

13 Tri-force

[dongminzhi](#) posted on September 13, 2011 09:31

Although the weather was a little bit chilly, it did not cool down the passion of triathletes from around the world gathering in Changping, Beijing, over the past weekend for the Triathlon ITU World Championship Series Grand Final. The international competition involved both professional and amateur contestants, but while most sporting news focused on the results of the professionals, Lifestyle particularly turned its lens towards those amateur foreign and Chinese triathletes competing in different age groups, discovering what goes on in the life of an Ironman.

Expats on track

Thin but tough 40-year-old Swiss Patrick Li, nicknamed Laoshu, is one of the experienced foreign triathlon enthusiasts in Beijing. Since his arriving in the city in 2004, Patrick has taken part in the Beijing Triathlon Championships eight times over the past years.

"Foreign triathletes in Beijing often share and exchange their training experience but practice individually," said Li, a country manager with a company that does relic exhibition design and security. Being an old China hand, he once started up a triathlon club for foreigners in 2004, however, the club was suspended due to the fact that many members only stayed in Beijing for a short period, which made the operation of the club difficult.

Most of the time, Li practices the three components of the game by himself. He goes running at 6 in the morning, swimming in gyms during his middle afternoon break or after finishing his work in the evening. On weekends, he goes cycling in the suburbs of Beijing such as Huairou, Yanqing or along the Great Wall.

The number of Chinese amateur triathletes has risen, but foreigners and the Chinese rarely practice together. "The main population of Chinese triathletes is located in the Western part of Beijing, however, most expats or foreigners live in the Eastern part. We prefer training towards the east direction in Beijing, whereas they prefer going along the west direction," Li explained.

"There is a triathlon club including about 18 foreigners in Shanghai, but in Beijing there is only a cycling club for foreigners," said Australian Mark Thirwall, 34, co-founder of the cultural exchange center thehutong.com.

In this year's event, Thirwall chose to join the audience watching the game instead of competing. Having settled in Beijing for seven years, Thirwall won a number of titles in triathlon games within and outside China. However, triathlons for him are more about participating rather than winning. "When I was young, I used to be quite sick," he said, thus, the initiative of triathlon for Thirwall is to acquire a stronger body through training. "Focusing on practicing is always more important than considering the results of games. Triathlons are an exemplary sport showing the spirit of the sportsmanship."

Locals in the lanes

Unlike foreign triathletes who often practice by themselves, Chinese enthusiasts, with an increasing number over the past years, often gather together for group training.

"I noticed more and more Chinese people running or cycling in the suburbs of Beijing. Several years ago, only foreigners would do this," Li said.

Triathlons first came into China in the 1990s. At the beginning, Chinese students and retired people were the main participants. "Accompanying the changing idea towards a more natural friendly and healthy lifestyle, many people from middle class have joined in," Dang Qi, the founder of Beijing's first triathlon club for amateurs told the Global Times.

Dang Qi is a 33-year-old fitness guide who started competing in triathlons in 2006 after he quit his previous job as a cabin crew in an airline company. Dang used to be well-trained swimmer when he was young, and this greatly helped him turn into a triathlete. He takes part in national or international competitions six to seven times every year.

Some 40 people have been registered in Dang's club, SKINS Triathletes. "Most of the club members are aged between 30-45, and they are public servants, IT professionals, teachers, professors and so on," he said. "It is better for us to form a club where we can practice and compete in games together, because the club helps us gain sporting equipments and sponsors from some companies."

Forming the club helps members get deals on the tools needed to participate, as triathlons aren't cheap. "The training level of triathletes in China is upgrading as the living standard of us has improved," explained Dang. "A professional bicycle, for example, usually costs more than 100,000 yuan (\$15,650), and the fees for nutrition supplements are not cheap either."

Nowadays in Beijing, there are more than 100 people who regularly practice triathlons, among which about 10 are foreigners, said Dang. He also said that he is studying hard to learn English, as he believes that will help him communicate more with his foreign triathlete counterparts.

Tips to start triathlon training:

The Olympic distance for Triathlon is normally 1.5 km swimming, 40 km cycling and 10 km of swimming. The even tougher Ironman Triathlon consists of 3.8 km swimming, 180 km cycling and a marathon of 42.2 km running.

The online homeland of Triathletes in China is Dongfanghong BBS, which provides the latest information about triathlon events in China and useful information in daily training.

The cycling club for foreigners in Beijing is Beijing Peloton.

Triathletes multitask where others specialize.

Posted in: [BEIJING, Miscellany](#)

Actions: [E-mail](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)  | [Kick it!](#) | [DZone it!](#) | [del.icio.us](#)

Comments

There are currently no comments, be the first to post one.