

Triathlon

The Sport That Does It All

by John James

You're talking sports with your friends. Someone asks a question. "What's the world's most **demanding** sport?" Kim replies, "I think football is the hardest sport." "Soccer is the toughest sport," Miguel says.

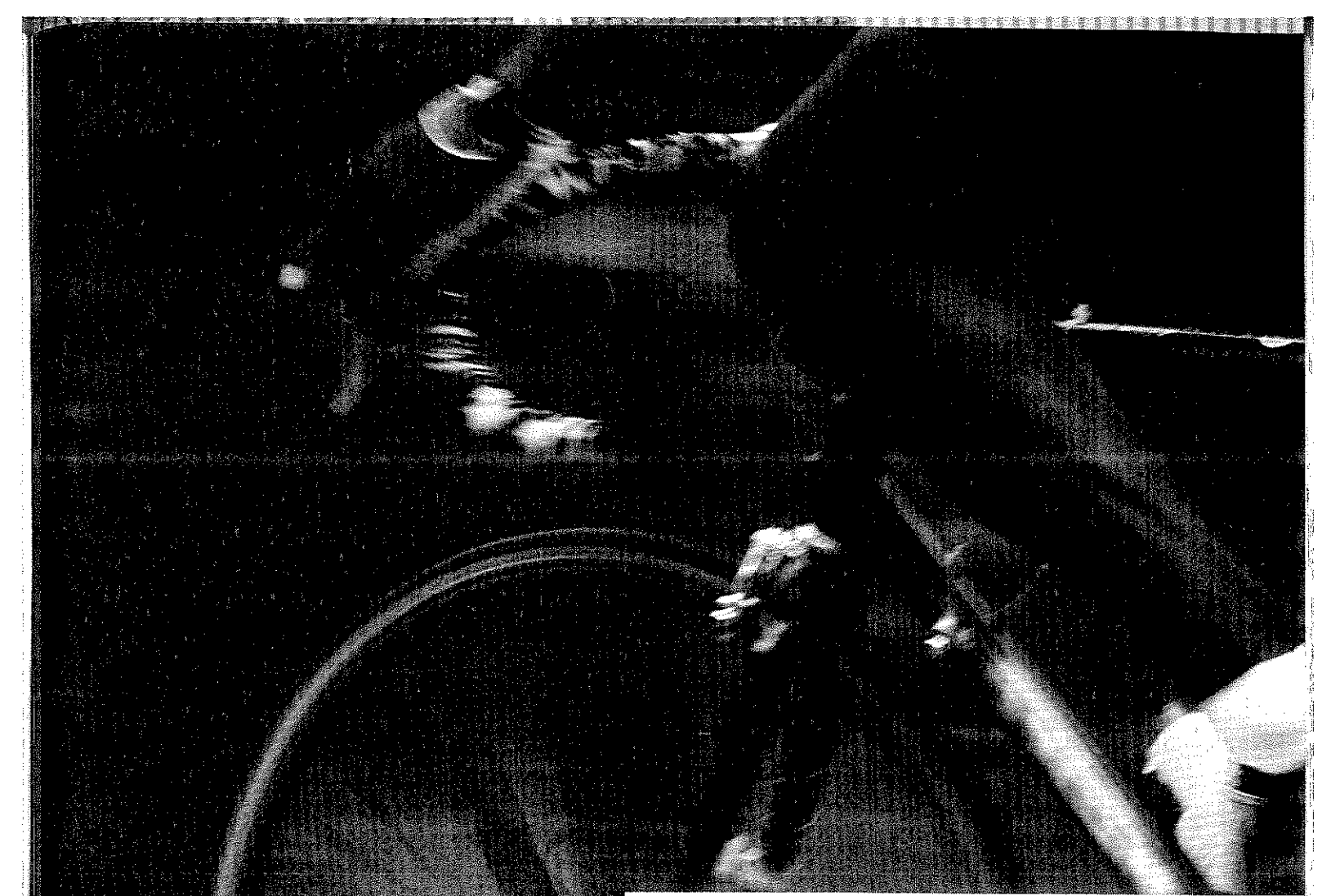
You're not sure what to say. Well, the next time you hear that question, try this. Say, "The triathlon." More and more people believe it is the hardest sport. What is a triathlon?

