

The ultimate test

Harmony was achieved in optics last month as seven opticians from around Europe and one from South Africa came together for the inaugural meeting of the Oakley Transitions Ironman Team

The challenge being taken on by this hardy band of optical folk is to complete the Monaco Ironman 70.3 in September. This is a gruelling triathlon event that requires participants to swim 1.9km, cycle 90km through the mountains and then run a half-marathon.

The Oakley Transitions concept is to build an optical team to raise the profile of the optical profession at a European level while highlighting the issues of healthy vision and promoting excellence in lenses and sports frames.

After a selection process in each of the regions a final selection for the team was made. Those making the cut are: Fiona Molloy (34) from the UK, Uwe Steinborn (47) from Germany, Andrea Strada (34) from Italy, Kees Staton (41) from Holland, Hugo Sousa (32) from Portugal, Marna Pieterse (29) from South Africa, Andre Clauss (42) from France and Pablo Galvez Martin (33) from Spain.

To ensure the team members make it across the finishing line, Oakley and Transitions have employed the services of the Monaco Ironman 70.3 organiser Triangle, and its Finish Line Programme, to build and train the team. The eight team members will attend three training camps in the run-up to the event. The first of these took place in late January in Monaco where the team found out more about the task that lay ahead.

The camp consisted of an extensive programme, hosted by world-class athletes such as four-times Olympic swimming Gold medal winner Vladimir Salnikov and Peter Reid, three times winner of the Hawaii Ironman world Championship.

Life balance

The message the team members heard was that training for an Ironman requires the ability to bring balance and harmony to work, family and training. Roland Allen, director of marketing (Europe) at Transitions, says that to be successful in business and life you have to be healthy and you have to be able



Fiona Molloy

● Shock, surprise and a permanent smile were the reactions of Molloy on arrival at the Oakley Transitions Ironman Team training camp. The newly qualified optometrist, who works for the Matheson group in Hampshire, said she just couldn't believe that she was in the Monaco sunshine being trained by world class athletes for an Ironman event. 'When I checked into the hotel I had a big fat smile on my face and when I got into the room I was bouncing on the bed,' she said. 'I saw the application form in *Optician* and applied but I never thought in a million years I would be picked. When I knew I was coming I thought everyone else might be high level triathletes.' But she needn't have worried, the compact 34-year-old more than held her own. Her dedication to optometry is also unquestionable. After undergoing her performance test, she slipped off to a small café overlooking the marina for a coffee and a rest. She also had her copy of *Optician*, so she completed some CET while she was there.

to set and achieve goals. Taking part in an Ironman is the ultimate test of dedication to high achievement and the ability of the competitors to find the harmony and balance required to put in the training and cross the finish line. This is as true in optical business life as it is in sport, Allen says.

Transitions Lenses believes in the concept of healthy vision and excellence in optics. 'I want the team to take that message out into their practices and into their working lives,' he says.

'Transitions lenses are for everybody, not just older patients. By linking with this project, we would like opticians to agree that Transitions can be for younger people and sports people.'

The five-day training camp included evening lectures on motivation, training and physiology, while the days were spent on the track and at the pool under expert tuition. Each of the opticians underwent a performance test to measure their ability to absorb oxygen and deliver power and this

data will form the basis of their online training programme. Their weekly training requirements will be posted online and they will keep in touch with the coaches over the internet reporting on their training progress, heart rates, blood pressure and weight.

Apart from the link of optics there was little else the athletes had in common when they arrived in Monaco. But over the space of a few short days the Oakley Transitions Ironman Team had become a close-knit unit of like-minded opticians. Their spoken languages may not have been the same but they certainly understood each other. Their language was the medium of sport and they shared the same dream, to cross the finish line at the Monaco Ironman 70.3 in September. ●

● Full reports on the training camps and the team can be viewed at www.monaco-ironman.com and progress of the team can be monitored at <http://oakleytransitionsironmanteam.blogspot.com/>