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## 5 Questions With: Tony Kanaan, IndyCar Driver, Triathlete

How a race-car driver prepares his body for the track and the Ironman

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Imagine driving a car at 200 miles per hour around four corners for 200 laps amongst dozens of other cars. The mental and physical strain is exhausting, which is why race-car drivers train as intensely — if not more — than athletes in other mainstream sports.

IndyCar driver Tony Kanaan has to train his 160-pound body to withstand gravitational forces of up to 5 g's during a race. Given that every g represents a person's body weight, he's fighting up to 800 pounds of compressive force at his car's highest speeds.

The intensity of Kanaan's training goes beyond weight lifting and cardio sessions. He prepares for triathlons by working out five to six hours daily with his IndyCar buddy and fellow Brazilian, Vitor Meira. An IndyCar driver since 2002, Kanaan has spent 10 years competing in various marathons, including three half-Ironmans. He completed his first full Ironman triathlon October 8 in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii.

Weight Watchers Online for Men spoke with Kanaan to discover how he hydrates, what exercises he performs to stay fit and in what way Ironman inspires him.

### 1. What made you want to compete in an Ironman triathlon?

Working out to be fit enough to drive the race car is how I started out. I was always a swimmer when I was a little kid. And I cycle and run to be able to be fit enough to drive a race car. One day, one of my trainers said that I already do the three [triathlon races], so why don't I get into a triathlon and compete? He's telling a race-car driver to compete somewhere else. It made it easier to work out because then I had another goal. But racing cars has always been my priority.

### 2. Your sport is unique in that g-forces push your body to the limit. How do you train to prepare yourself for that?

That is a little different than triathlon training. I can do this in the gym. I do a lot of core exercises, and now I do CrossFit. I know it's becoming more and more popular nowadays, but I've been doing CrossFit for the past four years. It helps with core strength; that's what you need. We normally pull 4 g's [in the race car] but we're sitting down; it's all core work to hold yourself [in the seat]. And I do a lot of neck exercises as well. There is a proper neck-exercise machine at my gym — like a biceps machine — but I do one neck exercise when I'm sitting at home on my couch. I lie on my back and shoulders and keep my neck up, looking sideways at the TV. You can do both sides for 15 minutes each. It's brutal, I can tell you that.

### 3. What are the various ways in which you hydrate during the week of a race?

There is nothing better than water. There are obviously some sports drinks, but I drink a gallon of water per day. You're not going to see me walking around without a bottle of water in my hand. During the week, I try to hydrate as much as I can, but during the race weekends, I take electrolytes and stuff that has more salt in it. Coming from Brazil, I'm very familiar with coconut water. That's what I drink a lot. Nowadays, it's so easy to buy it in America.

### 4. And what about your diet? What do you eat in the days before a race?

My diet is pretty strict. On race weekends, I try not to do anything different than I've done on other race weekends. It's pretty boring because it's the same food for 17 weekends per year

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[laughs]. But it's very well balanced — some carbs and some protein. Basically, there's plain pasta with chicken or rice and meat or fish. It doesn't change a lot. That's over Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I try to eat every three hours. I do that on a daily basis. A proper breakfast and a little snack between breakfast and lunch and then a midday snack. During the week, I try not to eat carbs past 7 o'clock at night; only protein. I try to watch my weight.

**5. To circle back to the Ironman, what advice do you have for aspiring triathletes?**

To be very determined and train hard. It's fun, it's very challenging and it's very rewarding. It depends on you. Look for a trainer — that's pretty important. I would never advise anybody to start working out without advice.

**Bonus question:**

**Sitting in a car for 200 laps must wreak havoc on your flexibility. What's your stretching routine like?**

I really stretch my back, legs and neck. You're using your whole body during the race. Driving a car is very demanding on the lower back, so that's an area that affects me the most. I try to stretch that a little bit more than everything else. I incorporate that every day. When you're working out as much as I do, if you don't stretch, you'll be in constant pain.

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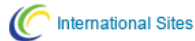
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