



Courtesy Calgary Tourism Board

BIG SKY TRI

A TOUGH COURSE IN A CITY WITH A TRUE SPORTING HISTORY
MADE FOR AN IMPRESSIVE DEBUT FOR IRONMAN 70.3 CALGARY.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JAY PRASUHN



Forest for the trees: Catriona Morrison powers along in the Alberta plains en route to a third-place finish.



Courtesy Calgary Tourism Board





Magali Tisseyre represented with the top Canadian finish, taking second.



American Tim O'Donnell motors along Weaselhead National Environment Park, helping sew up his win.



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There are two events that happened in 1988 that placed the city of Calgary on the global sports map. Surely you'll recall Eddie "The Eagle" Edwards, Great Britain's first ever representative in ski jumping at the Calgary Olympic Winter Games. He was the lovable, coke bottle glasses-wearing Brit who was adored for his fun-loving attitude despite his bad form and terrible results during the games, which were set at the foot of the Canadian Rockies.

And perhaps you've seen the 1993 movie "Cool Runnings," based on the Olympic experience of the Jamaican bobsled team, another lovable group known for their optimism despite several mishaps in the bobsled event. It wasn't exactly a brilliant debut in that sport, but their flailing efforts endeared them to fans.

In August, triathlon made a big debut with the Ironman 70.3 Calgary. The race came off as a quick favorite for those who want something special from their race: natural beauty. And while the '88 Olympic Games are still a part of the city's heritage, Calgary is also a cowboy town that is much more active than one might guess.

Nowhere is the Olympic legacy better exemplified than at Canada Olympic Park, just 20 minutes north of downtown, where Winsport Canada maintains an Olympic Hall of Fame museum and hosts mountain biking on the hill and zipline rides from the famed ski jump platform in

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the summer. This winter the bobsled runs will be used to train athletes for the 2009 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver.

But area visitors need not leave the downtown area to get in some fun—or training.

While downtown hosts the annual Calgary Stampede, one of the most renowned rodeos in the world, it ain't all "howdy" and Stetson hats. Set on the banks of the Bow River, the downtown area has one of the most extensive urban trail networks in North America, extending more than 300 miles.

Yet the Western cowboy culture in plains Canada remains a focal point year-round. The reason? Prairies—beautiful, rolling farmland that gently rolls east from the Canadian Rockies that shroud Calgary from the west, with real cowboys herding grazing cattle. It also made for an undulating course that was tougher than initially predicted. Call it "Colorado north."

"It's a lot like Denver," said men's runner-up Ben Hoffman. "With the mountains right there and the rolling hills, it's a strongman's course. It was beautiful." Women's winner Mirinda Carfrae was resolute. "Gorgeous, gorgeous course," she said. "It was definitely harder than I expected, but wow ... just good times."

While Mother Nature laid out the topography, it was veteran Canadian pro Lisa Bentley who was largely credited with helping design

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Aussie Mirinda Carfrae backed her trademark run with a solid bike that she'll employ at her Kona debut in October.

a tough, fair course—then chose to race on it. “It was a great chance to get first-hand knowledge of how to make this race even better,” Bentley said, “With the natural beauty here, it’s already one of the ones that makes me proud to be a Canadian.”

Australian Carfrae is accustomed to chasing from behind on the run. But a newly honed bike regime saw her take the race lead just seven miles into the bike, and she didn’t look back, with the only threat during the 56-mile bike being Canadian Magali Tisseyre. Carfrae rode to T2 with a four-minute lead, then padded it by assembling a 1:19:45 half marathon—the third fastest of the day, even among pro men. She considered it an ideal dress rehearsal for her debut at the Ironman World Championship in October. “It felt good,” Carfrae said. “I have one more half-distance race before Kona, but the bike and run are coming good right now.” Tisseyre held off a late charge from Scotland’s Catriona Morrison to take second.

In the men’s race, American Tim O’Donnell led wire-to-wire to claim his second 70.3 win of the year (following a spring win at Ironman 70.3 St. Croix), but it still didn’t distract him from his focus: the

London Olympics. “It’s been good doing these races to work on my run,” O’Donnell said. “If you look at the halves I did last year, getting run down [while] getting off the bike, now I’m starting to come off the bike behind people and running them down. It translates well to short course, too.”

2009 VITERRA IRONMAN 70.3 CALGARY

Aug. 2, 2009—Calgary, Alberta, Canada

1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike, 13.1-mile run

MEN

1. Tim O’Donnell (USA)	3:55:28
2. Ben Hoffmann (USA)	4:02:51
3. Jamie Whyte (NZL)	4:03:58
4. Kirk Nelson (USA)	4:04:14
5. James Hadley (GBR)	4:06:49

WOMEN

1. Mirinda Carfrae (AUS)	4:11:05
2. Magali Tisseyre (CAN)	4:21:05
3. Catriona Morrison (SCO)	4:21:30
4. Lisa Mensick (CAN)	4:25:36
5. Linsey Corbin (USA)	4:26:15