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IRON HEART

BRIAN BOYLE'S
INSPIRATIONAL STORY

THE BEYER PROJECT

ONE MAN'S
QUEST FOR KONA

2010 EVENT CALENDAR





The Experience of Being Alive

BY DAVID GLOVER

“People say that we’re all seeking the meaning for life. I don’t think that’s what we’re really seeking. I think that what we’re seeking is an experience of being alive...”

– Joseph Campbell

When I tell someone whom I just met that I do Ironman® triathlons, with their 2.4 mile-swims, 112-mile bike rides, and 26.2-mile runs, I typically get three questions:

- How many have you done?
- How do you train for something like that?
- Why do you do it?

The first question is the easiest to answer: “26.”

“Wow!” is usually the response. I smile.

The second question is a little tougher to answer, as I attempt to explain a typical workout week: 2-4 swim workouts, 3-5 rides, and 3-4 runs, for a total weekly volume of anywhere from ten to twenty-five hours per week, depending on where I am in my training cycle. “It’s my lifestyle,” I explain further, with another smile.

More “Wow!”

However, the third question is perhaps the most important to answer and for us, as athletes, to understand: “Why do you do it?” This question is universal to any person competing in any event at any distance.

This question is important because it gets to the guts of why we’re out there completing a triathlon or any other event in the first place. When the conditions get tough and our bodies start to hurt from the exertion, dehydration, cramping, sunburn, heat, cold, etc., the “Why” is what will help keep us going if our reason is strong enough.

We all have different “Whys” for doing the events we do. For many, triathlon is a new challenge taken up after a period of inactivity, or after focusing exclusively on a single sport, like running. For others, triathlon is a way to lose weight or to raise funds to support a worthy cause like cancer research. I met a group of people at the Luray Triathlon who were doing the sprint race as a result of a friendly bet over drinks one night.

For competitive triathletes, triathlons become a challenge in which to master both the event and themselves.

Understanding your “Why” is critical to achieving success, however you may choose to define it – whether it’s finishing, placing, or winning. Having a strong enough “Why” will help you get you to your goals. On the other hand, not having a strong enough “Why” can lead to disappointment and disillusionment. Time and again, I’ve seen athletes attempt to qualify for Kona and fall short by only a minute or two. In a ten-hour race, a minute or two is a fraction of the entire 140.6 miles - a slow transition, a low point on the bike, or walking through two aid stations on the run. First understanding, then keeping the “Why” front and center in your mind during your race might make the difference and give you back those extra minutes.

Why do I do it?

When I began doing triathlons in 1995, I had been diagnosed and treated for cancer earlier that year. Triathlon was a way for me to prove to myself that even though I had cancer, cancer did not have me (my “Why”). That “Why” fueled me to longer distances and ultimately to Ironman Canada in 1997. Beating my cancer became a source of strength during my races when I felt really bad, which inevitably happens at some point during an Ironman.

Now, my “Why” is, as Joseph Campbell said, seeking “the experience of being alive.” For me, racing an Ironman triathlon is real and raw, as I spend 9-10 hours within myself, through periods of discomfort, perspiration, and exertion. Although the Ironman race distances are all the same, the race experience is never the same, even at the same venue. During an Ironman, I feel alive and focused. Everything else in my life becomes irrelevant from the time the gun goes off until I cross the finish line. I crave that feeling.

Why do you do it?

Author of Full Time & Sub-Nine: Fitting Iron Distance Training into Everyday Life, David Glover dabbles extensively in triathlon as an Ironman-distance triathlete, coach, writer, and race director. He has helped hundreds of individuals achieve their triathlon goals, from finishing a sprint triathlon to qualifying for Kona. As a triathlete, his accolades include 26 Ironman finishes with an 8:51 Ironman PR, and being the 2007 inductee into the Vineman Hall of Fame. To learn more about David, please visit: www.davidglover.net. For information about his triathlon coaching and consulting services, please visit: www.enduranceworks.net

