

## Coast Guardsman Top Military Competitor at Ironman

Story by Lt. Cmdr. C.T. O'Neil, District Seven Public Affairs Officer

MIAMI – Fitness is a common thread among Coast Guardsmen and in today's culture of active lifestyles it's not uncommon to find coasties doing laps in a pool, hitting the jogging trail or saddling-up on a bike for a good work-out on the roadways. It is however uncommon to find someone doing all three activities in one day, much less doing all three in competition form. Yet that is exactly how Lt. j.g. Brian Monaghan of Civil Engineering Unit Miami recently worked up a sweat, beating all other military competitors in the grueling Ironman competition.



KAILUA-KONA, Hawaii – Lt. j.g. Brian Monaghan pedals through the pain while pushing to the finish of the bike portion of the Ironman competition. Competitors had to complete 112 miles by bike as part of the the run, bike and swim competition that is Ironman. Photo courtesy of Lt. j.g. Monaghan and Ironman.

The Ironman Triathlon, held this year on Oct. 13 in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, punishes competitors with a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike race and a 26.2 mile marathon. Monaghan posted time of 9:34:32, earning him first place among the 15 male military competitors, fourth place within his age group (18-24), and 121<sup>st</sup> from a field of 1,713 participants, placing him in the top seven percent of competitors. It's an impressive finish, particularly since it's Monaghan's first Ironman competition.

“This was my first Ironman distance race and it was also the first time I ran a marathon,” said Monaghan, “but I was a cross country and track runner at the academy so I knew I could do it.”

Monaghan gained confidence in his abilities due in part to his successes in Half Ironman races. “I competed in my first two Half Ironman events in the spring of 2007, placing third of 81 in my age group at Ironman 70.3 California and second of 89 in my age group at Ironman 70.3 Orlando,” said Monaghan. “My goal in doing those Half Ironman races was to put up some good times to make the Coast Guard Team and compete in Hawaii in October. I set this goal and had been training towards it since November 2006.”

Unlike the professional competitors who have all day to train for competition, Monaghan had to get training time between his duties at CEU Miami and his academic responsibilities.

“Time management is a huge challenge,” said Monaghan. “Usually I woke up at 5 a.m. to swim and then went to work. I used my lunch break to get a bike ride in and then after the work day I would usually get a third workout in. I'm pursuing my MBA at Florida International University in Miami, carrying 13 credits in the fall and spring semesters.

My life was pretty hectic and it was difficult to maintain a balance between work, school and athletics. I made a lot of sacrifices but it was all worth it.”

Monaghan’s goal of competing in the Ironman was nearly taken from him during a training accident.

“In January I was hit by a motorist while I was riding my bike,” said Monaghan. “I flipped over the car, cracked my helmet and I suffered a slight compression fracture in my back. Luckily, I was able to get physical therapy and continue training after the accident. I still have some back problems now, but it could have been much worse.”

While Monaghan relied on himself to push through his training regimen, he was also able to rely on the Coast Guard for support.

“The Coast Guard funded about \$1,500 of my expenses this year, which was absolutely huge,” said Monaghan. “I participated in Half Ironman 70.3 Oceanside with the help of a \$300 grant from the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Sports Grant Program. With the Ironman World Championships, the Coast Guard funded my registration fee and plane ticket. Furthermore, although I did well in placing fourth of 35 in my age group in Kona, I didn’t technically qualify for the race,” said Monaghan. “I got an entry based on my affiliation with the Coast Guard Team competing in the military division, so even being on the starting line was due to my affiliation with the Coast Guard – I wouldn’t even have been able to gain entry in the race without the Coast Guard,” said Monaghan.

Monaghan’s Coast Guard affiliation also became a source of encouragement as he pressed through the competition.

“It gets kind of tough on the long run in the heat,” said Monaghan, “and it really lifted my spirits through some tough times to hear people shout ‘Go Coast Guard’ the whole time. An Ironman Race is a long day and a lot of things can go wrong, and although my day wasn’t perfect, I just persisted through the through the tough times and got across that line as fast as I could.”

With such an impressive finish for a first-timer and the challenges of training while on active duty, one might think Monaghan would be tempted to rest on his laurels, but he says there’s more challenges ahead as he sets his sites on the Spring 2008 Ironman 70.3 California where he wants to finish in the top 20 and win the 25-29 age group.



KAILUA-KONA, Hawaii – Proudly displaying the Coast Guard emblem, Lt. j.g. Brian Monaghan takes the Hawaiian heat in stride as he runs to the finish of the Ironman Triathlon Oct. 13, 2007. Monaghan finished first among the 15, male military entrants and fourth within his age group. Photo courtesy of Lt. j.g. Monaghan and Ironman.