

An underwater photograph showing several triathletes swimming in clear blue water. The athletes are silhouetted against the bright light filtering down from the surface, creating a dramatic, high-contrast scene. Their bodies are in various stages of a stroke, with arms and legs visible. The water's surface is visible at the top, with light rays and ripples. The overall tone is serene yet powerful, capturing the physical effort of the sport in a unique perspective.

# INDOMITABLE

What's the toughest challenge for IRONMAN competitors—themselves, each other or the punishing landscape of Kona?

"I've shot ten Olympics, fifteen Super Bowls, trekked the Himalayas and shot big-wave surfing around the world," says Donald Miralle, who over a twenty-three-year period photographed the images on the following pages of the IRONMAN World Championship, held each fall on the Kona Coast of Hawai'i Island since 1980. (This year, the women's race will take place in Kona on October 14; the men's race will be held in Nice, France, on September 10). While IRONMAN triathlons are held in many locations around the world,

the Kona course—a 2.4-mile swim in Kailua Bay, a 112.3-mile bike race from Kailua-Kona to Hawai'i and back, and a 26.2-mile marathon finishing on Ali'i Drive in Kailua-Kona—has perhaps become the most symbolic of human endurance. Beautiful as it may be, Kona is also a relentless, unforgiving landscape. "My photos at IRONMAN might be remembered as the most iconic I've ever taken," Miralle says. "However, they're nothing more than a reflection of the mana [spiritual power] of the place and of the athletes."

