

The Beginning

Everything started on February 18, 1978 on the streets of Honolulu Hawaii where 15 men were part of the first Ironman Triathlon. Just before the race started, these 15 competitors received each three sheets of paper where they could find the rules and the description of the route. Handwritten on the last page it said: *"Swim 2.4 miles! Bike 112 miles! Run 26.2 miles! Brag for the rest of your life"*.

12 finished the competition. Gordon Haller, a sport enthusiast taxi driver, crossed the finish line in first place with a time of 11 hours, 46 minutes and 58 seconds; he became the first "Ironman" of history.

In 1979, the second year of the race, only 15 athletes started off the competition, among them was Lyn Lemaire, a cyclist from Boston who was the first woman to finish an Ironman, she placed fifth overall. The winning time belonged to Tom Warren from California with 11 hours, 15 minutes and 46 seconds, thanks to an article about his victory, published by Sports Illustrated; he became a celebrity in the Triathlon world.

The ABC's coverage in 1980 and 1981 increased the interest for this race in athletes all over the world but the most important broadcasting moment for Ironman Triathlon was about to come next year .

In 1982, Julie Moss, a college student of the University of San Diego, was leading the women's competition, after an impressive bike performance that moved her towards the first position and started to run with a great advantage, but as she was running her energy levels started going down in the last 5 miles of the competition; Kathleen McCartney, another competitor from San Diego, started to get closer to Moss. 20 meters before the finish line Julie Moss couldn't continue and fell down, she tried to stand up and continue but her legs didn't respond anymore, instead of giving up, she started crawling towards the end of the course. Although McCartney passed her, Moss won the heart of millions of people who watched her effort and determination. Her struggle to finish was broadcasted and remains as one of the most inspiring moments that the world of sports has ever seen.

Instantly, competing in an Ironman became the dream of all triathletes, so organizers set up a qualification system in order to control the number of participants.

From any point of view, the Ironman represents a big challenge for the body, mind and spirit for both professional athletes and amateurs. It is focus on dedication, courage and perseverance of athletes who constantly prove that "anything is possible".

For the first time ever, Mexico has the opportunity of being part of the Ironman's history, of being part of the World Series and to be an official qualifying event for the well known and worldwide famous: Hawaii Ironman.

On November 29 at the Island of Cozumel, will take place the COZUMEL's IRONMAN 2009. More than 2000 athletes from all over the world have an appointment to prove that the dream is possible, that in Mexico we're prepared to host world class events and that Mexican triathletes

have the level and the capacity to compete for a spot in Kona, Hawaii. It will be precisely here in Cozumel, that Mexico, being the host country, will present the largest participation with close to 800 Triathletes.

The triathletes from the state Quintana Roo and I invite you to follow closely the monthly articles that we'll be publishing from June to November. Among them, the athletes from Cozumel will be swimming, riding and running the proposed Ironman course and will be sharing with all of you their experience so you have the opportunity to train accordingly and be better prepared for the conditions you will probably be facing in November.

If you are reading this article you're surely one of the privileged participants that will compete in Cozumel, which is commonly known as "Heaven on Earth". It will arguably be called the most beautiful Ironman in the world. Therefore we invite you to join us in this virtual adventure. We hope that all of the information published here will be useful for you to be better prepared.

I'm privileged to be part of the Organizing Committee, and as a technical adviser and spokeswoman for the Ironman Cozumel my concern is to be all well prepared: athletes, coaches, organizers, volunteers and clubs to welcome the world and to represent with dignity and pride our country.

We want the name of Cozumel and Mexico to enter your hearts, so your experience is transmitted all around the World. We want this event to be well known, to receive your comments, to create expectation, to be better every time, and to wait with enthusiasm the long-awaited day, November 29, 2009; in Cozumel, Mexico to participate in the inaugural Ironman Cozumel 2009. Would you join me? See you there!

Nelly Becerra