

Marine Wife Takes on World, Wins at Japan ●

IRONMAN

For those who haven't run in an Ironman, the very thought is incomprehensible. The average person wonders why anyone would want to **swim 2.4 miles, ride a bike 112 miles** and **run 26.2 miles** all in one day. For Kailua resident and Marine wife **Deirdre Tennant**, women's winner of the **2003 Japan Ironman**, it's the thought of not competing that makes no sense.

Swimming in college, Tennant began her brush with fame in 2000 after living in Hawaii for three years. Encouraged by friends and family, she entered a local triathlon and found she still enjoyed the challenge of competition. Often separated for long periods from her husband, Capt. Thomas Tennant, the commanding officer for Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, training seemed like just the cure to get through those lonely times.

Tennant entered her first triathlon in May of 2000. The MAG-24 Sprint Triathlon held annually aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii gave her the first taste of victory in a sport that would become such an important aspect of her life. She took 1st place in her division, and 4th place overall. "That was my favorite race of all," she said.

▲ **Tennant starts** the last leg of the 112-mile bicycle portion of the 2003 Japan Ironman competition held in Goto, Nagasaki May 18. She placed 41st in this event of the race with a time of 5:40:17.

Photo courtesy of the Tennant family; Photo illustration by Seth Sirbaugh/R+B Design Co.



< **Tennant** crosses the finish line of the 2003 Japan Ironman triumphantly. She placed 14th overall and 1st in her category, five minutes ahead of her nearest competitor.

Photo courtesy of the Tennant family

in a mass start that could only be described as pure chaos. Setting a swim record 51:37 for the 2.4-mile course, Tennant was the first person out of the water.

"It is a great honor that I did not immediately realize—that I am one of only three women to ever win the swim outright in any Ironman race," said Tennant.

The next closest woman was a full three minutes behind her. Considered a 'dark horse' in the race, Tennant was resolved to take 3rd place when the day was done.

"It was going to be a long day" said Tennant, expressing her feelings that morning.

Coming out of the bike corral to begin the daunting 112-mile bike ride, Tennant was met by Lothar Leder of Germany. Leder, a top triathlete in the world was visibly shaken by the performance of Tennant. Not wanting to be overshadowed by a female competitor, Leder raced to exit the transition area alongside the women's leader.

The bike portion of the Ironman event took her 5:40.17 to complete, which for Tennant would be the most difficult portion of the day.

"I felt alone", she said. "I saw two of the lead women not far behind me and knew they had to be aiming to knock me out of contention."

Those two women, Nicole Leder and Belinda Halloran would be penalized 5 minutes for drafting. The only respite for Tennant was when she passed a Japanese marching band playing 'America the Beautiful.'

"They (spectators) cheered me on. They made me feel welcome and gave

me strength," she said.

Not knowing where her nearest competitor was, Tennant had no idea where she stood in overall competition. She knew she was in 1st place, but for how long? In reality, Tennant was over 5 minutes ahead of her nearest foe.

Some six and half-hours after she began, Tennant found herself on the final leg of her self-imposed torture session. The first woman through the transition from bike to run, she entered the run experiencing some pain in the metatarsal region of her foot.

"It felt like I was running on pins," she said. Determined to get through the race, Tennant pressed on. "Even with the pain in my foot, I felt strong, I never hit the wall, I never got tired until about three miles out from the finish line," she said.

It wasn't until she approached the finish that she realized she had won the race.

"If not for the love and support of my husband, I wouldn't have been able to do it," she said. "He called me right before the race to wish me well. That is what carried me through the race. I only wish he was there to see my Ironman victory."

Tennant looks ahead and waits for her next challenge. **M**

Fukue Island 2003 Ironman Japan Triathlon Goto Nagasaki Race Course



Bike course (yellow & red line)
Bike start: U-Turn Fukue (30km) • Left at **A** (59.5km) • U-Turn at **B** (73.5km) • Right at **C** (84.7km) • Left at **A** (90.4km) • Left at **D** (100km) • Left at **C** (121km) • Left at **A** (127km) • Left at **C** (137km) • Left at **C** (158km) • Straight at **A** (163.6km) • **Bike Finish**

New Women's Swim Record for Japan Ironman

New Swim Record for Japan Ironman
Deirdre Tennant (USA) 0:51:31 2003

New Men's Swim Record for Japan Ironman

Men's New Swim Record
Lothar Leder (GER) 0:51:54 2003

Infographic by Seth Stribaugh/R-B Design Co.

Ten tips to get you through your first Ironman

Geoff Fletcher has finished five Ironman races and draws on his years of experience in preparing for and racing in Ironman events to list these 10 tips.

1. You are what you eat and drink.

And never more so than when balancing your energy output with calorie intake. For the bike leg, gels and energy drinks are OK but eating some solid food that you enjoy will take you that extra few miles.

2. Choose clothing and equipment for comfort over speed.

Those heavier shoes may slow your run but if they protect you better from blisters you'll finish sooner and much happier. If it's likely to be hot, take a cap for the run—it provides some shade and you can put ice in it to cool you down.

3. Use a training plan and keep a diary.

A good flexible training plan will help keep you focused and structure your workouts. A diary or training log will let you look back and analyze what works and what doesn't.

4. Don't start too soon.

Most people can only handle about 12 weeks of heavy mileage training, so don't begin your build up too early in the season.

5. Prioritize your training.

First, make sure you can swim the 2.4 miles with relative ease. No point in bike or run training if you can't make the cut-off on the swim! Next, concentrate on the bike; no matter how good a runner you are, if the bike leg exhausts you, you're going to do a lot of walking.

6. Schedule at least one 100-mile bike time trial.

This is THE best way to check out on the bike nutrition, position and pacing while identifying the areas that could cause you problems during the Ironman.

7. Don't run a marathon in preparation.

If you've never run a marathon before, you'll finish thinking there's no way you'll repeat that after an Ironman swim and bike legs; though believe it or not, the IM run is easier than a straight marathon.

8. Don't set a time goal.

For your first race the ONLY thing that matters is finishing. 7:59 or 15:59 are both Ironman finishes—you get nothing if you bonk and miss the deadline.

9. Walk the aid stations.

The tendency is to try to run as far as possible before having to walk. This is a mistake as you'll fail to eat and drink properly early in the run when it matters most. Also, it is mentally much easier to run 26 one-mile intervals than to contemplate over four hours of steady running.

10. Soak up the atmosphere.

Use the course, competition, spectators and marshals to inspire you. Apart from the few athletes there to pick up prizes, most of you have entered for personal achievement. Encourage others, chat with spectators, thank all the marshals. This is an experience you will never forget, so enjoy something that very few people will ever achieve.

* Complete article can be viewed at <http://www.trisporttepping.co.uk/trainadv/ironman.html>