The word *triathlon* comes from the Greek language. *Tri* means "three"; *athlon* means "sporting event." There are three different races in one triathlon. There is a swimming race, a bike race, and a footrace. Triathletes must be good at all three. And they must finish all three races the same day. There is no time to **pause** between events.

Every triathlon is difficult, but some are shorter than others. The sprint is the shortest triathlon. "The Ironman" is the longest and hardest; it takes more than eight hours from start to finish. In the Ironman, the swimming

Set Your Purpose

In what sport do athletes need a swimsuit, a bike, and sneakers? Read this article to find out about a very hard sport called the triathlon.



Think About It

Do you agree that
the triathlon is the
most demanding sport?
Why or why not?

race comes first. The athletes start out at the same time. They each swim about two-and-one-half-miles. The bike race comes next. All the athletes start to bike immediately after they finish the swim. The bike race covers 112 miles. It goes uphill and down. The athletes must **pedal** extra hard going uphill. The footrace is the last event in the Ironman. The footrace covers about 26 miles. By this point, the athletes are very tired. Their wish to **succeed** keeps them going.

The athlete who finishes the three events in the fastest time wins. But no triathlete is a loser. Just crossing the **final** finish line makes each one a winner.

Name _____

Date _____

Check Your Understanding

Fill in the letter with the best answer for each question.

- Which race in the Ironman comes first?
 - the bike race
 - the footrace
 - the swimming race
 - the sprint
- Athletes are usually most tired at the beginning of the Ironman
 - bike race.
 - footrace.
 - swimming race.
 - sprint.
- Which words help us understand the sequence, or order, of events in the Ironman?
 - swim, bike, foot
 - bike, foot, swim
 - sprint, Ironman, triathlon
 - next, last, first
- Which sentence is not true?
 - All triathlons have three races.
 - All triathlons are the same length.
 - All triathlons have a swimming race.
 - All triathlons are completed in one day.
- Why do some people think the triathlon is the hardest sport?
 - because they like to argue
 - because triathlon athletes are stronger than wrestlers
 - because triathlon athletes need to be expert in three sports
 - because triathlons last longer than any other sports event

Vocabulary

Find each vocabulary word in the selection. The words and sentences around it will help you figure out its meaning.

Fill in the letter with the best definition of the underlined word.

- Triathlon is probably the world's most demanding sport.
 - easy
 - hard
 - short
 - tiny
- There is no time to pause between events.
 - move faster
 - keep going
 - stop for a short time
 - turn in a circle
- The athletes pedal up a steep hill.
 - ride a bike
 - swim
 - slide
 - march
- Their wish to succeed keeps them going.
 - stop
 - quit
 - fail
 - do well
- Just crossing the final finish line makes each one a winner.
 - first
 - second
 - last
 - start

Name _____

Date _____

Word Work

The letters **ar** stand for the sound you hear in *car*. The letters **or** stand for the sound you hear in *horn*. The letters **ir** stand for the sound you hear in *bird*.

car horn bird

Read the definitions. Complete the word by adding the letters *ar*, *or*, or *ir*.

1. part of a rose th__n
2. part of a body __m
3. not south n__th
4. large fish sh__k
5. number after 29 th__ty

Each sentence below has an incomplete word. Add *ar*, *or*, or *ir* to complete the word.

6. The triathlon is my favorite sp__t.
7. A sh__t triathlon is called a sprint.
8. The athletes must pedal h__d when biking uphill.
9. The swimming race comes f__st in the Ironman triathlon.
10. St__t running as soon as you finish the bike race.

Write Now

In this selection, you read about the events in an Ironman triathlon. Describe what happens during each one of the three events. Use a chart like the one below to help you organize your ideas.

Ironman Triathlon		
First Event	Second Event	Third Event
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

- Plan to write a paragraph summarizing what happens in an Ironman Triathlon. Think of phrases that tell about each of the three events in an Ironman triathlon. Write these phrases in the different parts of the chart.
- Write your summary. Use the ideas from your chart to help you. Be certain that you tell about the different events of the Ironman Triathlon in the correct sequence or order. Add a conclusion that tells how you feel about this sports event.