



Michael Webster got hooked on triathlons when he and his college roommate decided to train for a local triathlon in Kankakee, Ill.

What makes Mike run?

By Brad Emons
staff writer

It started innocently and gradually became a passion for triathlete Michael Webster.

"I was into a variety of sports," recalls the 29-year-old product design engineer from Plymouth. "I was a bike racer, mediocre at best, but I tried hard. I had done some running and I knew how to swim when I was in grade school and high school. I played basketball, tennis, and was a golfer, too."

While attending the University of Illinois, Webster and his roommate decided to train for a local triathlon — a half-mile swim at an outdoor community pool, followed by a 20-mile bike ride and 10-kilometer run.

"It was in Kankakee, Illinois — the two of us trained the whole summer and had one heck of a time," he said.

Webster was hooked.

By 1987 he was in triathlon heaven. With over 4,000 applications, Webster's name was one of 1,200 drawn to compete in the Ironman Triathlon World Championship in Kona, an island in Hawaii.

THE TASK was an arduous one. Within 17 hours he would be required to complete a grueling 2.4-mile open-ocean swim, a 112-mile bike race, and a 26.2-mile marathon through the vast lava fields and sun-drenched coastline of the largest of the Hawaiian Islands.

A well-prepared Webster was up to the challenge, finishing the event in 10 hours and 24 minutes.

"He participated in a master's swim program in Ann Arbor and it really helped," said Webster's wife, Vickie, an avid runner who competed in this year's Boston Marathon. "Michael took a month off (from his job) before the race. We were dating at the time and he didn't see me much, but I was happy for him because he said the experience was fantastic. He said he enjoyed it. It never bothered him one bit."

Some may view his Ironman endeavor as masochistic, but for Webster it was like a walk in the park.

"I always dreamed of the Ironman. It

On your mark

Here is a list of upcoming triathlon (bike, swim, run) and biathlon (bike, run) events around the state of Michigan during the next two months:

- **Clark Lake Triathlon:** Sunday, July 30 (half-mile swim, 25-mile bike and five-mile run). Call Leslie Ambler at 317-529-4364.
- **Manitoulin Island Triathlon:** Sunday, July 30 (three-mile run and 25-mile bike). Call Dave Gonzalez at 744-9429.
- **Mark Melton Memorial Triathlon:** Saturday, Aug. 5 in Claydon (one-kilometer swim, 50K bike and 10K run). Call John Nepe at 317-733-7568.
- **Metre Beach Triathlon:** Saturday, Aug. 19 in Mount Clemens (one-kilometer swim, 16K bike and 4K run). Call Joe Gooden at 732-4343.
- **Independence Lake Triathlon:** Saturday, Aug. 19 in Whitmore Lake (one-mile swim, 3K cross country run). Call Eric Edwards at 871-4337.
- **Kids Triathlon:** (ages 7-14) Sunday, Aug. 27 in Ann Arbor (one-kilometer swim, 2K bike and 100-meter run). Call Vicky Hallman at 663-4334.

was always one of my goals," he said. "I was able to get in good shape and when I got done, I felt good."

"But before that I had visions of stumbling around. The more I thought about it, I was real tired as I crossed the finish line and I was beat up."

BUT WITH THE beautiful surroundings and proper training, Webster was able to come away with an even greater yearning to compete another Ironman someday. (His name has been passed over in the lottery now for two straight years.)

"You train in relative isolation, but once you get over there (Kona), the environment is so great because there are so many people just like you. You talk to each other about training techniques and it's exciting. It's a real upbeat atmosphere."

Webster's advice to any first-time triathlete is simple.

"Try not to get caught up in the competition right away," he said. "Enjoy your first triathlon. Don't try to squeeze out every last second."

"One of my goals at the Ironman was just to finish. I didn't push myself to the edge. I wasn't racing. I held back a little and stayed within my abilities."

Naturally, Webster idolizes the king of triathletes, Dave Scott of Davis, California, who completed the 1985 Ironman course in a record eight hours, 28 minutes and 37 seconds.

"HE'S THE GUY I look up to, he's truly remarkable," Webster said. "He's not only gifted and talented, but he's often an underdog who always comes from behind. And he's humble, something I think we should all strive to be."

