

Iron man

Lukasz Kazmierski has overcome a Type 1 diagnosis to pursue his passion for triathlons. Interview by Deborah Condon

Completing an Ironman triathlon is no easy feat. The long-distance event involves a 3.8km swim, a 180km bike ride and a 42.2km run, which is the equivalent of a marathon. However this year, Lukasz Kazmierski, who has Type 1 diabetes, completed two half Ironmans and a full Ironman in a six-week period!

Originally from Poland, Lukasz moved to Ireland 15 years ago and currently lives in Tuam in Galway. Now aged 42, he was 18 when he was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

He remembers being very tired and thirsty and following a blood test with his GP, he was sent to hospital.

"I thought I would go into hospital, get some injections and that would be it," he recalls.

Lukasz was playing semi-professional football at the time and unfortunately he had to stop playing at that level because of his diagnosis.

"All my life, I had loved soccer. I presume it is very different now but 24 years ago, I had to stop playing because of my diabetes. It was very upsetting," he says.

He admits that the first few years were difficult and he didn't manage his diabetes well, however it is "now a part of my life".

Lukasz moved to Ireland when he was 27. He started working, found a GP and his partner and young child then followed

him over. He says he wasn't doing anything serious sports-wise but around 10 years ago, he became a semi-professional sports photographer.

"That's how I got back into sport. I still had a full-time job but I would do photography at the weekends. I was photographing triathlons and in order to understand it more, I decided to try a shortened version of a triathlon and I just never stopped training after that," he explains.

As he was still working full-time, he knew he had to decide between photography and training as he simply did not have time for both, so he gave up photography.

Lukasz did his first triathlon in 2018 and in 2019 he travelled to Italy where he competed in a half Ironman. His plan was to complete the 2020 Barcelona Ironman, but then the Covid pandemic hit.

He continued to train through the pandemic and believes that exercising helped him mentally at that time.

He decided to take part in the Barcelona Ironman in 2021 and he applied for a FreeStyle Libre. When he didn't get it, he decided to buy it privately and use it for one or two months around the time of the event.

Lukasz completed his first full Ironman in 2021 in Barcelona, although the swimming distance was shortened for safety reasons.

"There had been a storm the night before and the sea was very rough so they decided to shorten the swim from 3.8km to 900m. One side of me was happy because swimming is my weakest event, but on the other side, even though when we finished they said we had completed an Ironman, in my eyes, I hadn't finished it," he notes.

At his next diabetes appointment in Galway, knowing he was big into sport,



Lukasz Kazmierski competing in a triathlon

staff asked him about his use of technology. He explained that he used it when doing big events.

"They suggested using a Dexcom and they assured me I would get approved for it. This was like winning the lotto for me because I was planning three more big events," he says.

The first event was the half Ironman in Youghal in Cork on August 13. This was followed just two weeks later by another half Ironman in Duisburg in Germany and then just four weeks later, he completed the full Ironman in Barcelona again.

Lukasz can be found on social media with the handle @sweet_triathlon

"Everyone's experience is different and I'm not a doctor so I would never say to anyone that they should do something. I just like to share my experience and highlight what is possible," he says.