

Mountain king to conquer Ben Nevis in triathlon

Never mind the 17km climb to the top of the UK's highest mountain and back down.

Or two bike journeys of approximately 27km each – some across slippery, gravelly, terrain.

It is the 1.5 km swim in the icy waters of Loch Leven that has Peebles expert Iain Veitch, 41, slightly apprehensive about Saturday's Ben Nevis triathlon for which he will probably start favourite after defending his titles in the two other legs of a "trilogy" pitching man against mountain in Welsh Snowdonia and the English Lake District's Scafell Pike.

Adding lustre to that English victory, incidentally, was a new course record of 5hours, 4 mins, 38 seconds – slashing six minutes of his previous best by an athlete who is surely one of the unsung heroes of Scottish sport?

"Approximately 90 per cent of the mental strength and fortitude required to undertake these events will be getting my shoulders under what will be the freezing cold water of Loch Leven" laughs Iain.

Such is the danger attached to these type of events that organisers ROC Triathlon had to cap entries requisite to the amount of Mountain Rescue services available on the day.

Iain, though, feels he is well prepared including having arrived in Fort William to survey the route three days in advance.

"I can't have any excuses so long as there are no technical failings with the bike. I've trained well and gone head-to-head with a couple of very good athletes in the previous two legs.

"It's nice to win and even nicer when you are up against other good competitors" says Iain whose other successes this year include the Keilder Off Road duathlon and the Scottish Borders tri-series.

A similar race to the Ben Nevis challenge, called the Braveheart Triathlon, saw Iain sample part of the course back in 2018.

"I think it will help having previously run up and down Ben Nevis which has a special allure with its extra 1000 feet of elevation. Especially being the first year of the Trilogy series I'd love to add to the previous two successes."

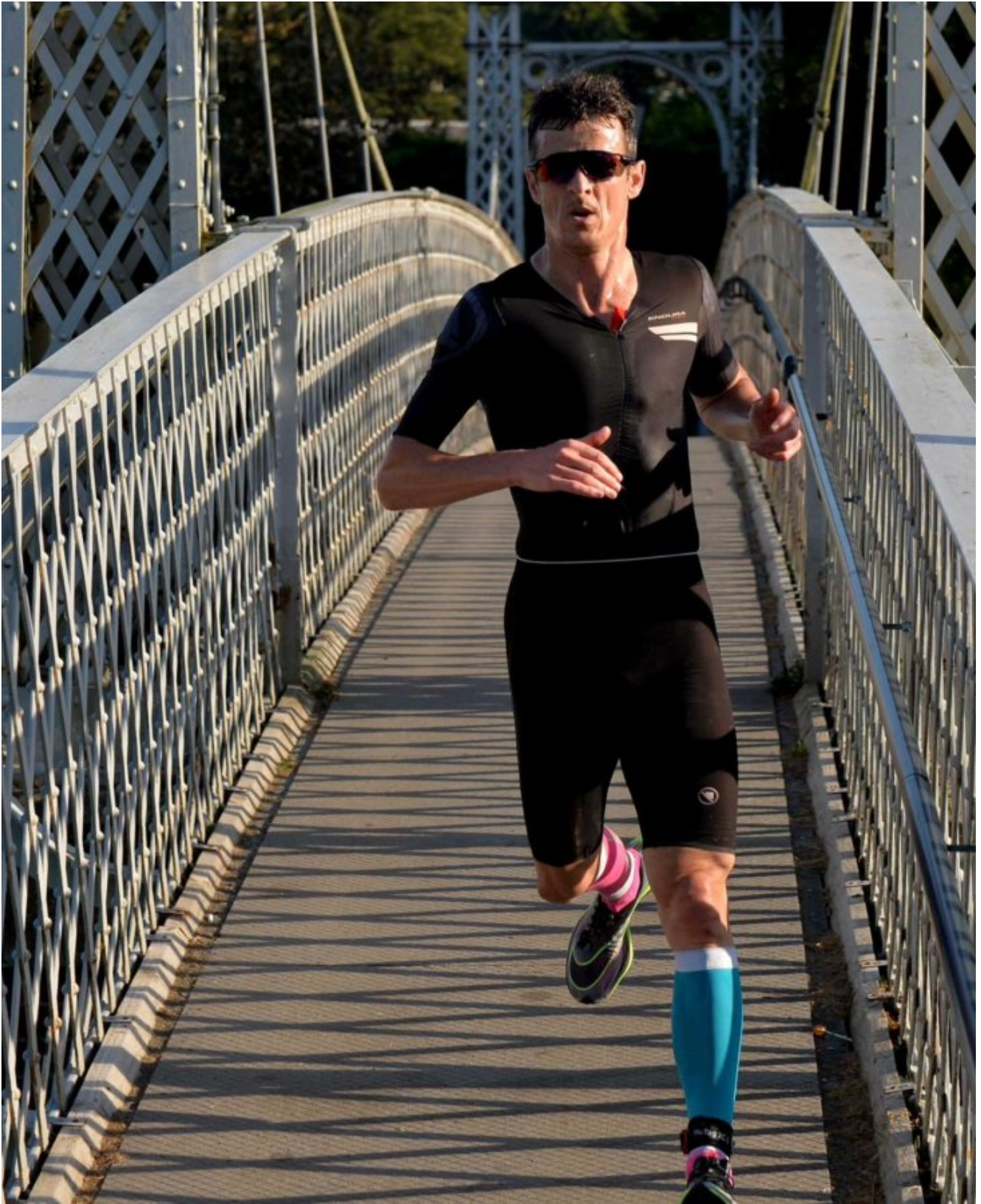
Meanwhile, organisers have billed the event as "The UK's toughest mountain triathlon" but insist "you will reap the rewards for years to come when you cross the finish line."

· Kicking off in Kinlochleven on the dramatic shoreline of Loch Leven the ROC Scotland starts with a 1.5km swim before heading off 27km on gravel (by) mountain bike round the north east end of the stunning loch and up into the Glens, joining the old military tail road to Fort William and Glen Nevis Transition at the western end of the Grampian Mountains, The race then heads off on foot up the UK's highest mountain with 4265 feet of intense ascent to the summit of Ben Nevis and a 17km total trek up and down. The return bike leg takes you 25km back to Kinlochleven and a 1.5km trail run to the finish line in the centre of the village."

Phew.



Mountain run. credit Sam Beaumont photography



Iain action credit Alwyn Johnston