

## Age Group Athlete In Transition To A New Level

### Nathan Killam

by Timothy Moore

**B**urger King's Whopper Wednesday used to be the best day of the week for Nathan Killam. "I lived for fast food and video games," the 23-year-old says. Now he simply lives to go fast.

"I strive to be the best I can, and I want to continue to improve my fitness and my results. I find that the more I love triathlon, the more it loves me back. Triathlon changed my life, and my health, both for the better."

The 2009 season marked Killam's transition to a new level in the sport. In September, Killam became British Columbia's Olympic distance champion by winning the Cultus Lake triathlon in Chilliwack. "It was the best way to end the season," he says.

Earlier in the season he finished second to Tom Evans at the Pushor Mitchell Apple triathlon in Kelowna, won the Vancouver sprint triathlon and won the UBC Duathlon.

"I've realized that I want to go places in this sport, that I have a fair bit of potential," Killam says.

And, while he's now at the point of deciding when, not if, to turn professional, this Surrey, B.C.-based athlete's triathlon resumé is very much a work in progress.

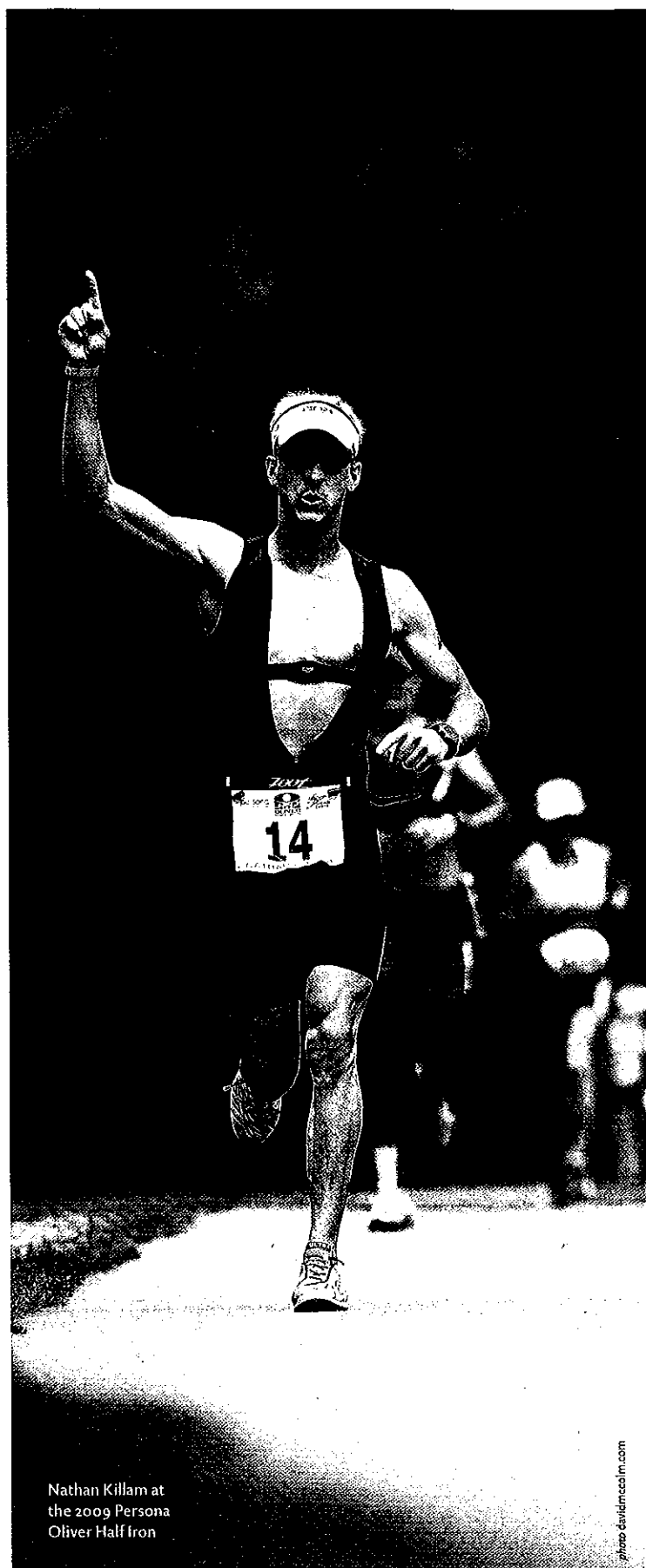
Four-and-a-half years ago, the 5' 10" Killam tipped the scales at more than 200 pounds (90 kilograms), a result of his love for fast food and lack of exercise. But, in his final year of high-school, Killam's body began to protest against his unhealthy lifestyle: he had a persistent hacking cough, trouble breathing in gym class and often was sick.

In October 2004, Killam joined a gym. He began running on a treadmill three times a week for about 20 minutes each session and lifted weights. Along with his new training regime, which he now describes as "not a whole lot really," he ditched fast food.

Killam's motivation was simple: "I wanted to get myself into better health and fitness, and I also wanted to just plain look better." It worked. He lost 30 pounds within four months.

