

## BREAKING NEWS

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## WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT

## Internet CEO Competes in Triathlons With Friend From Afar

Jeff Mariola in Chicago and Giulio Arnoldi in Milan Compete in Marathons and Triathlons Together



Jeff Mariola trains with Steven Feiger along Lake Michigan in Chicago. TIM KLEIN FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Jen Murphy

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Most people fight to be first across the finish line of a race, but Jeff Mariola and Giulio Arnoldi make a point of finishing together.

Mr. Mariola, 59 years old, and Mr. Arnoldi, 47, live on different continents but the two friends compete in marathons and triathlons together. The two met in Chicago, where Mr. Mariola lives, at a training workshop in 2002 when they both were in the interior landscaping and garden-design business. Mr. Arnoldi came from Milan to attend it.

The men kept in touch via email and in 2008 Mr. Arnoldi shared how he had completed the New York City Marathon for his 40th birthday and was itching to run another. He persuaded Mr. Mariola to run the Chicago Marathon with him in 2009.

Since then, the two try to run two races a year together, alternating between U.S. and Italy. Two and a half years ago, they decided to train for an Olympic-distance triathlon, which involves a 0.93 mile swim, 24.8 mile bike leg and 6.2 mile run, in Washington, D.C. "That was a lot of fun and got Giulio set on an Ironman," says Mr. Mariola, who last year became the CEO of Digital Brandworks, a Chicago Internet startup. "I convinced him we should try a half first," which they did in the coastal town of Pescara, Italy, in 2011.

Last year, the men ran their first full Ironman in Madison, Wis., a race with a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike and a 26.2-mile run. The two compare training notes, share training programs via email and often joke about who is faster or training harder on What's App, a mobile-messaging app. Mr. Mariola says he is the stronger swimmer, while Mr. Arnoldi is the stronger cyclist.

They may not race side by side the entire course of a race, but they try to finish together. In Pescara, "we crossed the finish line of the Ironman holding hands and someone later translated what the announcer said: 'This is what the Ironman event is about. A 58-year-old from the U.S. and a 46-year-old from Milan finishing together.' "



Mr. Mariola and Giulio Arnoldi near the finish line of their first half Ironman in Pescara, Italy. FINISHERPIX

To date, the men have completed six marathons, two triathlons, a half Ironman and a full Ironman.

"Of course there is a competitive element to it," he says. "But we focus on picking great destinations like Rome, Venice, Miami and San Francisco. It's about more than the race. It's a chance for

him to see parts of the United States and me to see parts of Italy."

Mr. Mariola is married and has six children in their 30s and 20s. Mr. Arnoldi is married with two daughters, ages 8 and 12. The men are currently training for the California International Marathon in December and a half Ironman race in Idaho and a full Ironman in Barcelona in 2015.

### The Workout

When Mr. Mariola is preparing for a half Ironman, he wakes at 5 a.m. and bikes between 25 and 40 miles with fellow local CEOs. Afterward, they often go to breakfast and network before heading to their offices.

When he's training for a full Ironman, he saves his long runs, usually around 18 miles, for the weekend, when his wife will bike alongside him. Sometimes he turns his workouts into a weekend away with his wife, with him biking on Saturday from Chicago to Madison or Milwaukee and his wife driving to meet him there. They then stay overnight in a hotel so they can enjoy a day in the city on Sunday before driving home together.

When Mr. Mariola signed up for his first triathlon in 2010, he "was not a very good swimmer," he says. A friend connected him with a swimming coach and they'd meet three to four mornings a week at 5 a.m. at a local school pool. "The minimum age in the morning was 70," he says. "It was really inspirational." He cut minutes off of his mile swim after four sessions.

He now swims at a pool at L.A. Fitness and in Lake Michigan at Ohio Street Beach. During the winter, Mr. Mariola trains indoors at the pool and spin bike at L.A. Fitness.

"We've started to sign up for winter races in warm places to keep us motivated," says Mr. Mariola. The men ran the Miami Marathon in January and a marathon in Madrid at the end of April.

### The Diet

Mr. Mariola eats a high-protein, low-carb diet. He starts the day with a protein shake made of whey protein, almond milk and walnuts, and a piece of fruit such as a banana or apple. He does a lot of business lunches. "I try to stick to lean protein like chicken with salad but I also eat a lot of eggs, even at lunch."

He is the chef in the family and often grills fish or chicken with vegetables and a salad for dinner. On long runs and rides, he packs fruits and vegetables for fuel. "I prefer real food to

gels," he says.

## The Gear



Mr. Mariola often swims in Lake Michigan in Chicago. TIM KLEIN FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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Last year he purchased a bike designed for triathlons made by the Swiss brand BMC, which cost \$3,800. "I'm sure it's helped improve my times, but more importantly it's helped my form," he says.

He runs in Mizuno Wave Inspire 10 sneakers, which retail for around \$115. He keeps three pairs in use at all times: two to train in and two weeks prior to a race he breaks in a new pair to wear on race day. His Garmin Forerunner 310XT watch with a heart monitor was around \$185. He pays \$49 a month for his L.A. Fitness membership.

## The Playlist

Mr. Mariola listens to opera on his long runs.

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