

# Mozena makes world stage as Ironman triathlete

## Podiatrist finds balance, fitness in triathlon training

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There are very few 60 year olds in the U.S., or anywhere, that can keep up with John Mozena.

Mozena is a Lake Oswego resident and podiatrist, who has worked out of his offices at the Town Center Foot Clinic in Happy Valley since 1985. He is also a competitive distance runner, having completed 25 marathons since 2002. Now a triathlete, Mozena has competed in 10 full triathlons and 25 half triathlons over the last nine years.

His hard work and dedication paid dividends earlier this year, when he finished with a lifetime personal record of

5 hours and 10 minutes at an Ironman 70.3 half triathlon race in Monterrey, Mexico, in March. A month later, Mozena finished fourth in the 60-65 year old age group at an Ironman 70.3 race in New Orleans, La., which qualified him for the Ironman 70.3 Half-Triathlon World Championships.

Why does he do it?

"I love the feeling of being fit, and being an Ironman is special," says Mozena, who stands 6 feet and tips the scales at 150 pounds. "People give you respect, because they know the Ironman is one of the hardest events an athlete can do. I look in the mirror and I'm happy with what I see. I'm lean and mean and probably in the best shape I've been in in my life."

Mozena has been a fitness advocate since a close friend, Jeff Baird, talked him into running when the pair were classmates at Central Catholic High School in the early 1970's. He enjoyed basketball and football through middle school, but his activity level became stagnant early in high school.

"I stopped sports and I got heavy," Mozena said. "My friend encouraged me to get back in shape, and it was something I worked hard to do."

Mozena says that after high school he continued to run three to five miles a day until 2001, when he upped his fitness routine and began a higher level of training.

Mozena's first marathon was the Silicon Valley Marathon in San Jose in

2002. He qualified for and completed the Boston Marathon in 2007, and later that year, competed in his first half-triathlon in Bend. His first full-triathlon (2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride, 26.2-mile run), was the Vineman, in Sonoma, Calif.

Mozena trains year round, many times two to three times a day, conditioning with running, swimming and cycling workouts. He even spends his lunchtime working out, running a 4-mile loop near his office just north of the Clackamas Town Center or stopping by Eastside Athletic Club for a swim.

The only time he misses a day or two is following a race, when he takes a little time off to heal up and recuperate.



(LEFT) Competing in an Ironman half-triathlon race in Monterrey, Mexico, in March, Mozena completed the race in a lifetime personal record time of 5 hours and 10 minutes. The race included a 1.2-mile swim, followed by a 56-mile bicycle leg, and a 13.1-mile run. Mozena says the running leg is the hardest, "because it comes at the end."

(MIDDLE) Mozena races in the 112-mile bicycle leg of an Ironman 140.6 in Woodlands, Texas, in May 2015.

(RIGHT) On the beach in Maui, Hawaii, Mozena did an open water ocean swim in October 2015.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



"As a foot surgeon, I believe it's important to be balanced in life both physically and spiritually, and the triathlon is like that," Mozena says. "If you are having a rough day or are injured, there's always another exercise to fall back on. If I need to take some time off from running, I can put in more distance swimming."

In 2007, Mozena says he got bored with marathons and switched to the more challenging triathlon.

Competing in a triathlon, or even a half-triathlon, is no cakewalk. Just finishing the race is a test of endurance. A half-triathlon is a 1.2-mile swim, followed by a 56-mile bike ride and a 13.1-mile run. Double those distances and you've got a full triathlon.

A month ago, Mozena competed in the Vineman near Santa Rosa, Calif., a full Ironman challenge, that saw him as high as third place in his age group before his stomach wretched halfway through the marathon phase forcing him to walk a few miles before regaining his pace to the finish line. He came through the tape in 10th place.

