

Christina

Peterson

by Patrick Sasser

Consuming about 6,000 calories a day, Christina Peterson went through six pairs of running shoes and one pair of biking shoes in a typical year of training. Peterson's training focused on: swimming 2.4 miles, biking 112 miles and running 26.2 miles.

Peterson, 24, was the graduate assistant for the men and women's track teams and when she was not working for the University, she trained. She had already competed in 10 triathlons and planned to do her first Ironman Triathlon Nov. 6, 2005 in Panama City Florida. Though the \$450 entry fee was pricy, Peterson said it was worth it.

"People think it's crazy and maybe I like pain, but I'm just super competitive," Peterson said.

Since the age of five, Peterson participated in track and field. She ran throughout high school and ended up at Iowa State University on a track scholarship.

"Running track for so many years left me a little burnt out, and I needed a break from the all-weather track, and it seemed that triathlons fit into my serious sense of competition," she said.

Peterson often got up before the sun to begin her training. She practiced constantly, forcing herself to go through her rigorous practices when she was the most tired. She lifted weights, ran, biked and swam six days a week.

Peterson broke up her training to simulate the competition, biking 40 percent, swimming 30 percent and running 30 percent. Peterson said eating candy ruined the strict diet she would like to have kept.

Peterson said she planned to do triathlons as a second job until she reached her highest level of competition. Triathletes did not peak until they were in their 30s, so Peterson believed she had a long way to go before she made it her profession.

"I wouldn't like it better if they called it Ironperson because Ironman gives it the connotation that only men can do it," Peterson said.

Mental preparation was vital to a successful triathlon Peterson said. Peterson said as she entered the transition stages she was focused. She went over in her mind how she got out of the water quickly, got her wetsuit off and got her biking shoes on. She focused on keeping a good cadence on the bike so that she didn't switch over to anaerobic respiration too quickly in the 112 mile ride. This was all done to save as much time as possible.

"The end of the race is mostly mental as you are physically drained after this intense competition," Peterson said.

She did not take any breaks from her training as the event rapidly approached. Peterson knew if she trained hard and performed to the best of her abilities she would be satisfied with her performance.

"The first time I saw the Ironman on TV, I knew it was something I wanted to do at some point in my life," she said.

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Determination drives a woman's might.

Competing in three different sports, Christina Peterson takes the road less traveled. Peterson, who has been training for years, planned to sign up for the ironman competition to compete against the best from around the United States. *photo by Mike Dye*