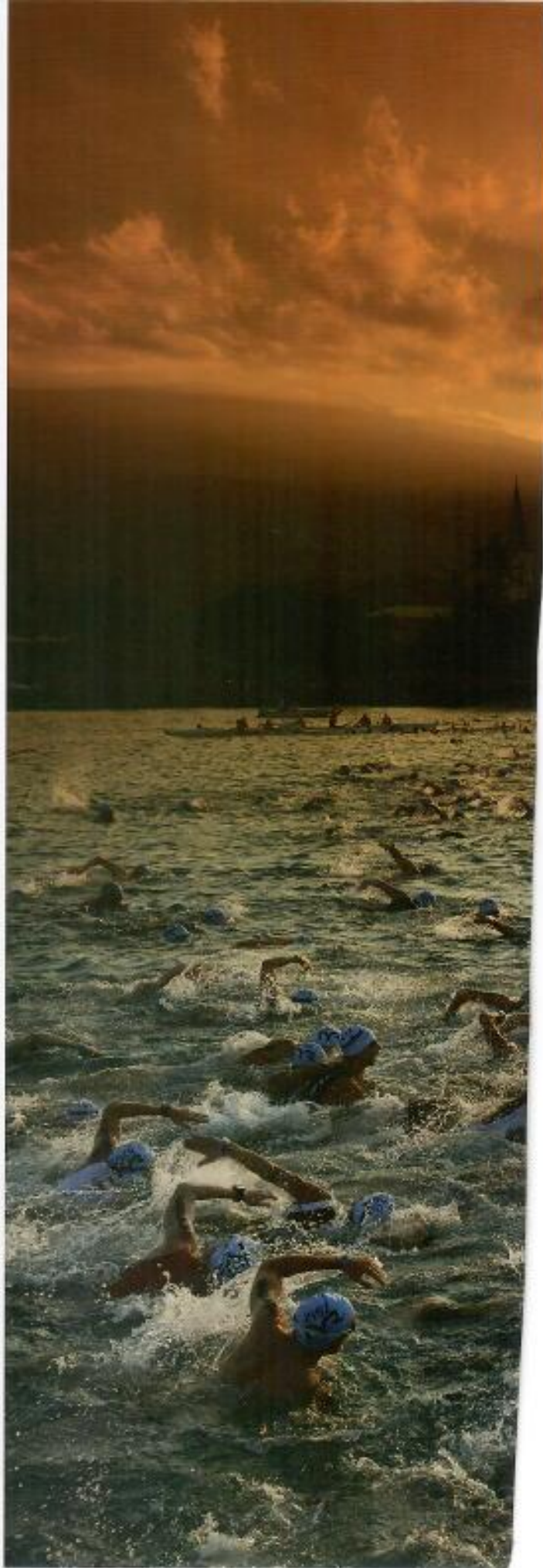


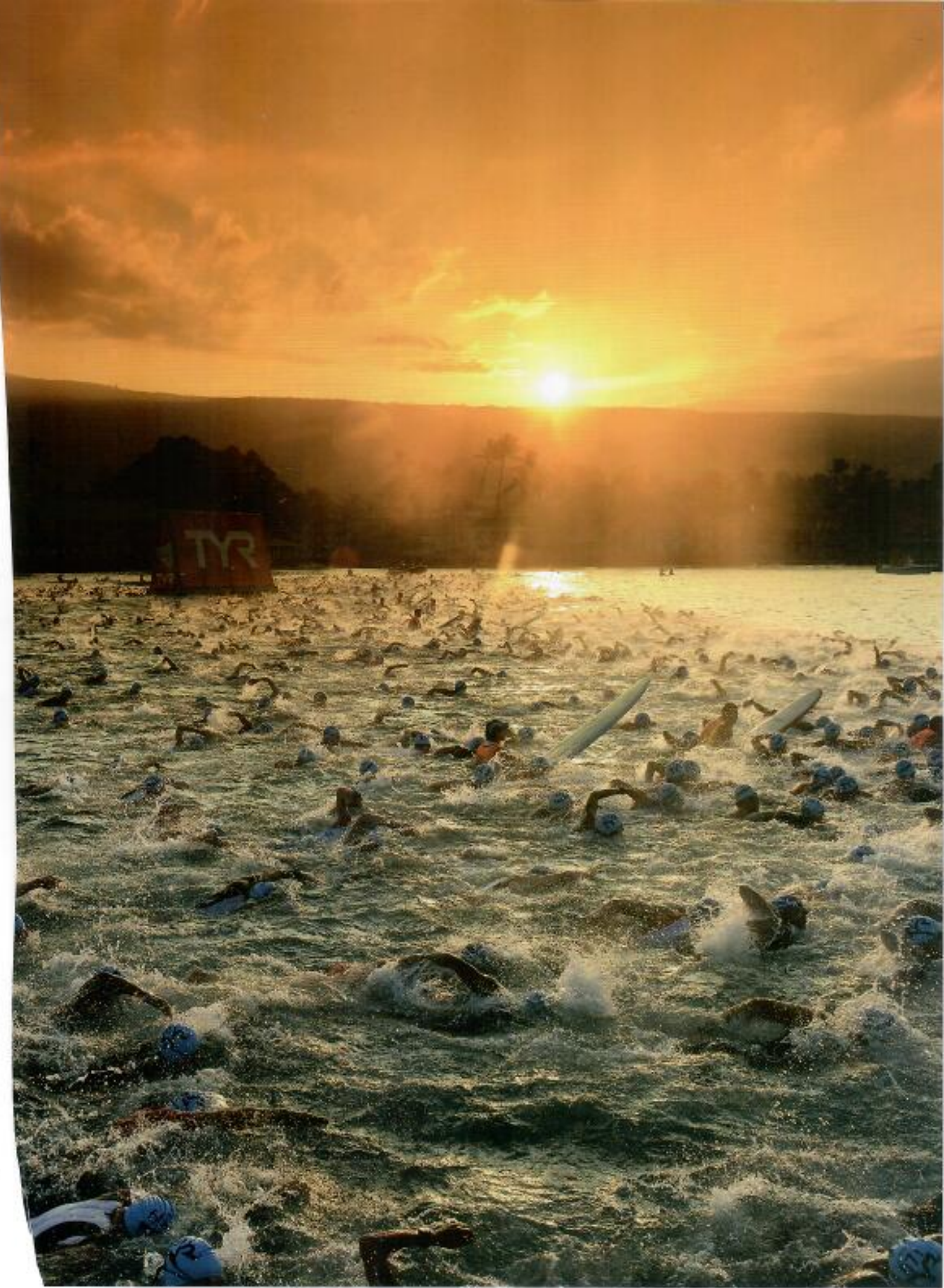
KAILUA PIER

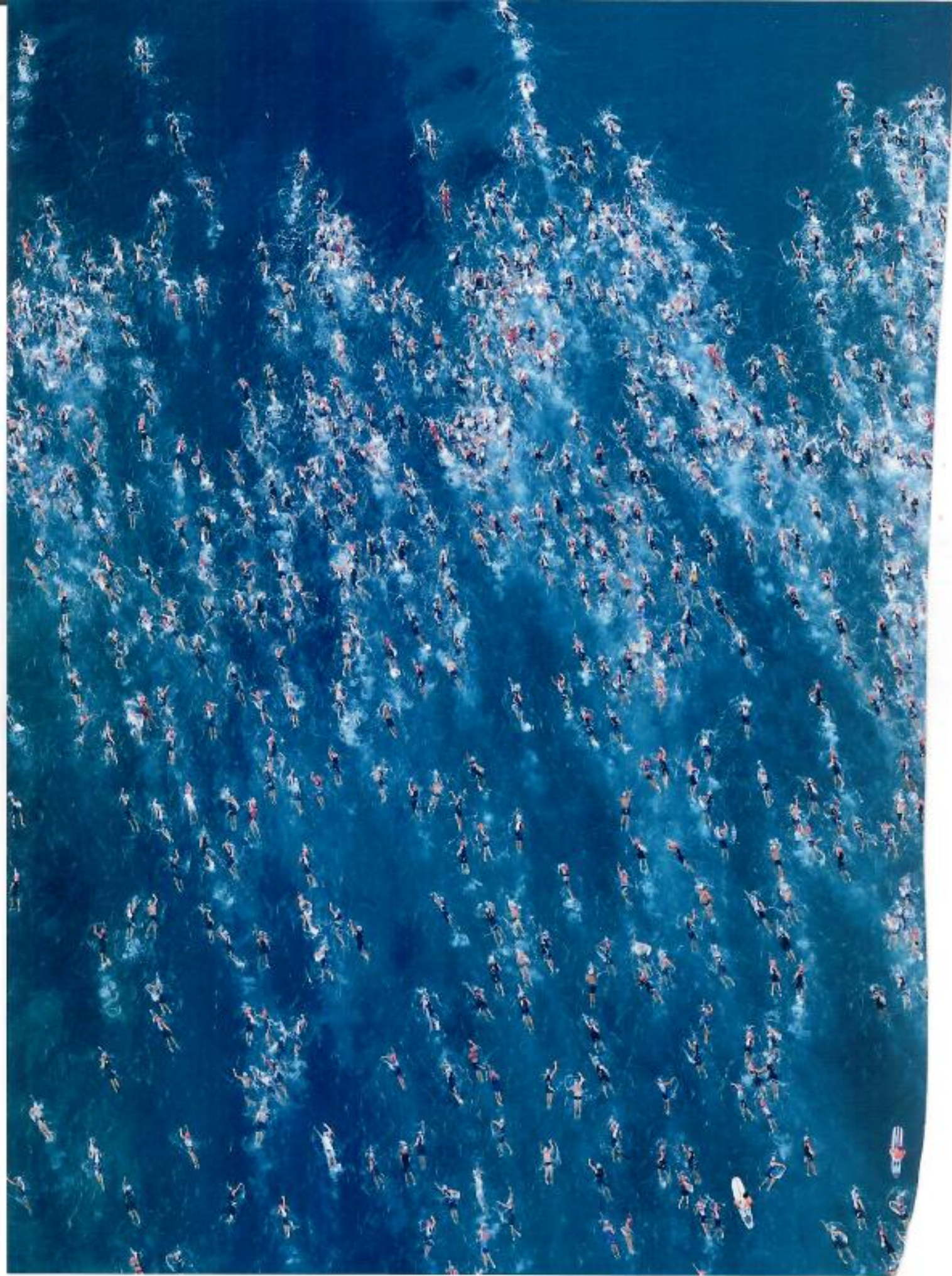


"I've done the race so many times that I immediately know the feeling," says eight-time IRONMAN World Championship winner Paula Newby-Fraser of the image on the opening spread, showing swimmers treading water before the start of the 2016 race.

