

## At age 50, man will run with bulls, tackle triathlon

By Bill Knight \ EL PASO TIMES

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Brian Carter is the associate director of the University of Texas at El Paso Swimming and Fitness Center. He turned 50 in March. He will mark his milestone birthday this summer by taking part in Ironman Nice in France and then running with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain. "This is just an opportunity for me to cross two things off my bucket list," Carter said. (Mark Lambie / El Paso Times)

EL PASO -- And so which strikes you as the worst idea? A 12-hour torture fest of swimming, biking and running? Or a two-minute run down a narrow street with scared and angry bulls?

Pick your poison.

El Pasoan Brian Carter has picked both for his

summer vacation. The associate director of the UTEP Swimming and Fitness Center plans on competing in Ironman Nice on June 27 in France and then participating in the annual running of the bulls in early July in Pamplona, Spain.

Laughing, as he so often does, Carter said, "My parents still think I'm nuts. A lot of my friends are asking me if I'm crazy. This is just a time in my life when I want to do this ... maybe because I still can."

Carter turned 50 on March 11.

"This is just an opportunity for me to cross two things off my bucket list," he said. "There are certain things we all want to do in life. I've been able to jump out of an airplane. I went whitewater rafting. I bungee jumped out of a hot air balloon in California. I can't explain it. I've just wanted to do the running of the bulls since I saw it on television as a teenager."

It will most certainly be a summer to remember.

And do not worry about Carter. He is hardly your average 50-year-old -- unless your average 50-year-old has six-pack abs and a frame where all body fat has gone AWOL.

The triathlon will be nothing new for him. He has done Ironman Canada, Ironman Germany, Ironman New Zealand and the original triathlon, Ironman Hawaii. He is a veteran

of these exercises in pain that involve a 2.4-mile

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ocean swim, a 112-mile bicycle ride and a full marathon, a 26.2 mile run to put the exclamation point on the long and tortuous day.

"I stopped racing when I got married," said Carter, who looks as if he might be in his late 30s. "It is just so time consuming. You never say never, but this is the last chapter. Just one more."

Carter's wife, Kristi, who will make the trip with him, laughed and said, "Brian did Hawaii after we got married. I told him if he did another one, I'd leave him. The boys were little then. Evan was 5 and Brendan was 2. But I know he's been wanting to do this, and the boys are old enough now. They aren't in diapers anymore. The running with the bulls is the thing that jumps out at most people. His mom is beside herself. But this is something he's talked about for as long as I've known him."

The triathlon is first up. The actual race is difficult. Training for the race is painful and time consuming.

"Right now I'm running 25 to 30 miles a week," Carter said. "I'm biking 150 to 175 miles a week and I'm swimming 7,000 yards a week. For Ironman training, that's pretty minimal. But I'm getting there physically. I'm not there mentally."

Carter knows the process. He has lived it. There will be times in the race -- deep into the bike ride and through most strides of the marathon -- when he will be hating life. It is simply part of

the process.

"You have to have your mind right, be mentally prepared when you go through those bad times," he said. "You know you will reach a point when you just can't wait to get off that bike. Then you take the first step of the run and you ask yourself why you ever got off that bike. You reach back during those times, think of the people who have been special in your life. I think of my grandpa ... I think of Dan (Viola, former UTEP strength coach), who just passed away ... I think of Diane Proud, who has ALS. The time becomes really important to you and that's where I'm going to go -- to the people who have meant so much to me."

Next up is the running of the bulls. Carter, who laughs easily and often and eats up life with his enthusiasm and appetite for challenges and adventures, will make this trip like all the others.

"Kristi has never been to Europe," he said. "This is not just about the race. It's about the whole trip."

The running of the bulls, somewhat popularized by Ernest Hemingway in his novel "The Sun Also Rises," is run July 6-14 each year as part of the San Fermin Festival in Pamplona, Spain. The bulls are released each morning at 8 a.m. and run through the streets for roughly half a mile and into the bull ring, where they will be part of the bullfights that evening.

"I don't have a goal of touching a bull," he said. "I

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just want to be part of it. There are certain spots more dangerous than others. I will probably try to run into the stadium."

Pausing, laughing again, he said, "This is something you don't want to do just a couple of days after the triathlon, though."

No worries. Carter will be rested and ready. But he has always been ready. He was a high school quarterback, point guard and shortstop at Waupun High School in Wisconsin and played baseball at the University of Wisconsin. He is the son of a quarterback, point guard and shortstop and he always has wanted to push himself, challenge himself.

It is in his blood and, though he stopped racing nearly 13 years ago, he never has stopped training.

Carter has traveled the world in his athletic adventures, created so many memories for himself. He and local triathlon standout Mike Baker set a world record for a tandem triathlon at the Vineman Ironman in Sonoma, Calif. But one of the most vivid memories came when he ran the Boston Marathon.

He still shakes his head at the memory: "I was wearing a UTEP athletics shirt and people would yell 'UTEP basketball ... Coach Haskins ... great.' If I heard that one time, I heard it a dozen times that day, and that was way back in 1990. I thought then, boy, we have a treasure in El Paso."

Carter is getting ready, getting closer to moving into that mental jumpsuit that will carry him through a dozen hours of work, sweat and pain.

Smiling, he said, "Maybe it's a little crazy. I'll see if I can push my body at 50 to do this. My (Ironman) goal is 12 hours (the cutoff point is 18 hours, and Carter has done 10 hours and change on a pair of occasions), but I won't lose any sleep if I don't make it. This is one of those special events that, whether you finish first or finish last, if you did your best, you had a good day."

Carter, with his outlook on life and his enthusiasm for the next adventure, the next challenge, never seems to have a bad day. Well, maybe those days that feature five hours on a bike with a couple of trips over TransMountain are not so good.

But this summer he is working his way, mentally and physically, toward a pair of very special days -- an exhausting dozen-hour day of swimming, biking and running, and an adrenaline-overloaded day featuring a two-minute dance with angry bulls.

Bill Knight may be reached at [bknight@elpasotimes.com](mailto:bknight@elpasotimes.com); 546-6171.

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