

Sports

SAVED FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Washington Times



Business

Local CEO goes for the gold
— or at the finish / C8



Larry Weinberg, 39, who runs McLean's Bowa Builders, is competing in the Ironman's CEO challenge tomorrow in Lake Placid, N.Y.

Photo courtesy of Larry Weinberg

IRONMAN

Big goals for business, athletics

By Marie Beaudette
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Starting a business is a lot like training to compete in a triathlon. Just ask Larry Weinberg; he's done both. The 39-year-old chief executive of Bowa Builders Inc. of McLean has trained for the past year to complete the Ironman Triathlon in Lake Placid, N.Y., tomorrow in a fairly new category: the CEO Challenge.

Mr. Weinberg, who started his building business on a shoestring budget 14 years ago, has been competing in triathlons for several years but decided to take the plunge, literally, into the Ironman about a year ago.

Bowa Builders' specialty is in designing and constructing large-scale residential projects in the Washington area.

Because Ironman organizers considered last year's CEO Challenge — the competition's first — a success, they decided to do it again.

The Ironman has been held since 1978, when a group of Navy SEALs decided to see who was the fittest of swimmers, runners and cyclists. It is much longer than a

regular triathlon, which is a 0.9-mile swim, 24.8-mile bike and a 6.2-mile run. About 100 competitors from the Lake Placid Ironman will qualify to compete in the world championship Ironman in Kona, Hawaii.

About 20 of the 1,800 athletes in the 2.4-mile lake swim, 112-mile bike and 26.2-mile run will compete for the title of Fittest CEO. They must finish in less than 17 hours.

Mr. Weinberg decided to compete before he had heard of the special CEO category. But after he learned about it, he decided to race with the 19 other executives who entered.

"It's an interesting twist to the competition," he said.

Entrepreneurs are "typically fairly driven, goal-oriented people," he said.

Ted Kennedy, president of race organizer Ironman Motivations, created the category after realizing that about 10 percent of the triathlon's participants were business leaders.

"These are very competitive people," he said. "That's why the Ironman is, quite often, a real in-

see IRONMAN, page C9

IRONMAN AT A GLANCE

The Ironman triathlon

2.4-mile swim

112-mile bike

26.2-mile run
(complete marathon)

Must be completed
in
17 hours or less

The Olympic triathlon

0.9-mile swim

24.8-mile bike

6.2-mile run

Takes elite competitors
less than two hours to finish

Ironman history

First Ironman: Feb. 18, 1978;
15 competitors

2002 Ironman USA: 1,800
competitors (about 2,000
register, but 200 usually drop
out before the race)

17 Ironman races will be held
worldwide in 2002, with more
than 20,000 competing.

Source: Ironman USA, USA Triathlon



IRONMAN

From page C8

terest to them."

Mr. Weinberg will join executives — including two women — from companies such as Unisys, Templeton Funds, Motorola and the Citadel Group. CEOs aren't the only ones eligible for the challenge: Owners, presidents and chief operating officers can also race.

He calls this one of his "big, hairy, audacious goals," BHAGS for short. Mr. Weinberg, who is using the triathlon to raise money for a local charity, hopes to complete the event in 12 hours or less.

Mr. Weinberg said that if someone had told him a year ago he would be competing in the Ironman, he would have laughed.

"It was almost laughable" when he was considering the competition, he said.

But this isn't the first time Mr. Weinberg has taken on what seemed to many to be a crazy challenge, he said.

At Bowa, he and his colleagues have taken risks to build the business, which they expect to gross \$23.5 million this year.

"It always seems like we're shooting for the moon," he said. "I think the Ironman is very similar to that."

Mr. Kennedy said the event is fitting for successful corporate executives.

"One thing that really makes Ironman unique is the number of extremely successful corporate executives who find the time to compete and train for the grueling event," he said. "It seems only fitting to put together this program, which will provide CEOs and company presidents a chance to see who is truly the fittest."

The CEO Challenge is more pricey for the execs: They pay \$4,500 each, while other Ironman participants pay \$375 to compete. The CEOs get top lodgings, special coaches and all the amenities they could ask for, Mr. Kennedy said.

"It's first-class all the way," he said. "We try to make it as easy and as enjoyable an experience for them

as we possibly can."

Mr. Weinberg, whose wife accompanied him to Lake Placid, has at least \$14,000 in donations from local colleagues and friends who pledged money to help him support the local charity Hoop Dreams, which mentors disadvantaged high school students and helps them obtain and fund college educations.

Even though he has been training for a year and in intense training for the past six weeks, Mr. Weinberg still isn't sure he can make his target 12 hours but has an incentive: If he can do it within that time frame, he will raise about \$3,000 more for Hoop Dreams.

Mr. Weinberg's training has included dieting, rigorous weight lifting, biking, running and swimming. He hired a swim coach to help him train for his weakest part of the triathlon.

Mr. Kennedy said last week that the competition was getting more heated.

"There's been some trash talk going on back and forth," he said.

The Washington Times