Mozena says his plans are to compete in four half-triathlons and two full-triathlons during the 2016 calendar year. He's already got three half-triathlons behind him, having competed in Monterrey in March, New Orleans in April and recently, in Bend. He has stayed busy this racing season as a result of moving into a new age group — as a rookie in the age 60-64 division.

"I aged up and that gave me the best chance to qualify for the World Championships," Mozena said. "It's my first time qualifying, and I'm very excited."

Mozena will travel to Mooloolaba, Queensland, Australia, in early September, where he'll be among 75 elite athletes competing in his age division of the 2016 Ironman Half-Triathlon 70.3 World Championships. His goal, he says, is "to finish. I'm honored just to be with all of those amazing athletes. It's an honor to be there with all the world's best athletes in the sport."

His ultimate goal, however, is to qualify for the Ironman Full Triathlon World Championships in Kona, Hawaii.

Mozena belongs to two Portland area triathlete clubs, Portland-based Ironheads and the Happy Valley-based Summit Performance Triathlete Club. Much of the year, he follows workouts developed by Portland radiologist David Ciaverella, who is a 7-time Kona Ironman qualifier and an Ironman age-group champion.

Depending on the proximity of his workouts to his next race, Mozena says Ciaverella's weekly workouts range from running 20 to 40 hours a week, swimming two to three hours and biking eight to 20 hours.

"I've seen friends fall out of health and it inspires me to keep with it," Mozena said. "Everybody has some wear and tear. It's not about training harder, it's about training smarter. When you quit doing heavy activity you hurt yourself. You aren't moving your joints properly. People should keep moving."

And, of course, Mozena would like to continue competing in triathlons and half-triathlons for as long as he can.

"My mother had a great saying that life is worth living as long as you have a goal in front of you," Mozena said. "As we age, the time to do it is now. You may not have that time later. It's important to keep moving and utilize every minute of your life the way the big guy intended."

He says he draws inspiration from Sister Madonna Buder, an 84-year-old nun from Spokane who still competes in triathlons and half-triathlons. At age 75 she became the oldest woman ever to complete the Kona Ironman.

With his passion for fitness and dedication to the sport he has grown to love, don't be surprised to see Mozena at the Kona Ironman when he turns 75.

"You can be 55 years old or 80 and still be a kid — it's all a state of mind," Mozena said. "But I try to be a role model for my family, as well as promote a healthy lifestyle to my patients."



**Editor's note: Dr. Mozena was among an elite group of athletes competing in the 60-64 age division of the 2016 Ironman Half-Triathlon 70.3 World Championships in Mooloolaba, Queensland, Australia, the first weekend in September. During a post-race vacation, he sent the following accounting of his experience.**

"I didn't have a very good race, but I did have a great race experience throughout the week. The parade of nations was pretty exciting, with 83 nations marching through the streets led by Scottish bagpipers. The weather cleared perfectly for race day but the scalding sun gave me a touch of hyponatremia (low sodium level), slowing me down on the run to a snails pace. I came out of the ocean swim 28th, which was clear and beautiful showing off the coral and happily clear enough to make sure no sharks were around.

"I managed to only lose a few places to 35th place on the bike which was very fast for the first 23 miles on their motorway or freeway. I was averaging 22 mph and feeling great! Then we hit the hills —

the most challenging one about a quarter-mile long and 20 degrees straight up. It's the first time I've ever seen bikers with (triathlon) expertise walk a hill. I fortunately was able to climb it standing on the bike the whole way, but another 10 yards would have done me in.

"I started my the run at my normal pace but soon realized things weren't going my way as the nausea set in. My normal nutrition schedule was now out the window and I was drinking only water. With my high sweat rate, my salt level started plummeting. I was determined not to stop running since I had fought for nine years to qualify for this event but four hills we had to navigate crushed my hopes of doing as well as I hoped.

"I came across the finish line 44th out of 90 who entered and 65 who finished. After an hour of rest and Gatorade, I felt good enough to make it back to the hotel and recoup. As I always told my athletes when I coached junior high track, there is always another race!"