

This was the age-old question that I sought to answer before making the decision to put down my hard-earned dineros on a registration last July 2004.

I've worked with countless athletes over the years – as a physical therapist and coach - and I've heard many describe their varied motivators for partaking in their sport activities. Each has had their own very personal reason, and I sought the deeper meaning behind mine. When the chips are down, you look to those deeper meanings – and I wanted to make sure that I had them. Many are motivated by the physical challenge. Many are motivated by self-validation. I remember watching the DVD from IMUSA 2003, the last time I'd watched the race as a spectator. In it was a woman that said that Ironman was going to be the greatest day in her life. I stopped for a moment and came to realization number one: I was NOT looking for the “greatest day in my life”. It was a powerful realization – because at that moment, I had a (not so subtle) reminder that my life has been full of wonderful experiences, that I am very fortunate to have gone down the paths in life that I have because they have made me the man that I am now. This thought truly put me at ease – because now I knew why I wasn't doing this – so onwards to finding out why I REALLY wanted to do it.

Strangely enough, about three years ago, I was sitting on the patio with Richard (my best friend for the last 35 years) and we were (nonchalantly, I might add) discussing “doing an Ironman before we turned 40”. Hahaha. Well, I hadn't given it much serious thought at the time, and frankly it wasn't even on my radar. Those who know me well know that I really didn't have much desire to do one. But the initial conversation was intriguing – and if there was anyone in the world that I would enjoy experiencing the event with, it would be Richard. We've shared a lot over the course of the past 35 years. It's hard to believe this story starts back in nursery school!

Many of you probably don't know much about my history. As a child, I suffered from Crohn's

disease – an inflammatory bowel disease. I was diagnosed when I was 15 – at a time when I was 4'8" tall and 68 pounds – though they think I had had it since I was 8 or 9. When I was first admitted to the hospital (a 17 day stay), I was told I was very fortunate to be alive. As a side effect of the Prednisone I was taking for my Crohn's, I developed some longstanding issues with my knees. I had essentially been told then that activities like running wouldn't be a part of my future. Period. End of conversation. Next patient please.

Fast forward to 2004.

So why was I even thinking about any of this nonsense? After thinking about it deeply, and having a stealth discussion with Kurt, Shelley, and Clark (over a Freebird's burrito – anything can get accomplished!) – before anyone caught wind of the idea - I realized that it was all about the mental challenge. All of the most significant accomplishments in my life consisted of overcoming a mental barrier – and even though Crohn's disease was a physical struggle, the mental challenge of "getting on with life on my terms" was still tremendous.

I didn't need an event in my life to define or validate me. I didn't need to prove anything – to myself or anyone else. Hell, after all these years, nothing needed to be proven in my eyes. As a PT, I had put back together countless elite and recreational athletes, allowing them to pursue their goals. As a coach, I had guided over 30 Ironman finishers and had a few qualify for the World Championships. I certainly had an intimate view and knowledge of the world of Ironman already. I was active and healthy. Why bother with all of this? It came down to one simple factor - I needed to know if I was strong enough mentally to do the necessary training – and to race the day on my terms.

So with the realization of having nothing to prove, having already had a life full of wonderful experiences, and the potential to watch Kurt get a maple leaf tattoo if I finished (nothing beats an external motivator!), I registered for the event. I emailed Richard, telling him that I'd "done the deed" ... and unbeknownst to me, he had gone online and "done the deed" himself without telling me that was his plan. "Are you crazy?" I asked the man who had been coached (by me!) through a few sprint races – the extent of his triathlon career. "I know you can get me there" was his response – "you're the only person I'd trust my life to" ...

As we'd say in Canada during hockey season – "Game On"!!!