

Three Times the Pain!

David Franks, our Sports Correspondent, has been investigating the sport known as the 'triathlon'. Introduced into the Olympic Games in 2000, it is one of the most gruelling tests of fitness and stamina.

Swimmers, cyclists and runners are among the fittest athletes in the world. Each sport demands vigorous training, a controlled diet and plenty of stamina and determination.

So, just imagine, in one race, you have to swim, cycle and run without stopping! Well, that's what triathletes do!

The race begins with a 1.5 kilometre swim. You are not in a warm swimming pool sheltered from wind, rain or soaring temperatures. This is in open water – a freezing lake or across a harbour.

After swimming (no time to get dry!), you have to be ready to cycle 40 kilometres. This is not in a flat, indoor velodrome, but on the open road with all its climbs, twists and turns, and weather!

After getting off your bicycle – if you can manage that – there is still the 10 kilometre run to complete. This is not



on a purpose-built running track but, again, on the open road.

So, why do people put themselves through this? One young triathlete, Luke Read, told me, 'For me, it's all about the challenge. If you get into this sport, you are probably good at one of the disciplines, but not so good at the others. You have to train hard at all three. It's no good being the faster swimmer if you can't cycle very fast. It's no good being great at the 10 kilometre run, if you climb out of the water way behind the others. It's keeping the three things going and always trying to get better.'

Do you think a triathlon is for you? I'll stick to writing about it!



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