

# Triathlon mystique comes to Springfield

By Marilyn Osgood-Knight

Of the Emerald

There's more than frost on the pumpkin to look forward to in October.

On Sunday, at least 120 athletes, including University students, faculty and staff, will compete in the second annual Oktoberfest Triathlon at the Willamalane Park and Recreation Fitness Center in Springfield. Athletes in various stages of physical conditioning and mental toughness will face what many enthusiasts claim is "the ultimate challenge" — the triathlon.

This "mini-triathlon," as Rich Saxton, event director, calls it, starts at 7:30 a.m. when the first heats of a "loop swim" in Willamalane pool begin the "final frontier for the aerobic athlete."

As Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over till it's over." Try telling that to the men, women, and kids (12 and over) who will swim a half mile, then grab their trusty 10-speeds for a brisk 10-mile bicycle race before climbing into racing flats for a final 3-mile run along Springfield streets.

Entrants will churn along a flat, fast course, dotted with course marshals and uniformed police officers at turns and intersections.

Volunteers are still needed for each segment of the triathlon, says Fitness Center attendant Cathy Hendon. She adds that any student wishing to cheer on a friend may call 726-4368 to volunteer. Each volunteer will receive a short-sleeve T-shirt with official emblem from the event.

This triple-fitness sport has a special appeal to the student-athlete, who may already be swimming, biking, running and lifting weights, trying to fight college-induced stress.

In the past four months, Lane County has seen the Oregon Triathlon (Cottage Grove in July), the YMCA Track Capital Triathlon (Eugene in August), and now the Oktoberfest Triathlon. About 250 individuals and 50 teams took part in the Y's open-swim, bike race and run, according to Rae Jean Larson, YMCA triathlon director.

The granddaddy of triathlons is the Ironman Triathlon World Championship, which drew some 3,000 applicants this fall. About 1,250 athletes competed in Saturday's endurance contest in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii.

That grueling 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike race and 26.2-mile run will be scaled down considerably for the Oktoberfest event. Local entrants, from seasoned professionals looking for personal bests, to fledgling triathletes hoping only to finish on their feet, will become part of the growing triathlon mystique.

Some say that the triathlon is rapidly gaining on the marathon as the "challenge of the '80s."

Triathlons are gaining some international attention also. This year's Ironman in Hawaii featured, for the first time, an Eastern Bloc athlete (Vaclav Vitovec of Czechoslovakia), as well as entrants from 46 states

and 31 foreign countries.

The course record for last year's Oktoberfest contest was 1:03.9, set by Jeff Storie of Corvallis. "We had a lot of University students taking part last year in our first meet," says Hendon. "We think 1984 will be even heavier for student athletes."

Willamalane Parks and Recreation District is sponsoring the triathlon, aided by Oregon Triathletes and backed by three commercial sponsors, including Nike Eugene. The entry fee is \$12 and includes a long-sleeved shirt as one of the awards, Hendon says.

Hendon says hardshell helmets are mandatory for the bicycle race, and that no support crews will be allowed to assist any entrant. "Only triathletes and officials are permitted in the bike area (the transition area near the pool exit),"

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After completing a half-mile swim loop, triathlon participants must finish a ten-mile bike race before the final three-mile run to the finish line.



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