

The Columbus International Triathlon shares the weekend with a very busy multisport festival that includes a sprint triathlon, a junior triathlon (ages 13-23), duathlons, an open-water swim, inline skating and running races. The race opens with a 1.5K swim at the west end of Antrim Lake with competitors taking off two at a time in rapid succession. The bike heads out of Antrim Park onto a largely flat circuit that crosses portions of Columbus, Worthington, Sharon and Perry townships via a five-mile loop taken five times. Except for a blocked-off two-lane section on SR 315, the bike course is closed to traffic. The run circles tree-lined Antrim Lake with a small out-and-back-leg to make a full 10K.

don't miss: Humorist James Thurber's childhood home in Columbus, complete with statues of his famous cartoon dogs, the German Village and the Columbus Museum of Art and the Center of Science and Industry. (fatrabbitracing.com) —T.C.

►TINMAN TRIATHLON

HONOLULU, HI
JUNE (TBD)

the basics: When Ironman left Oahu for Kona in 1981, some Honolulu triathletes decided to fill the gap. Since the around-the-island format of the Ironman had become too hard to pull off on the narrow roads of a crowded and populous island, they decided to make it a shorter race, and the first Tinman was born. While many people now associate Oahu triathlon with Bill Burke's very fine, big-league ITU World Cup and big age-group race in April in Honolulu, the popular and low-key Tinman has a small-town flavor that puts you in a time capsule somewhere near the hang-loose roots of the sport. The 750-meter swim is on the east end of Waikiki near the remnants of the War Memorial Natatorium, built in the early 20th century to honor the 112 Hawaiians killed in World War I. Olympic swimmers Buster Crabbe, Johnny Weissmuller and Duke Kahanamoku all trained there. The bike speeds east around Diamond Head into tradewinds toward Hawaii Kai and back. The 10K run circles Diamond Head and returns on the back side and ends up in Kapiolani Park, home to the finish of the classic Honolulu Marathon and the original Ironman.

don't miss: After enjoying the 26th annual Tinman, rent a surfboard in Waikiki and relax afterward at Duke's drinking mai-tais by the light of tiki torches, massaged by gentle tradewinds at sunset. (tinmanhawaii.com) —T.C.

►SAN DIEGO
INTERNATIONAL TRIATHLON
SAN DIEGO, CA

JUNE 25

the basics: Race director Rick Kozlowski was a pioneer Ironman and short-distance triathlete, and his love for the sport and experience show in the scenic, challenging and well-run San Diego International. Entering its 23rd year, San Diego sells out with 1,400 entrants for its just-short-of-Olympic distance 1K/30K/10K challenges. Koz also gets a boutique elite field of highest quality, drawing stars and legends like Michelle Jones, Mike Pigg, Craig Alexander and Greg Welch as well as up-and-comers like Jessi Stensland and Levi Maxwell. The draw for all is the course, starting with a 1,000-meter swim at the marina at Spanish Landing Park. The 18.6-mile bike tests everyone with its succession of rolling hills up to Cabrillo National Monument adjacent to Point Loma Naval Base and approaching the Old Point Loma Lighthouse, a fixture since 1854 and a lookout point for migrating gray whales in winter. What the run lacks in hills it makes up for in inspiring scenery, finishing off with a rush past Harbor Island and the Embarcadero, past big-gun modern Navy ships and the elegant old *Star of India* clipper.

don't miss: The San Diego Zoo, Sea World and a quick trip north to the cafés and bike shops of tri world central in Encinitas. (kozenterprises.com) —T.C.

►CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA, PA
JUNE 25

the basics: Philly has been missing a high-quality race for as long as we can remember, so much so that locals who routinely participate in the vast cycling community had to travel to New York or Washington, D.C. for some racing. Not so anymore after the debut in 2005 of this city race. Held in and around Fairmount Park and the Art Museum area, the race is a full Olympic distance with all the bells and whistles, taking spectators down the Schuylkill River before embarking on a two-lap crit-like course circling the river and the museum. The run takes you to back to where Rocky once danced and returns you down West River Drive to the finishline.

don't miss: This race. In its second year, it's almost already sold out. And while you're in town, grab that cheesesteak you've been craving (post-race, that is), some time in historic Old Town and—what the hell?—run those steps. (phillytri.com) —K.D.F.

