One Step At a Time

Staff member completes first full Ironman

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Finding her inner Ironman, Malcolm poses at the finish line.
By: Becky St. Clair

On Sunday, Sept. 11, 2016, Laura Malcolm, marketing & recruitment coordinator for the Andrews University School of Business Administration, swam 2.4 miles, biked 112 miles and ran 26.2 miles.

She wasn’t the only one; 2,880 others joined her in Madison, Wisconsin, for a full Ironman event. This crowd of athletes from around the world enjoyed a swim in Lake Monona, a hilly bike ride through the Wisconsin countryside with almost 5,000 feet of climbing and a run through downtown Madison and the University of Wisconsin. They were given 17 hours to complete the race.

“When I lined up at the beginning of the race, I was praying and thanking God for the opportunity to do this,” says Malcolm, who has also completed five Ironman 70.3 (half Ironman) events. “I was marveling at the thousands of spectators lining the shore, and trying my best to stay calm and relaxed.”
Malcolm began training for Ironman Wisconsin in January. She worked hard with not only her partners in the Niles Distance Training group, but also her parents, both Andrews alumni who cycle, swim and run, and Gregg Morrow, aquatics director at Andrews University.

“Gregg tore apart my swim stroke and built it back into a smoother, faster stroke,” Malcolm says. “My husband, my parents, my boss and my friends have all been huge supporters along my journey.”

Ironman events aren’t Malcolm’s only achievements; she has also participated in three marathons (including one trail marathon), two week-long cycling trips, nine Olympic-length triathlons (1,500-meter swim, 40-kilometer bike ride, 10-kilometer run), 12 century bike rides (100+ miles in a day), three half marathons and a few 5K and 10K runs.

“And that’s only so far!” she says with a grin.

Malcolm was biking, swimming and running long before she ever signed up for her first triathlon.

“For me it’s almost a spiritual experience,” she admits. “I love the outdoors and being active. It’s amazing what God has created our bodies to be capable of doing. Pushing my body physically while surrounded by the elements often draws me closer to God. I love the peace that nature brings while being in tune with your body’s active capabilities.”

Malcolm certainly demonstrated God’s beautiful design on that brisk September day; she completed the Ironman in 12:33:33 and was very happy with her result.

“If you’re considering an Ironman, I say start small and take it one step at a time,” she advises. “The shorter races can teach you valuable lessons about how you need to train, hydrate, race and manage transitions.”

Malcolm also suggests finding a training partner to help motivate you, help you improve, hold you accountable and give you a friend to train with.

“Most of all,” she says, “enjoy the journey and rely on God through both the tough and good times.”

What’s next for Malcolm with her first full Ironman behind her? While she thinks it would be “awesome” to qualify for Kona, the Ironman championships in Hawai’i, her dream race is the Isklar Norseman Triathlon in Norway. Isklar is equivalent in distance to Ironman with a cold fjord swim, mountainous bike ride and two possible run finishes, depending on your time, the preferred being a trail to the top of Gaustatoppen Mountain.

“It’s a lottery system to gain entry and travel would be expensive, but we’ll see,” she says with a determined smile. “We’ll see.”
Related Links

- [What is Ironman?](#)
- [Ironman Wisconsin: September 10, 2017](#)
- [Getting Started: Ironman 101](#)
- [Andrews University School of Business Administration](#)
- [University Health & Wellness](#)

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