

TROPICAL LIFE

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Unstoppable Ironman

Humberto Speziani was determined to do the Ironman on Saturday in Panama City—even if he had to train with a sling after a bike accident

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Finishing the last stretch of a five-hour bike ride to and from Everglades National Park, Humberto Speziani was feeling great.

"I was doing awesome," said Speziani, 51, a Coral Gables resident and father of three. "Other people were complaining about the wind but I was cutting through like a knife."

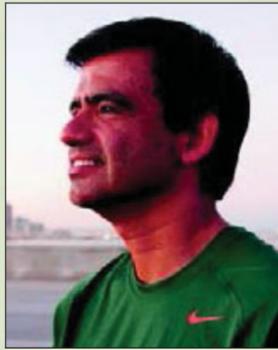
Riding at about 20 miles per hour and approaching Black Point Marina in south Miami-Dade, he was about five minutes ahead of his

riding group as cars and boats passed him on the road. In a flash, Speziani looked up and saw cars piling up on the road as a boat trailer had gone past the guardrail shoulder, leaving Speziani little space.

"I just really wedged myself through," said Speziani, who bounced against the boat, lost control and tumbled off the bike, flying shoulder first into the guardrail, damaging his collarbone.

The Aug. 31 injury had the potential to be a disaster for Speziani, who had been training months for his first Ironman, the mega-triathlon in which athletes swim 2.4 miles, ride 112 miles on a bike and run a full marathon (26.2 miles). The event is Saturday in Panama City

• TURN TO IRONMAN, 4E



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STILL IN THE RUNNING:

Despite a bike accident, Humberto Speziani will participate in an Ironman race Saturday.



FITNESS

Broken bone doesn't stop Ironman athlete

• IRONMAN, FROM 1E

Beach in north Florida.

"Fortunately, it was just my collarbone," said Speziani, whose collarbone fractured into five pieces. Luckily, the fracture did not sever the skin but went through his muscle.

"The irony of his injury is that he's a very safe cyclist," said Laura Lagomasino, 42, one of Speziani's training partners from Alien Endurance, the Coconut Grove triathlon training group. "He rides so safely. He stops at stop signs. He stops at red lights. He really respects the road rules."

Speziani, an assistant vice president of finance at the University of Miami, has done several other triathlons but none as challenging as the Ironman. He was a T2 volunteer at last year's Ironman, that is, someone who assists between the biking and running stage of the race.

"It's always been on my bucket list," said Speziani, originally from Lima, Peru.

Speziani never gave up on his dream of doing an Ironman. The first question he asked his doctor, Dr. Lee Kaplan, director of the UHealth sports medicine division, was whether he could compete in the race.

Kaplan, the medical director and team physician for the Miami Hurricanes and Miami Marlins, said it was out of the question.

But a week after his surgery to repair the collarbone, Speziani spoke to his trainer Andy Clark,

founder of Alien Endurance. He encouraged him to keep on training, only if to stay in shape.

Clark came up with a special training plan for Speziani, who was required to wear a sling at all times except for when he showered. He started off on a stationary bike and walked constantly, sometimes three hours a day.

"I told Andy, 'I think the program you gave me is too light,'" Speziani said.

Four weeks after the surgery, he began swim workouts that lasted about 45 minutes, using only one arm and his legs.

"One Saturday he showed up in a wet suit," said Juan Lopez, 51, training partner from Alien Endurance who will have completed five Ironman races after the Panama City one. "It's not easy to put on a wetsuit with one arm."

Lopez, who passed out recently after swimming 2.4 miles due to overperspiration and Florida's humidity, recalls that Speziani was unable to swim that particular day because of the jellyfish.

On Oct. 4., Kaplan cleared Speziani to do the Ironman; he had his sling removed the next day.

"It's really pretty amazing that he is going to attempt to do this," Kaplan said.

Through it all, Speziani knew nothing would stop him from achieving his dream.

"He's never really seen anything as an obstacle," said his oldest son, Matthias Speziani, 20.

"He's the only person I've seen that doesn't really have any lazy



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ALIEN ENDURANCE: The training group based in Coconut Grove poses with their arms in imaginaries sling to represent Humberto Speziani's journey through his Ironman training after his collarbone injury. Pictured are Laura Lagomasino, 42, Humberto Speziani, 51, Eduardo Chipoco, 55, Juan Lopez, 51, and Andy Clark, 37. Below, training at Hobie Beach on Key Biscayne.

days," said his son, who is studying advertising at UM. "He never takes a day off, not even on holidays."

For Speziani, who wakes up sometimes at 5 a.m. to train, the sacrifice is well worth it.

"I go through a little bit of pain and hard work now, but when I cross that finish line, I can say I'm an Ironman for the rest of my life."