►LIFE TIME FITNESS

MINNEAPOLIS, MN
JULY 15

the basics: The hype of this race was surely overdone at first when racers were enticed to

"race on the same course as the pros." Then came the unheard-of prize purse. What happened next surprised us all. They made it a legitimate Olympic distance, replaced marquee athletes with ones who could win here and it's now a classic. For us mortals, we get a fun, flat, curvy course that's part of the scenic Twin Cities Marathon later in the year. (And you can't find cleaner lakes to swim in than in Minnesota.)

don't miss: The race is always held in conjunction with the city's Aquatennial festival, so be sure to hit one of the remnant days for some killer Scandinavian food. (tfftriathlon.com) —K.D.F.

►CLEVELAND TRIATHLON

CLEVELAND, OH
JULY 16

the basics: Jack Caress' classic Olympic-distance test could serve as a snapshot of triathlon history during its 19-year run by Lake Erie. Various known as the National City, Rock and Roll, Metropolitan Bank and Sky Bank triathlons, now, as it approaches 20, it has achieved standalone status as, simply, The Cleveland Triathlon. Fittingly for an event that starts and finishes in the shadow of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, its roster of past winners sounds like a triathlon hall of fame: Paula Newby-Fraser, Karen Smyers, Erin Baker, Emma Allen, Scott Molina, Mike Pigg, Greg Welch, Simon Lessing and Chris McCormack. The 1.5K swim is held in the protected (and wetsuit-friendly) waters of North Coast Harbor off Lake Erie. The three-loop bike attacks the mostly flat and fast Memorial Shoreway drive and is broken up by some mildly rolling hills. The multi-loop run is mostly flat with surprisingly tough and tricky uphill and downhill sections on downtown streets with a finish in front of the Rock and Roll Museum.

don't miss: The Rock and Roll Museum, Jacobs Field and the resurgent Cleveland Indians major league baseball team. (pacificsportsllc.com) —T.C.

►MOUNTAIN MAN TRIATHLON

FLAGSTAFF, AZ
JULY 16

the basics: The Mountain Man Triathlon will turn 22 years old in July and this Flagstaff, Arizona race hangs tight to its grass-roots feel. Three distances are on offer: a sprint (700-meter swim, 18K bike, 5K run), an Olympic distance and a half-iron distance. The long-course race is new this year but, incredibly, the Mountain Man has enjoyed the same crew of organizers since its inception in 1984 with just 46 on the start line. The field is now capped at

{ THE BEST OF THE U.S. EVOLVES }

AFTER A HURRIED, beat-the-deadline startup that finished with a great series finale at Timberman in Gilford, New Hampshire last year, Jerry McNeil and Trudy Marshall of Midwest Events are back and committed to their second **Best of the U.S.** series championship. The unique format is the same—qualifying races to find the best overall short-course male and female triathletes in 50 states, then a series finale where the 50 best men and the 50 best women will compete to crown the individual and state team champions.

But for 2006 the pair has made several changes designed to improve on a good working model. First, says McNeil, the series will attempt to have all qualifying races staged at the Olympic distance, moving up from the predominance of sprint distance in year one. And the series championship will move from New Hampshire to Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota—much closer to Midwest Events' headquarters in Minneapolis. "The main reason is that the ITU world championship in Lausanne, Switzerland, is scheduled for the same weekend as Timberman, and we don't want to conflict with a major age-group championship," McNeil says. New races joining the series include the prestigious and long-running Columbia Triathlon, the Philadelphia Triathlon, the St. George (Utah) Triathlon, held on much of the scenic St. George Marathon course, the Route 66 Triathlon in Oklahoma, and the Deschutes Dash in the endurance sports haven of Bend, Oregon.

Another sign of progress—each state will now have its own qualifying race. "In our desire to reward amateur triathletes and promote the growth of the sport, we discovered several great events that deserved the publicity," says McNeil, one of the nation's great triathlon announcers. The finale will be September 16. (midwestevents.com) —T.C.