



National Office Headquarters
5825 Delmonico Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80919-2401
phone 719. 597. 9090
fax 719. 597. 2121
www.usatriathlon.org

A History of Triathlon Timeline

1904 – An event in the Olympic Games was called triathlon, consisting of the long jump, shot put and 100-yard dash.

Sept. 4, 1921 – The Petit Perillon swim club in Marseilles, France, held an event called Course Des Trois Sports: The Race of Three Sports. The race consisted of a bicycle leg of about 7k, a run of 5k, and finished with a 200-meter out-and-back swim, and was won by Lulu Helmet.

1972 - David Pain, celebrating his 50th birthday, held a run-bike biathlon in San Diego, Calif., the first known multisport event in the United States.

September 1974 – While advertising its new race, the San Diego Track Club Newsletter headline read, “Run, Cycle, Swim – Triathlon set for 25th,” using the word “triathlon” for the first time in the modern sense.

January 1977 – John Collins challenged those gathered at the Oahu Perimeter Relay Run awards ceremony to compete in the first Iron Man Triathlon, a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike and 26.2-mile run.

Feb. 18, 1978 – Fifteen men started and 12 men finished the first Iron Man Triathlon, won by Gordon Haller in 11 hours 46 minutes 58 seconds.

May 1979 – A *Sports Illustrated* article by Barry McDermott featured the Hawaii Ironman Triathlon. Entries increased to 108 the following year.

Feb. 6, 1982 – The unforgettable crawl to the Ironman finish line by second-place finisher Julie Moss shown on ABC’s “Wide World of Sports” inspired many to take up triathlon.

April 9, 1982 – The United States Triathlon Association and the American Triathlon Association, both founded earlier that year, decided to merge into one unified national governing body called the United States Triathlon Association.

Sept. 12, 1982 – The first triathlon offering prize money, the Torrey Pines Triathlon, is also the first United States Triathlon Series event, won by Dave Scott.

1983 – The word “triathlon” was added to the Ninth Edition of Webster’s New Collegiate dictionary.

1983 – A spin-off of the San Diego Track Club News called *Triathlon*, as well as *Tri-Athlete* founded by William Katovsky, were the first triathlon publications.

August 1983 – The United States Triathlon Association changed its name to Triathlon Federation/USA.

1985 – Triathlon sparked the cross-training fitness boom. Nike featured pro triathlete Joann Ernst in national ad campaigns, which later featured Bo Jackson and Deion Sanders.

March 31- April 1, 1989 – The International Triathlon Union was founded at its initial Congress in Avignon, France. Les McDonald was elected president.

Aug. 6, 1989 – The first triathlon world championship was held in Avignon, France, using the intermediate or international distance of 1.5k swim, 40k bike and a 10k run.

June 13-16, 1991 – The International Olympic Committee recognized the ITU as the sole international governing body for the sport of triathlon at its 97th session in Birmingham, England.

1993 – The Pan American Games approved triathlon for competition at the 1995 Pan Am Games in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

September 1993 – Actor Tom Cruise completed an 18-mile bicycle leg as part of a relay team in the Malibu Triathlon. Other celebrities participating in the sport in subsequent years include *Baywatch* actress Alexandra Paul, comedian/actor Robin Williams and singer/songwriter Alanis Morissette.

July 23, 1994 – The first Goodwill Games triathlon was held in St. Petersburg, Russia.



MEMBER





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Sept. 4-5, 1994 – At the IOC’s 103rd session in Paris, France, triathlon was named to the Olympic Programme as a medal sport at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia.

March 26, 1995 – The first Pan American Games triathlon is held in Mar del Plata, Argentina. Karen Smyers of the United States wins the women's gold medal

Feb. 26, 1996 – Triathlon Federation/USA changed its name to the present USA Triathlon.

Nov. 1, 1997 – The USOC officially recognized USA Triathlon as an Olympic Sport Organization.

April 1, 1999 – The International Triathlon Union celebrated its 10th anniversary.

July 23, 1999 – Triathlete Karen Smyers was Team USA’s flag bearer for the opening ceremonies at the 1999 Pan American Games, voted by captains from every sport to lead the U.S. delegation of 704 into Winnipeg Stadium.

Sept. 25, 1999 – USA Triathlon celebrated its 25th anniversary.

May 27-28, 2000 – The first U.S. Olympic Triathlon Team Trials took place in Dallas, Texas, selecting the team that will compete at the Sydney Olympics.

Sept. 16-17, 2000 – Triathlon debuted as an Olympic sport. The women’s event, on Sept. 16, is the first medal event of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia.

Aug. 10, 2003 – Hunter Kemper won the first gold medal for the U.S. men at the Pan American Games in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Aug. 13, 2004 – Susan Williams became the first U.S. triathlete to win an Olympic medal when she finishes third at the Summer Games in Athens, Greece.

April 5, 2006 – Hunter Kemper receives the 2005 United States Olympic Committee SportsMan of the Year Award, becoming the first male or female triathlete to be selected as the SportsMan or SportsWoman of the Year in the 32-year history of the award.

2006 – USA Triathlon annual membership surpasses 80,000.

2007 – Hunter Kemper became the first elite triathlete to appear on the cover of the Wheaties cereal box.

2007 – USA Triathlon annual membership eclipses 100,000.

Aug. 18, 2008 – American Laura Bennett finishes fourth in the women’s triathlon at the Beijing Olympic Games.

Aug. 19, 2008 – Three-time Olympian Hunter Kemper places seventh in the men’s triathlon at the Beijing Olympic Games.

2009 – USA Triathlon annual membership grows to more than 130,000, and the organization sanctions more than 3,100 events. The International Triathlon Union launches the seven-race World Championship Series, which will determine the annual world champion.

2010 – The Hy-Vee Triathlon ups its combined prize purse to \$1 million, making it the largest single-day prize purse offered in the history of the sport. USA Triathlon annual membership reaches 140,000, and the organization sanctions 3,500 events.

August 2010 – Americans Kevin McDowell and Kelly Whitley combine for three medals at the inaugural Youth Olympic Games in Singapore.

Dec. 11, 2010 – The sport of paratriathlon was officially added to the Paralympic program for the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

May 11-12, 2012 – The sport returns to its roots with the inaugural ITU World Triathlon San Diego, held in close proximity to the first-ever triathlon in Mission Beach. Thousands watch as Laura Bennett, Hunter Kemper and Manuel Huerta qualify for the 2012 U.S. Olympic Team, and more than 2,100 age-groupers compete in the same iconic venue.



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