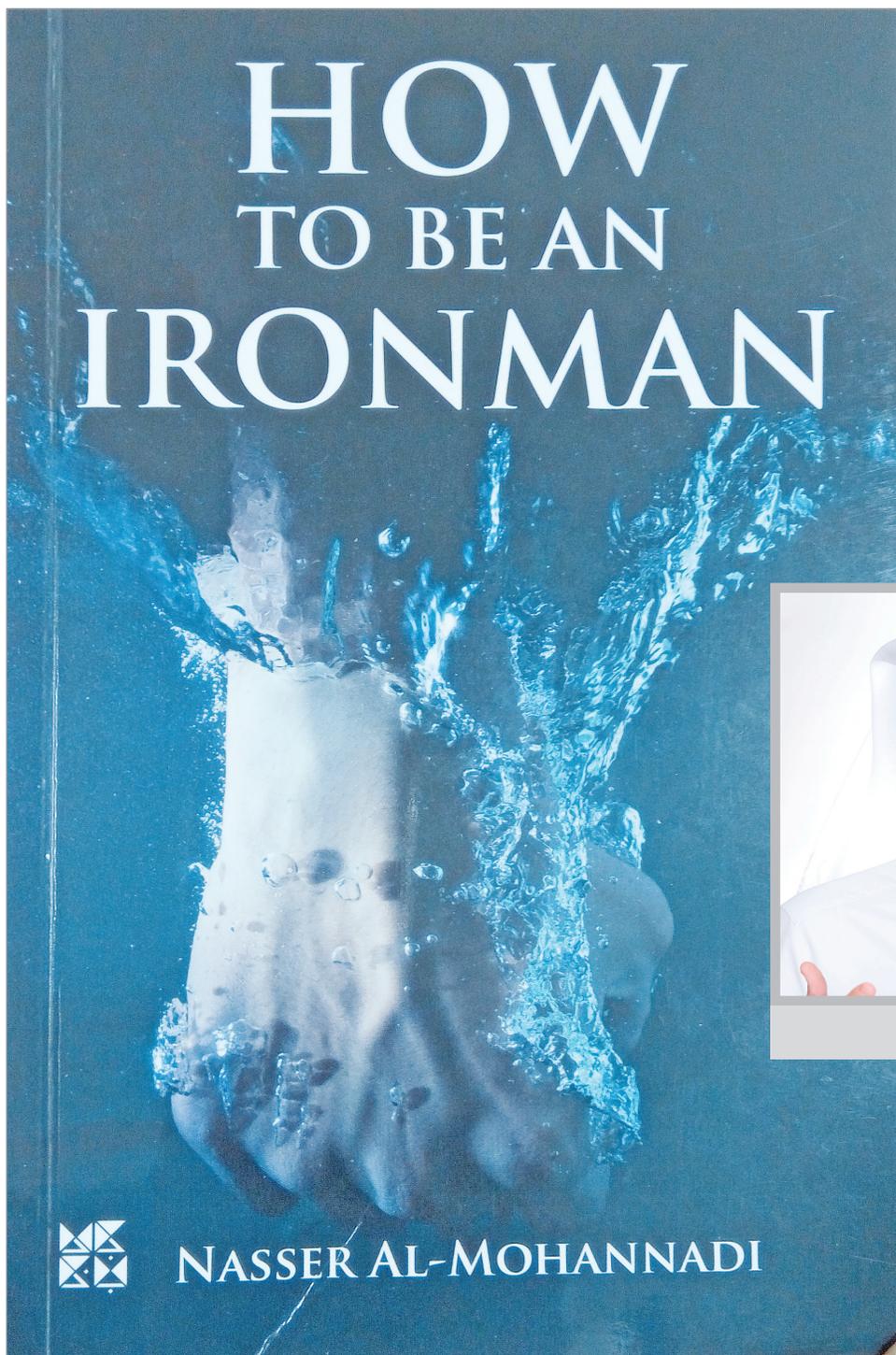




# The making of an Ironman: sweat, tears, grit



LLEWELLYN FLORES

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**H**OW to be an Ironman by Nasser al Mohannadi is not a step-by-step instruction guide on how to be a triathlon athlete as the title might suggest. It is, in most part, a narrative, an account of the author's journey to realising a childhood dream. As the story is told, mistakes are identified and lessons are specified.

A person who aspires to be an Ironman should read this book. It provides a vivid picture of what the sport demands from an athlete. It will give a healthy perspective. Anyone who has a goal, big or small, to improve their health, career, education or a skill can benefit from the

book. It will encourage you to continue and focus on the goal. Those who are planning to start a project, or learn something new, might just start after reading it. And if you know Ironman only by name, this

book will give you a better understanding why the title solicits admiration.

It is not entirely a narrative because charts are included in the book. These are the author's performance in the competitions he participated in, timelines of his journey, and the challenges, mistakes and solutions realised towards and during the Ironman race. He also breaks from the tale to talk about a mistake made and how it could be avoided.

The author holds that the mindset, the attitude and discipline necessary to becoming an Ironman are the same traits necessary to be successful in life. He echoes the life lesson many adults have heard in their lives, perhaps not just once: achieving a dream requires hard work, dedication, focus and a posi-

tive outlook; the importance of planning, family, friends, mentors, humility, purpose, etc.

Here, however, he puts weight on the value of those qualities in overcoming obstructions that come along the way of achieving any goal by giving an appreciable description of his struggles during his Ironman race.

The author's account of his experiences and his thoughts during the journey are engaging, especially from chapters three to five, where he describes his first Ironman race in detail. Although knowing beforehand that he had finished the race, you could still fear for his safety as he describes the physical struggles he encountered during the race.

His description of what was happening to his body while he swam, biked and ran, can make a reader question the sanity of people who aspire for the Ironman title. He himself did. But as he talks about approaching the finish line, you find yourself watching from the sidelines and rooting for him. You rejoice when he finally reaches the finish line.

Besides the narrative, the short history of Qatar and how the Ironman race came to be, is also a pleasure to read. The two or three instances of humour are great breaks from the somewhat serious but short-read book.

There are, however, two elements of the book that diminished my enjoyment of the narrative. The first is timeline charts placed before the author expands on them. Though it creates a clearer image of the order of how things occurred, it was for me, like a spoiler to a film one is so eager to see. I learned quickly though, and decided to ignore the charts and continued reading, then went back for a clearer picture.

The other was when the author points out his mistakes and provides the lessons he's learned from the incident. It broke the momentum of a good narrative and I felt robbed of the opportunity to learn from someone else's experience simply by reading their reactions and their thoughts about a challenging experience – by observing if it were happening before my eyes. It also prevented me from being awed by how the protagonist handled a difficult situation.

Overall, the book serves its purpose – it educates, inspires and motivates.



Nasser al Mohannadi

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