

ARMSTRONG

29

3 TIMES FIT

On land, on wheels, or in the water, this teen is a champ.

A Lean Teen Sports Machine

Lance Armstrong is 19 years old, 170 pounds, and six feet of trained muscle. He is a triathlete—an athlete who competes in triathlons.

"I first saw a triathlon on TV," says Lance. "I said to myself, 'Someday, I'm going to do that.'"

Lance kept his promise: He started training. "When I started out, I was mostly a swimmer," he says. "But a triathlete needs to work on swimming, running, and cycling."

So Lance started working out with his high school track team. He also cycled two hours a day.

At 14, he began competing in

PHOTOS: Allsport/Gary Nezhik

short triathlons in his home state of Texas. After a few years, Lance started racing triathlons for pro race and finished in sixth place.

Today Lance competes in triathlons three months out of the year. Most of his races are Olympic-distance triathlons. Competitors swim .9 mile, cycle 25 miles, and run 6.2 miles. When Lance isn't racing in triathlons, he's busy practicing with the U.S. Olympic Cycling Team.

In the Race

Wonder what it's like to race in a triathlon? Here's a typical schedule for Lance.

On the day before the race, Lance registers and attends a prerace meeting.

He learns about the race course, the rules, and the officials.

At 5:30 a.m. the day of a race, Lance takes a number. It's written in waterproof marker on his arm and leg.

At 7:30 a.m., the racers are ready to start. A thousand or more swimmers plunge into the water at the same time. "The first part of the race is always swimming," says Lance. "And there's a good reason for it—safety. When you're running, you can slow down or walk. When you're cycling, you can coast. But a tired swimmer can drown."

At 8:00 a.m., swimmers leave the water and race for their bicycles. They quickly change into cycling shorts, shoes, and helmets. (Many triathletes wear special one-piece Lycra-spandex "tri-suits" for all three events.)

Aid stations are set up along the race course. Racers can get water, sports drinks, bananas, oranges, and even chocolate chip cookies.

"The main thing is to drink lots of fluids," says Lance. "Dehydration is dangerous. I carry two water bottles on my bike."

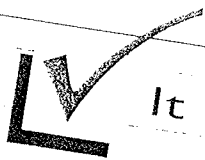
At around 9:25 a.m., racers are finishing the cycle course and changing into running shoes.

About 10:30 a.m., the best runners are crossing the finish line. Sweat is pouring down. Muscles are aching. People are taking showers under bottles and hoses.

"It's a feeling of triumph!" says Lance. "There's nothing like it!"

—Alan Gintzler



Check  It Out

Triathlons come in different sizes. The Ironman race in Kona, Hawaii can take 8 1/2 or more hours to complete. Competitors swim 2.4 miles, cycle 112 miles, and run 26.2 miles. No wonder the Ironman is called the "Granddaddy of Triathlons."

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29

13

1. What does a triathlon consist of?
2. Where is Lance Armstrong's home town?
3. How often does Lance participate in triathlons?
4. What does Lance do when he isn't participating in triathlons?
5. What is the first part of the triathlon?
6. Why is that part of the triathlon first?
7. Where can racers get fluids?
8. What happens if racers don't drink enough fluids?
9. Can women compete in triathlons?
10. What is an Iron Man race?