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Florida man becomes first person with Down syndrome to finish Ironman triathlon

BY CHRISTOPHER BRITO
NOVEMBER 9, 2020 / 12:04 PM / CBS NEWS

Chris Nikic became the first athlete with Down syndrome to complete an Ironman Triathlon. The 21-year-old from Maitland, Florida earned himself Guinness World Record for the finishing race and his milestone was considered a "historic achievement" by the Special Olympics.



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Swam 2.4 miles, biked 112 miles and ran 26.2 miles in 16 hours, 46

minutes and nine seconds during [Ironman Florida](#) in Panama City Beach on Saturday and finished 14 minutes before the official cut-off time. Nikić competed along with his guide, Dan Grieb.

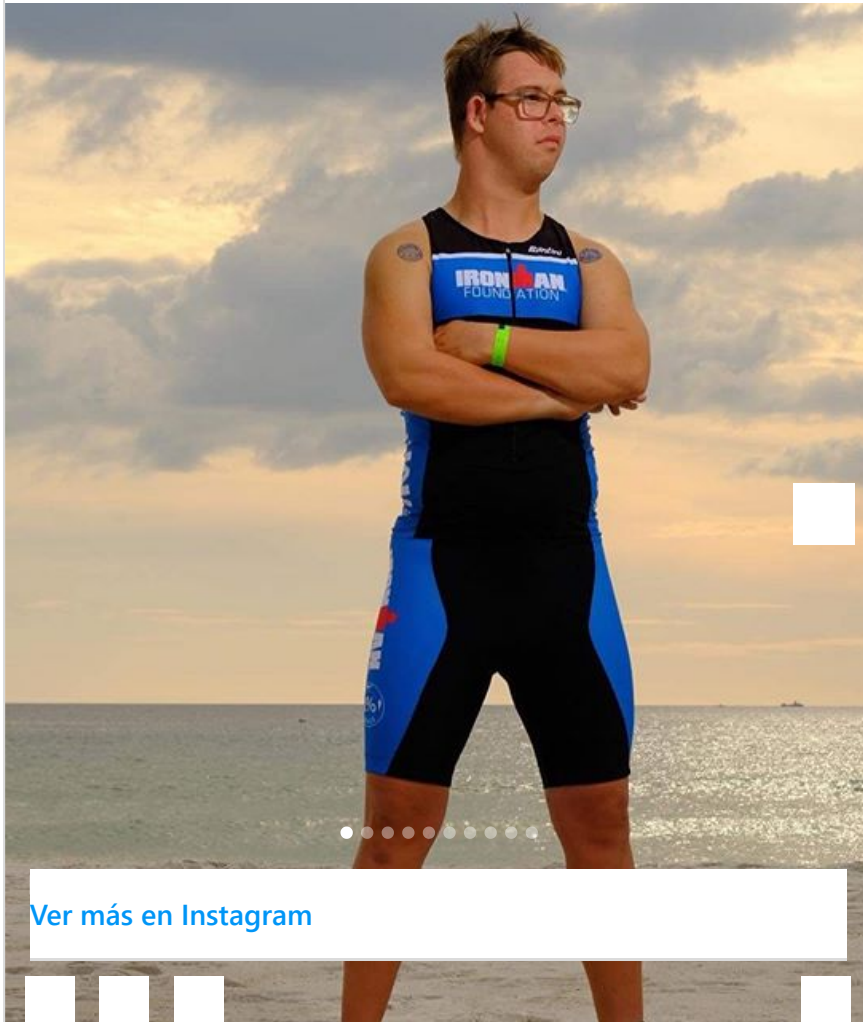
Nikić reflected on the milestone on Instagram and set his sights for more next year. "Goal set and achieved," Nikić wrote Sunday. "Time to set a new and BIGGER Goal for 2021."





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chrisnikic

IRONMAN. Goal set and achieved. Time to set a new and BIGGER Goal for 2021. Whatever it is the strategy is the same. 1% Better every day. YES, I did the work but I had angels helping me. God surrounded me with Angels. Best part of all. New family and friends. All about awareness and inclusion. Awareness for Down Syndrome and Special Olympics. Inclusion for all of us with all of you. I'm sorry for not responding personally to all your messages. It's amazing but overwhelming because I got 33K new followers and messages since yesterday. I will try and catch up. If you want to support my mission for Down Syndrome and Special Olympics go to my website www.ChrisNikic.com because 100% of the donations go to my charities. I achieved my goal and now I want to help others like me. Thank you to [@ironmantri](#) and [@im_foundation](#) for making it possible. Thank you [@specialolympics](#) [@specialolympicsfl](#) for starting the triathlon program. Thank you [@rodsracing](#) for giving a home to babies like me. I will be thanking so many more people over the coming days. But I must start with the 3 Angels who trained with me and did the race with me. Dan, Jenn and Carlos. #inclusion

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He added that this goal was all about "inclusion" and awareness for Down syndrome and the Special Olympics.

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Jean King, who is no stranger to breaking barriers. "Congratulations to @ChrisNikic, the first person with Down syndrome to complete the grueling IRONMAN! No limits. No boundaries. Keep dreaming big and going for it, Chris!" she tweeted.

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Chris Nikic is awarded a medal after finishing Ironman Florida on November 7, 2020, in Panama City Beach, Florida.

MICHAEL REAVES /GETTY

The [Global Down Syndrome Foundation](#), a U.S. non-profit that aims to improve health outcomes for people with Down syndrome, [congratulated](#) Nikic, saying he "has broken barriers and shattered doctors' expectations."

"We are beyond inspired, and your accomplishment is a defining moment in IRONMAN history that can never be taken away from you," Ironman Triathlon's [official Twitter account](#) wrote.

First published on November 9, 2020 / 12:04 PM

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