

HUDSON VALLEY TRIATHLON CLUB

Iron Gifts

By Mark Wilson

Have you ever completed an Ironman and been asked “Why do you DO that?” It may be an un-answerable question, but if you put some thought into it some good reasons why may arise. The most obvious answer is the incredible fitness gained from the experience. However, what are the more intangible gifts offered by the ever-grueling Ironman distance. Let’s do a search and see what we get!

The Ironman event gives the gift of self-esteem. If you have any doubt in your head about who you are and where you’re going, enter an Ironman. If you survive the training, and then the race, you will have tapped into parts of yourself you may or may not have wanted to discover. Your spouse can vouch for this! The interesting aspect regarding these newfound treasures is that you’re sure to want more. You’ll feel so proud of yourself for completing the thing that you’ll want more of it...because it makes you feel good!

The Ironman event offers the gift of humility. If you have ever been accused of being a self-absorbed ego-maniac, enter an Ironman. There’s a couple of reasons why this would be good for you, the first is because you’re bound to meet others just like you who will reflect your outrageous arrogance back to you which (hopefully) will encourage you to tone it down a bit (think Rudolph) and secondly, it may instill in you a sense of gratitude for living that has been missing in your daily activities. However, most individuals who participate in the Ironman realize how quickly one can be humbled to tears anywhere between mile 1 and 140.6 due to a foot to the head, flat, muscle cramp, fuel-shortage, etc; it’s a long day!

The Ironman event offers the gift of giving. How often do you get as much personal attention as on the day of your Ironman? Literally hundreds of people (especially your loved-ones) awaken between 3-4 am on race-day just for you; they create posters for you, number you, take off your wetsuit, help change your clothes, feed you, fetch your bike, feed/hydrate you some more (4-8 hours worth), change your clothes again, lather you with sunscreen, feed you again, scream encouraging words to you (wait), scream encouraging words to you (wait again), scream encouraging words to you (wait some more, etc.), catch you upon finishing, massage you and then finally...clean-up after you. Can you imagine? It hasn’t been that good for you since you came to this Earth once upon a time! If there was ever a time for a big “thank you” it’s at an Ironman.

Now, when people ask you “Why do you DO that?” you’ll have at least three answers for them. Or, you may ask yourself the question “Why DO I do that?” and find that the answers you discover are more valuable than any triathlon training book on the market today. See ya out there!

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