

Cath Hall is an athlete who finds a four-kilometre swim relaxing. When she goes for a run, it's usually between 20-30 kilometres, and a weekend bike ride is anything up to 200km! Then there's the treadmill and exercise bike...35-year-old Cath could aptly be termed...

The girl with the will of Iron



ONCE a week during summer, usually a Monday - and come rain, hail or shine - Mildura's Cath Hall ties a stretch rope to her ankle and jumps into an 8ft circular backyard kids wading pool for a tethered hour-long 'swim'.

After work on the hotter days, Cath goes down to the Murray River for a proper swim, averaging about 4 kilometres, with fiance Ian Roberts 'tiding shotgun' from his kayak. Then at night she works out on the treadmill and stationary exercise bike.

On Saturdays it's time to hit the road, with a jog around the streets - anything between 15 to 30 kilometres.

And on Sundays, Cath jumps on her bicycle and goes for a ride...usually peddling for 200 kilometres!

Again, Ian isn't far from her side. As well as being her partner, Ian is the motivator, support crew, drinks carrier, lookout man and most importantly, the first aid man.

Cath, 35, suffers from asthma, moving to Mildura in 2005 because of the warm, dry climate, but it's still a good idea to have the right medication handy just in case she has a relapse.

Cath knows it could happen at any time, but that doesn't stop her putting her body through some punishing exercise routines as she prepares for a new triathlon and Ironman season. Cath has been hooked on triathlons since completing her first Ironman event at Port Macquarie in 2006, completing the gruelling swim, ride and run in just under 16-and-a-half hours, despite a chest infection and a stress fracture of the foot.

She set herself a goal of finishing the 2010 Busselton, WA, Ironman competition in 14 hours or less, and with that goal accomplished, is aiming for a time of 13 hours or under in the Ironman Asia Pacific championships in Melbourne on March 25. Ironman athletes have to complete a 3.8km swim, 180km bike ride and a run over the marathon distance - 42.2 kilometres.

And it isn't just the challenge of competition that appeals to Cath. She uses the big events to raise money for, and awareness of, the John Madigan Foundation, which uses funding to enhance the lives of young Australians who are confined to wheelchairs.

After nine years in training, Cath is ecstatic to have finally been able to put together a decent road bike, a tough, lightweight model designed specifically for long, fast rides, and she can't wait to try it out in race conditions.

As if battling an asthma problem isn't bad enough, Cath found out after her last big competition that she is intolerant of dairy products, wheat and



• ON A MISSION; Cath Hall shows her allegiance to her country at the recent Mildura Marina sports challenge day, while, TOP LEFT, taking a break from her backyard pool swim, BOTTOM LEFT, and with her support 'crew' and fiance Ian Roberts.

eggs. "Since dairy used to make up a big part of my diet, I've had to make some big changes lately," she says.

Cath says it took her a while to figure out all her dietary problems...about seven kilos to be exact...but now she's starting to shed that excess weight with proper eating.

She has also had to switch to a new medication, one that caters specifically for exercise-induced asthma - and says that so far it's working a treat.

Her triathlon and ironman challenges are a far cry to a decade or so ago, when, as a researcher at the University of California, she found it impossible to go for as run, or climb a flight of stairs with running short of breath and gasping for air.

That all changed when she moved to Mildura nine years ago, with the better climate and exercise routines opening up a whole new world for her. Ironically, she suffers from exercise-induced asthma, and growing up and later working in wet, humid climates

- both in Australia and overseas - had an adverse affect on her health, especially when she attempted any form of strenuous exercise.

It was a condition she tried to control with the puffer - a Ventolin inhaler, while studying for a degree in environmental science, firstly in Warrnambool, then going for her Honors Degree after moving to Brisbane, furthering her career by completing her PhD in New Zealand, and then working as a researcher in California. Her condition wasn't helped when she developed whooping cough while living in NZ, further damaging her lungs.

But in Mildura, working as a biodiversity officer with Mildura Rural City Council, she doesn't have any major problems looking after her health, even with a punishing training regime.

FOOTNOTE: Mildura Weekly readers who want to support Cath in her quest to raise money for the Foundation can contact her on 0409960900.

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