While Webster awaits another chance to compete in Hawaii, he spends his leisure hours running with the Redford Roadrunners Club or competing in local triathlons. In April he ran his third Boston Marathon, finishing in an impressive two hours and 49 minutes.

"When I was single, I could get away with staying out until 10 p.m. training, but now it's more difficult," he said. "I have added demands to my wife and it takes away from training, but my wife is very encouraging and supportive."

Vickie Webster said she wouldn't mind another trip to Hawaii.

"He's dying to do it again, I'd be glad to go," she laughed. "It wouldn't take much to get him motivated. All he needs more time to train."

But even with the demands of his marriage, a full-time job with Ford Motor Co. and night school (Wayne State's master's program), Webster is itching for another opportunity at the Ironman.

"I FOUND MYSELF often dreaming about it," he said. "After a challenge like that, you feel you've reached the ultimate. But there's also quite a letdown. That's why my ambition is to go back and maybe go a little faster."

"The people who work the Ironman take every precaution and they make it enjoyable and safe. You come away feeling good."

Into the wild blue yonder

'Angel' flies way to fame

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

So you want to be Naval jet pilot, eh?

Well, like in the films "An Officer and a Gentleman" and "Top Gun," first you have to go to flight school. Nothing strenuous, mind you.

First, let's take a dip. You have to swim a mile — in 25 pounds full flight gear. But before you dry off, you have to dive off a platform and swim another 25 yards underwater wearing the same outfit.

We aren't even talking about the obstacle course or the loads of work in the classroom or trying to land a jet at night on an aircraft carrier in the middle of the ocean.

Indeed, to be jet fighter pilot, a person has to wait.

Lt. Cmdr. Doug McClain did. As a result, he flies as No. 3 pilot, left wing for the U.S. Navy's prestigious Blue Angels flight team.

"It's pretty similar (to the movies)," said McClain, 32, whose Blue Angels will fly this weekend at the Wayne County Air Show. "It's Hollywood, so they dramatize things a bit. But as far as the physical demands and the flight footage, it's very realistic."

Except in the movies, the ride is only two hours long. In the Blue Angels, there's some 80 shows a year with 300 days on the road. For an hour of performing in an air show, there is at least four hours of practice.



Navy Lt. Cmdr. Doug McClain said Hollywood isn't offbase when it comes to being a top-notch pilot. He flies as No. 3 pilot, left wing for the prestigious Blue Angels Naval flight team.

'Each show is different. The accomplishment you feel by performing a safe and enjoyable show makes it worthwhile. . . . The only thing is you can't get too excited. It's a lot like a football player playing 60 minutes of football. Both are physically and mentally demanding.'

— Lt. Cmdr. Doug McClain

FOR THAT reason, Blue Angel pilots usually only serve two or three years on the team. This is McClain's second year, performing as a narrator last season.

As the No. 3 pilot, McClain's job is to balance the flight formation. The No. 2 pilot on the right wing sets the formation, McClain follows it.

That takes practice. McClain has had plenty.

His debut in the Blue Angels has been preceded by an honored career in the U.S. Navy. He served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Midway as a member of the VA-115 Eagles. As a member of the Eagles, he was awarded "Top Tailhooker" and "Pilot of the Year" in 1984. He was also honored with the Navy Achievement Medal for overall performance.

McClain has accumulated more than 2,650 flight hours and 379 carrier landings. He earned the Norden Fickel Award for bombing accuracy and is a three-time nominee for the Commander, Naval Air Pacific's Landing Signal Officer of the Year.

All of which culminates a personal dream of McClain's since he was 14. His dad was a fighter pilot in the Air Force. Like father, son wanted to follow.

McClain attended the University of Colorado for two years, playing on the Buffalo's 1977 Big Eight Championship team that went to the Orange Bowl. He transferred to the University of Oklahoma, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration.

All of which helped prepare him for the rigors of back and advanced jet training in Kingsville,

Texas. He received his gold wings in 1981.

"EACH SHOW is different," McClain said. "The accomplishment you feel by performing a safe and enjoyable show makes it worthwhile. Obviously, we don't hear the fans clapping on the ground."

"The only thing is you can't get too excited. It's a lot like a football player playing 60 minutes of football. Both are physically and mentally demanding."

Before a show, members of the Blue Angels sit down to map out each detail. They can spend up to two hours debriefing after a performance.

"Each time we go out — we call it a show — but it's really a practice," he said.

