

## Chiropractic at the Hawaiian Ironman Competition

Ernest Ferrel, DC, CCSP

On race day, 7 a.m., helicopters whirled overhead and excitement rose to a feverish pitch. The gun sounded. Fifteen hundred bodies began flailing their arms and churning their way through an exhausting 2.4 mile swim, the first leg of the race. As I looked around at the faces of our chiropractic team, their excitement was evident. The veterans gave me a knowing smile. We were in for a long but very exciting day.

Those doctors new to the ironman event were still untested in the field despite a week of pre-race preparation and orientation. As I had told them, everything they experienced prior to race day was like a day at Disneyland. Now it would be as though they were off to Vietnam. The veteran doctors knew exactly what I meant. The Hawaiian Ironman is an event that must be experienced. It defies description. The talking was finally over and it was time to get to work.

Race day, 2 p.m. -- Don Difabio, Scott Greenapple, and I met with race directors, pier and finish line personnel, security and medical staff to discuss what their expectations were and to be made aware of any last minute changes. We wanted to make sure that all contingencies were met. We then re-organized the new members of our team. Doctors were given assignments: finish line triage, "catching" finishers, and massage area triage. Experienced doctors were paired with newcomers. Posts were rotated every two hours so that everyone could experience each area of responsibility.

Race day, 3 p.m. -- We all manned our stations, preparing for the onslaught of the first wave. It was a hot and windy day. The following four hours are very hard to describe. It is so exciting to watch athlete after athlete come across the line, as we manned the triage unit and gave advice to the new doctors. All the veterans were great and gave unselfishly. Although we each cheered for individual competitors (patients, family, friends), we rooted for all the competitors and worked tirelessly wherever we were needed. All the treating DCs did an excellent job. Race directors were around us all day, working side by side with the chiropractic team, grateful for our presence.

As darkness fell, a look of growing exhaustion crept across the faces gathered at the finish line. The veteran DCs seemed much more relaxed than in years past, obviously due to the newfound help. The "rookies" were slowly turning into veterans, learning, understanding, and finally assimilating the ironman experience.

The chiropractic team proved that it was truly ready for any and all contingencies: massage area triage, emergencies, shock, dehydration, transportation to the medical tent for IVs and emergency care.

As the last athlete crossed the finish line after a grueling 26 mile run, and the midnight cut-off passed, there was still work to be done and athletes to be cared for.

I have nothing but praise for every member of our chiropractic team. They did an excellent job and I thank all of them, especially the veterans who have come back year after year giving of their time,

energy, and expertise.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the 1995 Hawaiian Ironman chiropractic team, please contact the National Office at 1-800-593-3222. This year's race will take place on Saturday October 7, 1995.

*Ernest Ferrel, DC, CCSP*  
*Santa Barbara, California*

APRIL 1995