

Putting it all on the line Athletes to compete in Ironman Canada

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On Sunday, Aug. 26, Penticton will be abuzz as participants embark on one of the toughest, most challenging athletic journeys of their lives.

They'll be competing in the Subaru Ironman Canada, an internationally renowned triathlon historically held in the Okanagan Valley. Competitors will race through a 3.8-kilometre swim, a 180-km bike ride and a 42.2-km run.

This year's triathlon is particularly noteworthy, as it's the 25th edition of the event. According to race organizers, a number of special celebrations have been planned, including the return of course champions, a retrospective evening of music, video and remembrance and a charity hockey game featuring an Ironman all-star team against some former NHL legends. The greater Penticton community is also joining in on the fun, with its museum hosting an Ironman Canada-themed exhibition.



CREDIT: NEWS photo Cindy Goodman
Neil McIver has his sights set on raising \$20,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

So what is it that motivates individuals to embark on this grind of a journey? What are their expectations and some of their goals? What turn of events in their lives prompted them to attempt to meet the challenge? What type of training has it required?

North Shore News reporter Rosalind Duane interviewed a number of the North Shore residents signed up as participants in this year's Subaru Ironman Canada and this is what she found out:

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For Neil McIver, watching the Ironman event for the first time in 2005 was an inspiring experience.

"Literally the hair on the back of my neck stood up watching it, and I think most people who see it live have a similar experience as well. You just feel so much for these athletes trying to get across the finish line," he says. "I was impressed by the level of dedication that it took each individual athlete to accomplish that goal."

The next year, McIver, a West Vancouver resident, once again attended the event and this time he signed up for the 2007 race.

Although he had an idea of what the training would be like, he admits that

"experiencing it is something entirely different."

Serious training started in February, and in the two months leading up to the race, McIver has been training in the pool or on the road for up to 20 hours a week, but that grueling schedule will taper off as race day gets closer. "It's been both tough and very rewarding," says McIver.

He explains that the key to his success so far has been the support of his wife Tricia and his stepson Mitchell.

"They're the greatest pit crew in the world. They've been great," says McIver, who is participating to raise money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Currently at \$17,000, he's hoping to raise \$20,000 for the cause.

"This time I'm doing it simply to cross the finish line but I'd like to train the next time for speed," he says, noting that he plans to take on more Ironman events in the future. To donate to McIver's fundraising drive, contact him at neilmciver@shaw.ca.

--Rosalind Duane