

Triathlete's iron will

Hingst paying price to compete in Hawaii

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Brian Hingst is not your normal sports fanatic. He exercises almost constantly when he's not working, spending enough time swimming, running or riding a bicycle to count as a part-time job.

The 29-year-old engineer is not trying to stave off the aging process. He's not obsessed with staying in shape. He's not spending all this time exercising because he's got nothing better to do.

Instead, Hingst is trying to qualify for one of the most grueling athletic events in the

world — the Ironman Triathlon World Championship in Hawaii. To get there, he has to do well in a qualifying race, the Subaru Ironman Canada Triathlon in Penticton, British Columbia, on Aug. 26.

The Ironman triathlon consists of 2.4 miles of swimming, 112 miles of biking and 26.2 miles of running — a full marathon after all the swimming and biking.

Six years ago, Hingst, a graduate of Douglas Freeman High School and

Virginia Military Institute, was looking for a way to stay involved in something competitive. He had hopes of playing football in college, but a series of knee injuries in high school ended that dream.

Then, a friend issued a challenge Hingst couldn't refuse. He said he didn't think Hingst could handle an Ironman.

"A couple of weeks later I found myself at the starting line of a small race here in town," Hingst said.

Hingst was hooked. He concentrated on smaller races until 1999, when he raced in his first Ironman in Canada. He ran the Ironman Canada again last year and in another one in May this year — the Isuzu Ironman California in San Diego. His best finish was 11 hours, 18 minutes in the 2000 Ironman Canada.

He figures he will need to cut his time to under 10½ hours to qualify for Ironman Hawaii.

"They say the Ironman race is a race of experience," Hingst said. "You don't have



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Next up for Brian Hingst is the Subaru Ironman Canada Triathlon on Aug. 26.

the experience and knowledge to really pace yourself until you've run it three times."

Mental endurance is as important as physical stamina in an Ironman. Hingst says that he experiences many low points throughout the race and has to remind himself to "keep going, it will get better."

Mental discipline is as important in the training phase as it is in the actual race. Hingst trains six days a week, taking Mondays off to run errands and otherwise catch up with the rest of his life.

On the remaining weekdays, he awakes at 5 a.m. By 5:45, he's at the Tuckahoe Family YMCA, where he swims or does some other workout until 7. He eats breakfast in his car on the way to his job at ERNI Components Inc. in Chester. He puts in a full day on the job, from 8 a.m.-5 p.m., sometimes working out during his lunch break. After 5, when most people head home to relax, he goes to run or ride a bicycle until 7:30 or 8.

Then he goes home, eats dinner and tries to be in bed by 9.

Hingst doesn't slow down on the weekends. He swims again on Saturday morn-

ings, rides about 100 miles on his bicycle — usually from Richmond to Wintergreen (he gets a ride home) — and runs about five miles as soon as he finishes the ride. He runs another 18 miles on Sunday.

Hingst said his life probably is more regimented now than when he attended VMI.

Maintaining proper nutrition is vital for a triathlete. He eats a healthy diet — lean meat, fruits, vegetables and pasta — along with a couple of extras: protein shakes and energy bars.

"I probably take in about 6,000 calories a day, maybe 7,000 depending on the workout," Hingst said. "Your grocery bill gets high."

The grocery bill isn't the only expense.

Hingst's bicycle cost something between \$3,000 to \$4,000. The registration fee for Ironman Canada was \$350, and he'll have to add in travel to British Columbia, hotels and meals.

"Why do I do it?" Hingst said. "The absurdity of covering 140 miles a day — swimming, biking, running — is probably one of the reasons why I do it."

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