

TYPES OF RACES

Marathon race (history)

Long-distance foot race deriving its name from Marathon, Greece. According to legend, in 490 , Pheidippides, a runner from Marathon, carried news of victory over the Persians to Athens. In the first modern Olympics of 1896, a commemorative event retraced his route. The race soon became an Olympic event, its distance standardized in 1908 at 26 mi, 385 yd (42.195 km). The popularity of running as part of a physical fitness boom in the 1970s provoked a proliferation of marathons, some of them televised. Races in Tokyo, New York City, and elsewhere joined the famed Boston Marathon (begun in 1897). Tens of thousands of runners entered these and less celebrated marathons seeking to achieve personal records and to test their endurance. One of the most influential male runners was Bill Rodgers, who won the Boston and New York City marathons four times each between 1975 and 1980. Until the 1970s, women were largely ignored in (or excluded from, as at Boston) marathon racing, but in 1984, American Joan Benoit won the first Olympic race for women, and Grete Waitz won the New York City marathon nine times in 1978—88. Confronting the limits of endurance, some athletes enter ultra-marathons, races of 50 miles or more, or of periods like 24 hours. The current marathon record for men is 2:04:42, set by Morocco's Haled Khannouchi (Chicago, 1999); for women it is 2:20:47, set by Kenya's Tegla Loroupe (Rotterdam, 1998).

Motivation: Segment 1

Triathlon

A triathlon is a sports event which combines three sports, typically running, biking, and swimming. During a triathlon, competitors perform all three sports sequentially without stopping, in an attempt to beat the clock. People of all ages and sizes compete in triathlons, although a circuit of professional athletes dominates the triathlon world, much like with other sports events. Training for a triathlon, as well as competing, can be a great way to get in shape and enjoy sports. In addition, many triathlons are held to benefit charity, much like marathons, which encourages athletes at varying levels of experience and physical ability to compete.

Because a triathlon involves competing against a clock, rather than against other athletes, it is an individualized but not brutally competitive sport. Usually groups of athletes are sent out in stages, to avoid clogging up the field, typically beginning with professionals and following with amateurs broken up by age group. A variation on the triathlon is a relay triathlon, in which a different athlete completes each stage.

The swimming stage typically takes place in a lake or the open ocean. As soon as athletes emerge from the water, they immediately change into cycling gear, as the transition time between stages is counted in the overall time. After cycling, the athletes change shoes to run, and the course is considered complete once the athletes have crossed the finish line. In longer triathlons, help stations along the way offer water, food, electrolytes, and other supplies to athletes, along with first aid for injuries.

The length of a triathlon can vary immensely. In a super sprint triathlon, athletes compete over very short distances, typically a **quarter mile** (400 meter) **swim**, a **six mile** (10 kilometer) **bike ride**, and a **one and a half mile** (two and a half kilometer) **run**.

Ironman Triathlon

By contrast, the, held annually in Hawaii, features a **2.4 mile** (3.8 kilometer) **swim**, a **110 mile** (180 kilometer) **bike ride**, and a **26.2 mile** (42.2 kilometer) **bike ride**.

In order to compete in the iron man competition, the athlete must win one of the slots that are available in a number of domestic or international locations. Some locations that host the qualifying events include Japan, South Africa, the Canary Islands, Europe, and the United States. Each location has a different number of available slots, and the way they are won is different from one location to the next. Some slots are also made available through a lottery drawing.

The number of iron man competitors would be even greater if they did not have to first pass through the rigorous qualifying event. In fact, more than 3,000 hopefuls enter the iron man lottery every year in hopes of finding a slot. However, only 150 iron man spots are awarded through the lottery to United States citizens, and 50 are awarded internationally.

Ultraman Triathlon

An even more grueling event, the Ultraman Triathlon takes place over three days, and covers 320 miles (515 kilometers).

Bicycle racing or cycling

An internationally popular sport conducted on closed courses or the open road. Track racing takes place at a velodrome, usually a banked 1,093.6 ft (.333 km) oval. Olympic medals are awarded in individual and team track events, including the sprint, which features a duel between two finalists. Another track event is the pursuit, in which racers begin at opposite sides of the circuit and attempt to catch each other. The Olympics include road races, but the best-known road events are grueling multi-day races, especially the **Tour de France** (begun in 1903), which covers some 2,500 mi (4,000 km) in more than twenty daily stages. Tour de France cyclists ride for teams that share prize money and employ various strategies to aid each other, but an individual winner emerges from both time trials and races over varied terrain, including downhill mountain rides at speeds above 70 mph (113 kph). In 1996 mountain biking, featuring varied off-road events (cross-country, hill climb, slalom), debuted as an Olympic event. Cyclocross, long popular in Europe and gaining in the United States, involves racing around an obstacle-filled course.