



Iron Dads: Managing Family, Work, and Endurance Sport Identities (Critical Issues in Sport and Society)

Diana Tracy Cohen

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Among the most difficult athletic events a person can attempt, the iron-distance triathlon—a 140.6 mile competition—requires an intense prerace training program. This preparation can be as much as twenty hours per week for a full year leading up to a race. In *Iron Dads*, Diana Tracy Cohen focuses on the pressures this extensive preparation can place on families, exploring the ways in which men with full-time jobs, one or more children, and other responsibilities fit this level of training into their lives.

An accomplished triathlete as well as a trained social scientist, Cohen offers much insight into the effects of endurance-sport training on family, parenting, and the sense of self. She conducted in-depth interviews with forty-seven iron-distance competitors and three prominent men in the race industry, and analyzed triathlon blog postings made by Iron Dads. What sacrifices, Cohen asks, are required—both at home and at work—to cross the iron-distance finish line? What happens when work, family, and sport collide? Is it possible for fathers to meet their own parenting expectations while pursuing such a time-consuming regimen? With the tensions of family economics, how do you justify spending \$5,000 on a racing bike? At what point does sport become work? Cohen discovered that, by fostering family involvement in this all-consuming effort, Iron Dads are able to maintain a sense of themselves not only as strong, masculine competitors, but also as engaged fathers.

Engagingly written and well researched, *Iron Dads* provides a penetrating, firsthand look at extreme endurance sports, including practical advice for aspiring racers and suggestions for making triathlons more family-friendly.

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