

NEWS TRIATHLON LEGENDS

## Legends of Triathlon – Greg Welch – Grand Slam Glory

Luke Howard October 14, 2020 Triathlon Legends

**Greg Welch, an Australian triathlete, is acknowledged as one of the greatest in the history of the sport due to his remarkable dominance in winning a “Grand Slam”.**

Welch, born in Sydney, Australia in 1964 is regarded as having a list of accomplishments that is among the most diverse in triathlon history. His breakthrough came in 1989, when still relatively new and unknown on the world stage he finished third at the Ironman World Championship behind Mark Allen and Dave Scott in the sport’s all-time classic Ironman race.

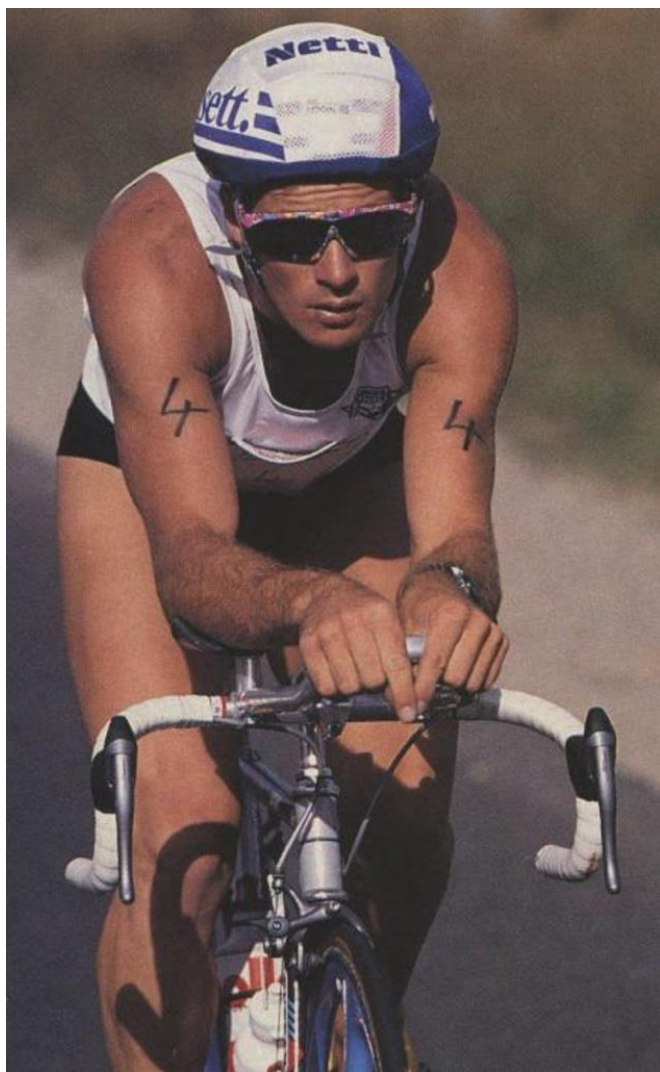


Photo credit: Triathlon.org

From that point on Welch etched his name in the history books in not just one, but three ITU World Championship races across three different disciplines and distances to claim his Grand Slam Glory in addition to winning the Ironman Title in 1994.

- ITU Triathlon World Championships (1990)
- ITU Duathlon World Championships (1993)
- ITU Long Course Triathlon World Championship (1996)
- Ironman World Championship (1994)

Greg Welch dominated at all distances with his ability to win races all over the globe at any distance from Sprint to Olympic-distance triathlons through to Ironman.



Competing in his second ITU's World Championships in 1990, Welch upped the stakes, this time beating out a talented field that included Brad Beven, Simon Lessing and Mike Pigg to win his first ITU World Championships in Orlando.

*"I was the type of guy that went out after hours and did another 10km run because I was possessed. I just...I just wanted to train. I loved it. Adrenaline was my best friend,"* Welch said in an interview on Enough Rope with Andrew Denton.

The Australian then went on to also win the 1993 Arlington ITU Duathlon World Championships and the 1996 Muncie ITU Long Distance World Championships to complete his Grand Slam.

It will be of no surprise that Greg Welch was inducted into the ITU Hall of Fame in 1994, for his unprecedented feat of dominance in the world of triathlon.

When he won the Ironman World Championship in 1994, he became the first non-American male and the first Australian to win the most prestigious title in the sport. In Kona, besides his third-place in 1989 and his 1994 victory, he took fifth in 1990, second in 1991, sixth in 1992, fourth in 1995 and third in 1996.





Photo credit: Ironman Archives

Following his world title success, Welch again defied odds when he returned to faster sprint courses on the ITU World Circuit and started cleaning up on younger, quicker fields in an attempt to qualify for the sport's Olympic debut in his native Australia. While he was on track to achieve his Olympic dreams, life had other plans for him. Welch was forced to retire prematurely when he was diagnosed with "**Ventricular Tachycardia**" after the 1999 Ironman World Championship. Even though he was having abnormal heart rhythm episodes throughout the race when his heart surged to 320 beats a minute and was forced to stop numerous times to wait for his heart rate to drop, he still ran a 2:46:51 marathon and finished 11th overall.

Following his diagnosis Greg underwent nine open-heart surgeries from 2001 until 2003 and lived to tell the tale, quoting: *"Who's the luckiest man in the world? It isn't 'Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.' It's me."* The Australian maintains contact with triathlon through his work as an advisor, coach and commentator.

Greg Welch was – and still is – a Legend of Triathlon. His is a story of true Australian grit; abandoning beer and a BBQ in favour of bike clips and a pair of speedos to become one of the greatest Australian triathletes of his era, on his pathway to Grand Slam Glory.



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