

Triathlete maintains strict regimen to prepare for Ironman competition this month

This is another in the series of articles that will accompany the "Make Your Move" program and feature Hanford workers who are physically active. While most people who seek to increase their level of activity to improve fitness would not consider the Ironman competition, shorter-distance triathlons offer participants the opportunity to compete in swimming, cycling and running all in one event.

First, the participants swim 2.4 miles in a lake or ocean; then they bicycle 112 miles; and then they run a marathon — 26.2 miles. This grueling itinerary makes up the competition known as the Ironman Triathlon. Leslie Wolff, a project lead for the Web Services Group at Lockheed Martin Information Technology, will join eight other Hanford workers to compete in the Ironman USA Coeur d'Alene Triathlon on June 29. The anticipated 2,000 participants in this event range in age from 19 to 77 years.

Among the Hanford competitors will be Leslie's husband, John Wolff, a mechanical engineer at CH2M HILL Hanford Group. The Wolffs are Tri-City natives, Leslie being a graduate of Pasco High School and John a graduate of Kennewick High School. John introduced Leslie, a track and cross-country runner and swimming instructor, to the triathlon, and she has been an enthusiast ever since.

The Ironman competition began in 1978, when U.S. Navy Commander John Collins came up with the competition to settle a debate among competitors of a running race in Hawaii: Who is the most fit — swimmers, runners or other athletes? Collins' solution was to combine three existing races together and have competitors complete the races in succession: the Waikiki Roughwater Swim (2.4 miles), the Around Oahu Bike Race (112 miles) and the Honolulu Marathon (26.2 miles). Whoever would finish first would be known as the Ironman. In Ironman competitions, women and men compete in separate groups, and participants are further divided into age groups.

The typical triathlon season opens in April and runs through September, but training regimens continue year-round. Wolff trains six days a week, varying the combinations and distances of swimming, cycling and running each training day.



At the Canada Triathlon Championship in August 2000, Wolff won the Best Overall Woman title, finishing in just over 12 hours and 23 minutes.



Wolff participated in the 'Onionman' Triathlon in Walla Walla in 2001.

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Over the Memorial Day holiday weekend she and fellow triathletes braved the Columbia River's 54-degree temperatures to train. The swimmers tied inflatable kids' water toys to themselves to make themselves more visible to boaters. "The toys also help when you get a cramp. You hop on the toy until the cramp passes," said Wolff. "The toys do slow us down, but it is better than being hit by a boat." During triathlons, participants swim in waters where boats are prohibited during the race, so they have no need for the colorful markers. Wolff's regular swimming workouts begin at 5:30 a.m. in the indoor pool at the Tri-City Court Club in Kennewick.

Wolff credits her bike-handling skills to experiences and instruction from her husband, who is her coach, and members in the weekly bike class, which also originates from the Tri-City Court Club. "Training is easier when you know that there are 15 to 20 other people who are working just as hard and hurting as much as you are," Wolff said.

In training for the marathon, Wolff runs "all over the Tri-Cities." In her training regimen, she varies the type and timing of running, from 45 minutes to three hours.

What does it take to fuel the body of a triathlete? A lot. "I eat for three. But it is imperative to choose the right kinds of foods for this level of activity. I need to include proteins to rebuild and maintain muscle tissue, and I am snacking on a lot of fruits and vegetables rather than the sweets that I love," said Wolff.

In the Canusa Triathlon Championship held in Harrison Hot Springs, British Columbia in August 2000, Wolff took the Best Overall Woman's title, completing the race in just over 12 hours and 23 minutes. Although this was not an Ironman-sanctioned race, the distances — 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bicycling and 26.2-mile run — were the same as for the Ironman races.

Wolff has two bicycles that she uses for training and racing. During Ironman races she changes from a wetsuit to biking shorts with seat padding, to running shorts and shoes.

Wolff is using her upcoming participation in the Coeur d'Alene Ironman Triathlon to raise money for the American Cancer Society. Donors can sponsor her on a per-mile basis or make a lump-sum donation. In addition, as part of its philanthropic mission, the Janus Foundation will donate from \$700 to \$10,000 to the designated charity of the Ironman winners.

If she wins in Coeur d'Alene, will Wolff be an 'Ironwoman?' Actually, every person who finishes this race, regardless of gender and finishing time, is called an Ironman. And rightly so. ■