His transformation wasn't without its challenges. In January, 2007 he broke his tailbone while snowboarding in Whistler. He couldn't do much; he had to stop running. So he ate. The resulting weight gain scared him into his gym's pool and he learned how to swim.

When his injury healed Killam decided to do the 10 km Vancouver Sun Run and finished in 40:29. "Instantly I wanted to do another 10K race and try to get under 40 minutes," Killam says. He upped his



Nathan Killam at the 2009 Persona Oliver Half Iron

photo: davidmcaim.com

treadmill running frequency to five times a week. He raced a 10 km on July first that year, crossing the line in 39:36. "I was so proud of myself for setting this goal and achieving it."

Killam had also begun to cycle, though in quite rudimentary way. He used his dad's old and heavy road bike to commute to work, a 28 km round trip. A friend recommended that he enter a triathlon for first-timers. He signed up and upgraded his bike.

Wanting aerobars because they looked cool, he was referred to a triathlon-specific shop. There he also found his first mentor in the sport, Charlene Parrott. "She got me so excited about triathlon and I hadn't even done my first race." By the time race morning came, Killam was more than ready. "I wanted to be there super early - some things never change. I had no idea what to expect." He exited the water in fifth place, was second as he got on his bike and soon after was leading. "Charlene had stressed how important transition was."

Killam immediately signed up for two more triathlons and raced the Subaru Vancouver Sprint next. "It was after that race that I knew triathlon was for me. Something about how friendly everyone was in transition, how everyone cheered so loud as you raced, and the competitiveness of the race itself."

"I loved how it was pure exertion from when the gun went off until I crossed the finish line. I just pushed as hard as I possibly could. When it was so hard to breathe [that] I thought I was going to pass out, I pushed harder. I guess I got hooked on the adrenalin and endorphin rush too."

In December, 2007, Killam, a heavy-duty equipment mechanic, started training with Shaun Callaghan of Pacific Rim Multisport.

"I do train a lot. If I'm not sleeping or working I am generally training. I'm motivated by the hunger for the win. They say you have to want it and you have to be willing to work for it. I know that consistent training will help me reach my goals, which motivates me most."

"I do find it hard some days, after climbing equipment and being on my feet in the sun all day, to go do a few hours of training. But I almost always look forward to training - it's the highlight of my day. Especially when I see a really hard workout in the plan, I know that it's going to make me that little bit stronger, to get me a little closer to where I want to be. Reaching my goals gets me moving."

Killam dreams big, especially after an unexpected 4:22 finish at the SOMA Half Ironman (Arizona) in October 2008. "It really got me thinking about my future in the sport, that in eight months [of structured training] I could get this fast, so I started to take a much more serious approach to training."

His ultimate goal is winning the Ford Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii. But he knows his more immediate goals are putting in the hard yards every training session and to win races.

Killam's diet these days is unrecognizable from five years ago. He has cut out processed foods and sugar. He eats a mostly plant-based diet, with seafood, eggs and milk. He also works very hard on his recovery, stretching and using his foam roller after each workout, and sees a massage therapist at least every fortnight. "I listen to my body very carefully and, if something doesn't seem right, I figure out what the problem is and fix it. I actively seek out my weaknesses to make them my strengths."

As for 2010, "I am considering turning pro this season, but I haven't yet made up my mind. It is most definitely my goal within the next year or two. Being a pro triathlete is my dream career."

Timothy Moore is a Squamish, B.C.-based editor, journalist and triathlete. He can be reached through: [www.triathletetim.com](http://www.triathletetim.com)

# THE TRIATHLON SERIES

[www.MSCTRIATHLON.COM](http://www.MSCTRIATHLON.COM)

WOODSTOCK TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON, SPRINT TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON & GIVE-IT-A-TRI JUNE 5 & 6

TORONTO ISLAND TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON & GIVE-IT-A-TRI\*\* AUGUST 14 & 15

BINBROOK TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON & GIVE-IT-A-TRI JUNE 13

**NEW Half Iron race**

WELLAND HALF IRON TRI/HALF IRON DU, TRIATHLON/DUATHLON & GIVE-IT-A-TRI JUNE 26 & 27

GRAVENHURST OLYMPIC TRIATHLON/DUATHLON, SPRINT TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON & GIVE-IT-A-TRI\*\* JULY 17 & 18



BALA FALLS TRIATHLON\*\* JULY 25

COBOURG OLYMPIC TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON, SPRINT TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON & GIVE-IT-A-TRI AUGUST 28 & 29

WASAGA BEACH OLYMPIC TRIATHLON, SPRINT TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON & GIVE-IT-A-TRI SEPTEMBER 11

LAKESIDE OLYMPIC TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON, SPRINT TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON & GIVE-IT-A-TRI PLUS KOS\*\* SEPTEMBER 18 & 19

BRACEBRIDGE HALF IRON TRI/HALF IRON DU, SPRINT TRIATHLON/ DUATHLON & GIVE-IT-A-TRI AUGUST 7 & 8

\*\*DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER EARLY FOR THE RACES THAT SOLD OUT IN 2009! Lakeside, Bala Falls, Gravenhurst and Toronto Island

For more information and to register go to

trigeeks.ca

247 1385