factor: the Boston marathon, Ironman, Heartbreak Hill, poles in comparison with marathons and in mountain ranges such as the Andes or the Himalayas. Add to that, distance and time: an ultra-marathon is a full marathon plus a half, basically a 40-mile run, while Ironman triath-

lons are given 17 hours to complete a race. And for that, from endurance. X-factor, all mind conditions are usually either self-imposed or desert-bred, making somewhere like the north pole or Chinn's Gobi Desert an ideal location for an endurance athlete.

Accidents surrounding the sport's beginner bodies: 42-year-old ultra-marathoner Dean Karanovic described having to run along the white lines on the road during the Death Valley ultra-marathon to prevent his trailors from making a *Beyond Endurance* participant fold of the unexpected danger the men in particular faced on their Antarctic adventures – getting foodies when relieving themselves. Given that they are normal, sane people, it is difficult to understand the impetus behind why they put themselves in these situations in the first place. Certainly, there are factors present in Ireland now that allow for the possibility of these sports. Widespread access to the internet means information is easily available and the entry barriers are on the decline. Sports psychologists, like those of the Institute of Technology, Tralee believe therein lies the answer – the challenge. By far the majority of entrants are male, in the 35-45 age group. According to Klagenfurt, "when men reach that age category, they feel a vacuum in their lives that sport and competition fulfill." He believes endurance athletes, rather than being a mediocre golfer or runner, look beyond what is expected of the normal psyche.

Swimming the Irish Sea? A marathon in the Gobi Desert? The Dublin City one seemingly is no longer enough as more Irish people try endurance athletics. Olivia Smyth talks to the best of them. Photographs: Mark Condren