

The New Zealand Herald

Scratching Ironman itch

By [Gary Hamilton-Irvine](#) @thedailypost

5:00 AM Thursday Mar 3, 2016

After nine months of juggling long training sessions with a busy schedule, Rotorua's Grant Utteridge is ready to tackle his first Ironman New Zealand race.

Ironman New Zealand will be staged in Taupo on Saturday featuring a gruelling 3.8km swim, 180km bike ride and 42km run. More than 1300 keen athletes have signed up to race the event which has been running for 32 years.

"I have done seven or eight halves and it was an itch I needed to scratch to do a whole one," Utteridge said.

"I've been on the RATS (Rotorua Association of Triathletes and Multisport) aide station at Ironman New Zealand for two or three years and you get pretty inspired. I have had to resist a couple times from entering, but I guess I probably couldn't resist a third time."

Utteridge runs a business in Rotorua and is also the current Sport Bay of Plenty chairman – a position he has held for seven years.

He said he'd been training since June last year to prepare for his first full Ironman event, and was looking forward to the hard work paying off.

"To be honest if I had to train a couple more weeks I would have been over it," he said.

It is pretty hard training for one of these events, you have to be pretty organised.
Grant Utteridge

Utteridge said a lot of people, including his two sons, thought he was crazy for entering the race, which can see competitors out on the course for up to 17 hours.

However, he said living a healthy lifestyle and keeping active was very infectious once you get started.

"Particularly being around the Sport Bay of Plenty office, it is pretty infectious," he said. "And the whole multisport thing – everything from mountain biking, to cycling long distance, to running – I love it."

He said he expected the toughest part of the race to be the marathon (42km run).

"The run by far will be the toughest part. I'm not a runner," he said. "The plan is to come off the bike with enough energy to get through it."



Grant Utteridge from Rotorua aims to be an Ironman on Saturday. Photo / Stephen Parker

Utteridge said about 10 members from the Rotorua Association of Triathletes and Multisport were taking part .

"The RATS group are really good. I think there is 10 of us doing it," he said. "And Stephanie [McHale's] sister, Charlotte, is doing it which is going to make it pretty special ... it could be quite an emotional day."

McHale was a huge part of the club but tragically died last year.

By [Gary Hamilton-Irvine](#) @thedailypost

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Giga Byte () | 03:52PM Sunday, 06 Mar 2016

go hard "gutter" you can do it mate

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