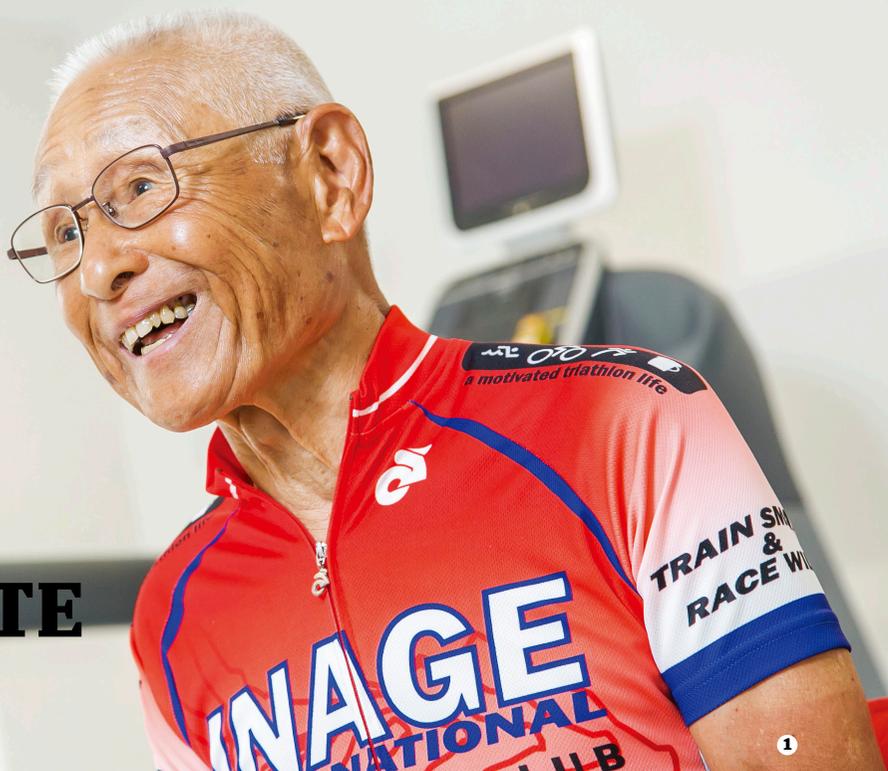


# SUPER SENIOR TRIATHLETE RACES ON



## KATSUYA YAMADA

*Hiromu Inada is an 85-year-old triathlete who continues to test himself in one of the world's toughest endurance challenges—the Ironman Triathlon. The super senior describes how and why he keeps going, and what his goals are.*

**R**EQUIRING competitors to run a full marathon of 42.195 kilometers after swimming 3.8 kilometers and cycling 180 more, the Ironman Triathlon's 226 kilometers have been called the toughest race in the world.

An 85-year-old competitor from Japan, Hiromu Inada, holds the record as the oldest person to complete an Ironman. He finished his first one in 2011 at the age of seventy-eight, fell in love with the race and has continued to qualify every year since. When the world championship takes place in Hawaii this year, he intends to be there.

Inada retired at age sixty, and began swimming at a gym near his house to maintain his health. Starting at age sixty-five, he has competed in four aquathlons, an event that combines swimming and running. He says he got started on triathlons after seeing triathletes riding on road bikes while he was cheering at aquathlon events. Inada bought a road bike at age 69, and at 70 completed a triathlon. He began entering longer and longer competitions until he worked his way up to the Ironman, completely absorbed in the pursuit.

He first attracted worldwide attention in 2015 at the Ironman World Championship. Just shy of

the 16 hour and 50 minute time limit, Inada collapsed several hundred meters short of the finish. Although he managed to get to his feet and cross the finish line, he was five seconds too late, and consequently was not recognized as having completed the race.

However, the previously unknown senior's grit captured the attention of people through news articles and social media, and Inada received interview requests and messages of support from all over the world. His supporters included countless people, one of whom he inspired to begin doing triathlons at age sixty.



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- 1 Triathlete Hiromu Inada
- 2 Inada crossing the finish line at the Ironman World Championship
- 3 The cycling section of the Ironman covers 180 kilometers
- 4 Inada tackling the full marathon portion of the race

Photos 2-4 by Hiromu Inada

“I was very happy, and I felt like I must live up to their hopes,” Inada says, and his motivation grew. And so at the following world championship in 2016, after solid preparation, he finished the race with a time of 16 hours, 49 minutes and 13 seconds, making up for what happened the previous year in the most fantastic way.

“My goal is to continue participating in races and completing them within the time limit,” Inada says. “My body is weakening with age, but that moment when I can feel all my training paying off is real. I try out things I see on TV and advice

I receive immediately. By doing so, my times get better. And then I try something new again. It’s that repetition. I see the tricks I try out turn into real results, and it’s extremely fun.”

After sensing the limitations of being self-taught when he couldn’t complete his first Ironman Japan race at seventy-six, Inada joined a triathlon club that has turned out Olympic athletes. After that, he adopted a hard schedule of resting only one or two days a week, and on every other day rising at six a.m., practicing hard until four p.m., and going to bed by nine p.m. at the latest.

“To continue, I have to keep all my thoughts focused on the triathlon—what I should eat, what my daily rhythm should be. I’ve lived to my eighties and I’ve never felt so fulfilled. I’m too busy to have time to take it easy, but I think of now as my youth.”

Imbued with a boyish innocence and boundless enthusiasm, Inada continues to face his current tasks with a surprising amount of level-headedness and willpower. As long as he can keep moving forward and progressing, he’ll go on enjoying his newfound youth and his Ironman challenges. **7**