

Read the passage. Then answer the TDA question.

Hawaii Ironman: An Irongirl's Story

Greta was a triathlete. Unlike other athletes who specialize in one event, a triathlete competes in events that require swimming, biking, *and* running. Greta's dream was to compete in the Hawaii Ironman, a race for which she would have to swim 2.4 miles, bike 112 miles, and run a standard marathon distance of 26.2 miles—all in the same day.

For Greta, being a triathlete had its price in time and energy. When she first became interested in the sport, she woke up at 5:30 A.M. every morning in order to swim for an hour before her high school classes began. During track season, she trained with long distance runners. For much of the time, however, she was out on coastal roads, logging a weekly average of 200 miles on her bike and running between thirty-five and fifty miles a week.

Greta persisted. Finally, just after her eighteenth birthday, she managed to qualify and soon found herself on an airplane headed for Kailua-Kona, Hawaii.

Race day: 5:30 A.M. The grandstands lining Alii Drive in Kona were already filled with spectators. Greta stood in line, swim cap and goggles in hand, along with close to 1,500 other athletes, waiting to receive her number.

The entrance to the harbor was crowded with swimmers. The horn sounded and the Ironman triathlon was under way. Greta swam steadily. After ten minutes, she found herself alone, the next swimmer three body lengths behind her. Fighting the numbness in her arms, she maintained her pace. At 1.2 miles, she rounded the turning point and headed for shore.

When her feet hit the boat ramp, Greta ripped off her swimming cap and ran to the changing tent. A quick change into bike shorts, and she was off to the bike transition area. A volunteer pointed to the row where her bicycle stood racked and ready with bike shoes already clipped in the pedals. Greta downed a bottle of Gatorade, put on her helmet, and headed out.

The first hill was tough, a steep ascent up Palani Road, but the crowd lining the street urged her on, and Greta rode gracefully and powerfully out onto Queen K highway. She forced herself to eat a protein bar, which she washed down with a swig of water. From experience Greta knew that if she didn't eat and drink all day, she would deprive her body of much-needed nutrients and run out of energy.

With 110 miles to go, Greta let her mind relax into the “zone”—that state of mind in which she was aware of nothing but the delicious strength of her muscles gliding on the pedals. She felt energetic and strong, and a great calm enveloped her.

At 3:00 P.M., Greta entered the bike-to-run transition area and dismounted from her bicycle, having now been on the move for seven and one-half hours. Only the grueling 26.2-mile run to go!

Although aid stations had been set up every mile, they seemed farther apart to Greta, who was now beginning to feel dizzy. She grabbed half a banana at Mile 10 and several packets of GU (a high energy gel) at Mile 15. The road was littered with orange peels and empty GU packets, and the sun beat down over the lava fields. Focusing on the stride of a runner ahead of her, she dug deep inside herself for strength to continue.

When at long last the crowds along the road thickened, Greta knew she was approaching the final stretch. The cheers of the crowd revived her, and with a final surge, she strode down Alii Drive, crossing the finish line with a young man from Switzerland, who grabbed her hand and held it with his over their heads.

It was then that Greta realized exactly why she loved the triathlon. She told a local newspaper reporter, “At Ironman, you look around and see 1,500 other triathletes like you, with the same goal. Of course, there are a few elite athletes here who intend to win. But it doesn’t matter if you finish in under ten hours, or if you come in after the sun has gone down and the stars are out. To finish is to win.”

Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) Question

One theme of the passage is “To finish is to win.” Write an essay analyzing how the author develops this theme. Use evidence from the passage to support your response.

Refer to the Writer’s Checklist on page 3 of this document.
Write your final response on pages 6 and 7.