

Triathlon Club

Talisman Tri Club

Part of Calgary's Triathlon Boom

Two years ago, Ted Traynor had never trained for a triathlon. Last season he became an Ironman.

"I'd participated in a couple of triathlons in the 1980s just for fun, and had always wanted to take up the sport more seriously. In the hope this 60-year-old body could progress from zero triathlon training experience to completing an Ironman in one year, I joined the Talisman tri club," Traynor says. He signed up strictly to take advantage of the state-of-the-art facilities at the Talisman Centre, but then discovered the importance of good coaching. "The club is the sole reason I was able to realize my Ironman dream."

In the three years since its founding, the Talisman Triathlon Club has developed a reputation for excellence under the leadership of Jack VanDyk, along with coaches Jon Bird and Grant Burwash.

Club members have access to two 50-metre swimming pools, 30 computerized bike trainers, a 200-metre indoor track and their own weight room. The Talisman Centre was also one of the first facilities in Calgary to do wattage training on the bike. "We have a fleet of Tacx ergotrainers that provides power readings and a more objective method of training for each athlete," explains Bird. "Coaches can provide very specific goals for the bike and members enjoy seeing concrete proof of how their cycling fitness improves throughout the year."

Since the Talisman Centre sits along the Elbow River just south of downtown Calgary, members have many kilometres of riverside running paths right on their doorstep.

The club has about 50 members ranging in age from 16 to 70.

They sign up for a designated number of workouts per week as well as seasonal additions like brick training, group rides and 90-minute Ironman swims. Bird says they try to keep the class sizes between 15 and 20 members with a ratio of 10 athletes to a coach.

"We have athletes who have never done a triathlon and some who are multiple Ironman finishers. The idea behind the club is to promote a balance between life and triathlon, but also to ensure every workout is of the highest quality and members feel they are training like professional athletes."

Cindy Pittman, who's been with the club since it started, says she's progressed from coming last at races to finishing in the middle of the pack. Pittman says it's really convenient to be able to do all her tri training under one roof in a fun and inclusive atmosphere. "I've been in cycling classes with newbies, Olympic-calibre athletes and Ironman veterans. We all work hard together to achieve personal bests."

There are three races most members gear up for each year. One is the Viterro Ironman 70.3 Calgary in early August, a local race that's become a premier event on the 70.3 circuit. The others are Gericks Wasa Lake Triathlon near Cranbrook, B.C. in early June and Subaru Ironman Canada in Penticton.

Last season five members qualified for the Foster Grant Ironman World Championship 70.3 in Clearwater, Florida. Ten members achieved personal best times at Ironman Canada and several won their age groups at local races. Two members – Jon Bird and Grant Burwash – are pros.—TW 



photo Courtesy of the Talisman Triathlon Club