Island and Lagoon offer evening fare

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DO THE 11 p.m. Instead of the 9 p.m. Electrical Parade at the Kingdom. Watch daytime parades from the back of the Kingdom (for example, Frontland or Liberty Square). Get to the Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park early and go straight to the Backstage Tour while others are finding their way down Hollywood Boulevard. You won't beat the crowds but it helps.

You will probably want to spend some of your night time doing the fireworks and electrical parade at the Kingdom and the new Laser-Phonic Fantasy show at EPCOT. Spend a night in Orlando at the clubs and cafes of Church St. Station.

And definitely plan a night or two at Pleasure Island, which connects by three footbridges to the WDW Village Marketplace on the opposite side of the property from the theme parks. If you remember the Empress Lilly, a riverboat-casino-restaurant, it anchors one end of the island.

This entertainment complex is quite different from other Disney attractions. It's designed for adults and older teens. You can eat, shop, enjoy the ongoing street parties and wandering musicians free, but a \$14.95 flat fee gives you admission to any and all of the seven themed nightclubs.

You must be 21 to go to Mannequins Dance Palace. You should probably have a teen-aged escort. If you're over 21 at Videopolis East. Each place is unique — XZFR Rockin' RollerDrome, Adventurers Club, Neon Armadillo, Comedy Warehouse, and the more traditional Empress Lilly.

"It's like one big night club with seven different rooms," Carradine said. "Pleasure Island is a new form of entertainment with its roots going back before the days of sound films."

"DISNEYLAND and the Magic Kingdom were based on the movies, but Pleasure Island is based on the ideas that led to Disneyland in the first place. It's the whole island has the texture of a night-time arena. It's not like a cinema, it's more like a theater, only the visitors are the actors and the script changes every night."

Carradine gets really excited when he talks about designing XZFR or Mannequins, both of which are entered from the top floor.

"XZFR, pronounced zephyr, is a satire and you follow a path, from the bar on the top, to the roller skating on the second floor to the dance floor at the bottom. The rooms get bigger as you go down, so you feel safe and in the company of friends when you get there."

In real life, the whole of the outside and the inside of the Rockin' RollerDrome is pulsating action

and light. Crowds are dancing on the street. The building is an atrium, a vessel of light. The live band is in a futuristic vehicle above the dance floor. Roller skaters circle on a mezzanine above it.

Mannequins is more like a live dance theater. You listen to intercom conversations between show technicians as you ride the elevator to the third floor. From a catwalk you look down on a revolving dance floor and a crowd of real and live mannequins dancing in a world that never stands still. Sets move. Lights change; the floor turns.

If you prefer country and western, you find it across the plaza at the Neon Armadillo. Disney wouldn't be Disney, if it didn't have a little cornball, so there is an elaborate fiction to explain the island.

A FABLED sailmaking mage named Merryweather Adam Pleasure, disappeared at sea and left all these abandoned lofts, warehouses and factories for rehabilitation by the Imaginering group a century later.

The Neon Armadillo is in "Adam Pleasure's quirky greenhouse," but you can ignore all that. Focus on the featured country bands — The Vigilantes July 30 and Aug. 6 and Southern Rail July 24-29 and July 31-Aug. 5.

The Adventurers Club, "once a retreat for Pleasure's yachting clientele," is where you join live performers on a mystery tour, following the great explorers into the unknown, or breaking off at the bar, as you wish.

Videopolis East was designed for your brother, but you will love it if you can stand 125 decibels. You walk into a huge video arena, which is illuminated by 169 video monitors. It looks like the inside of a spacecraft, with the latest music videos and two cameras shooting images of the dancers onto some of the screens. You even dance on video monitors.

"Each of the clubs express their entertainment form by conventional means, but Videopolis East is quite different from the others," Carradine said. "It's all lit. Imagine 169 30-inch monitors controlled by a computer system. Six locations have monitors that ask you to play games, difficult games, but if you win you can talk over the whole club temporarily."

UNLIKE THE other clubs, Videopolis East doesn't serve alcohol. Like most of the clubs, they serve food. Other restaurants and bars are scattered around the island.

You may want to spend the next day stretched out at Typhoon Lagoon, but stay the day because it's \$17.50 plus tax and is not covered in your three- or four-day pass. (That covers the Magic Kingdom, EPCOT and the Disney-MGM Studios.)