"Minutes before the event starts ... this moment is expectation, nerves, personal conflict, anticipation—the highest vibration of energy in the race. What a moment in time for Don to have captured in this image, serendipitous with the honu [sea turtle] beneath us all, an unbeknownst grounding. Manic energy above and calm below the surface." At right, swimmers churn the water at start of the 2014 IRONMAN World Championship.









## QUEEN KA'AHUMANU HIGHWAY

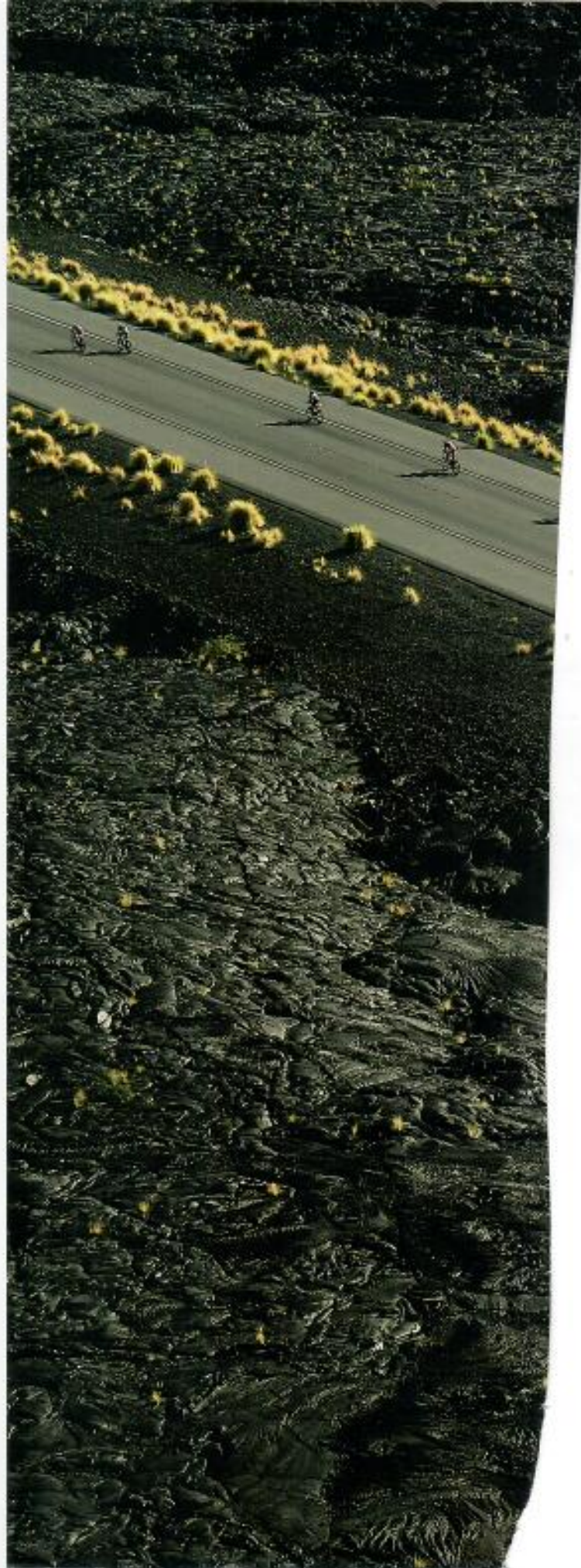
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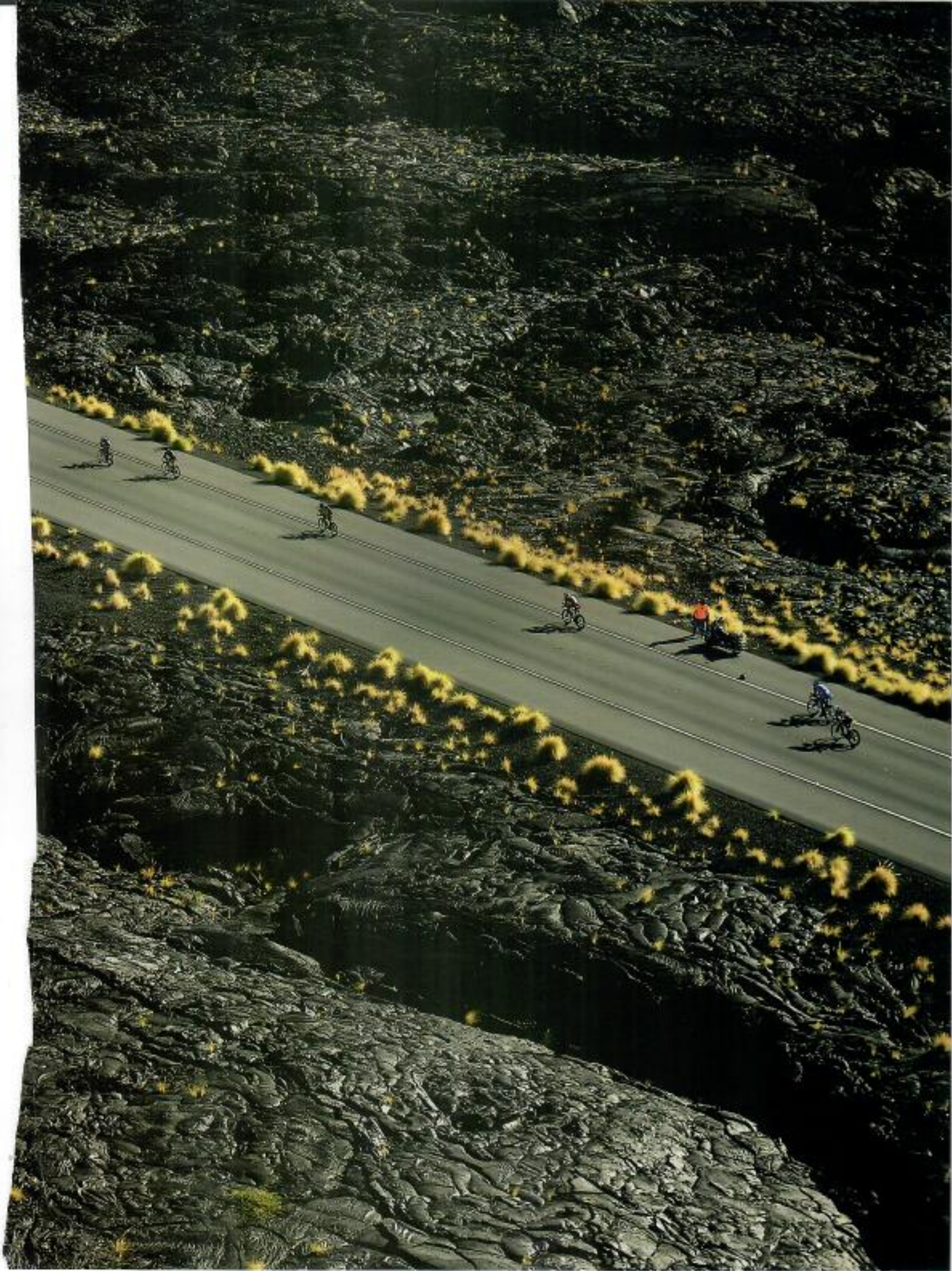
112.3 MILES



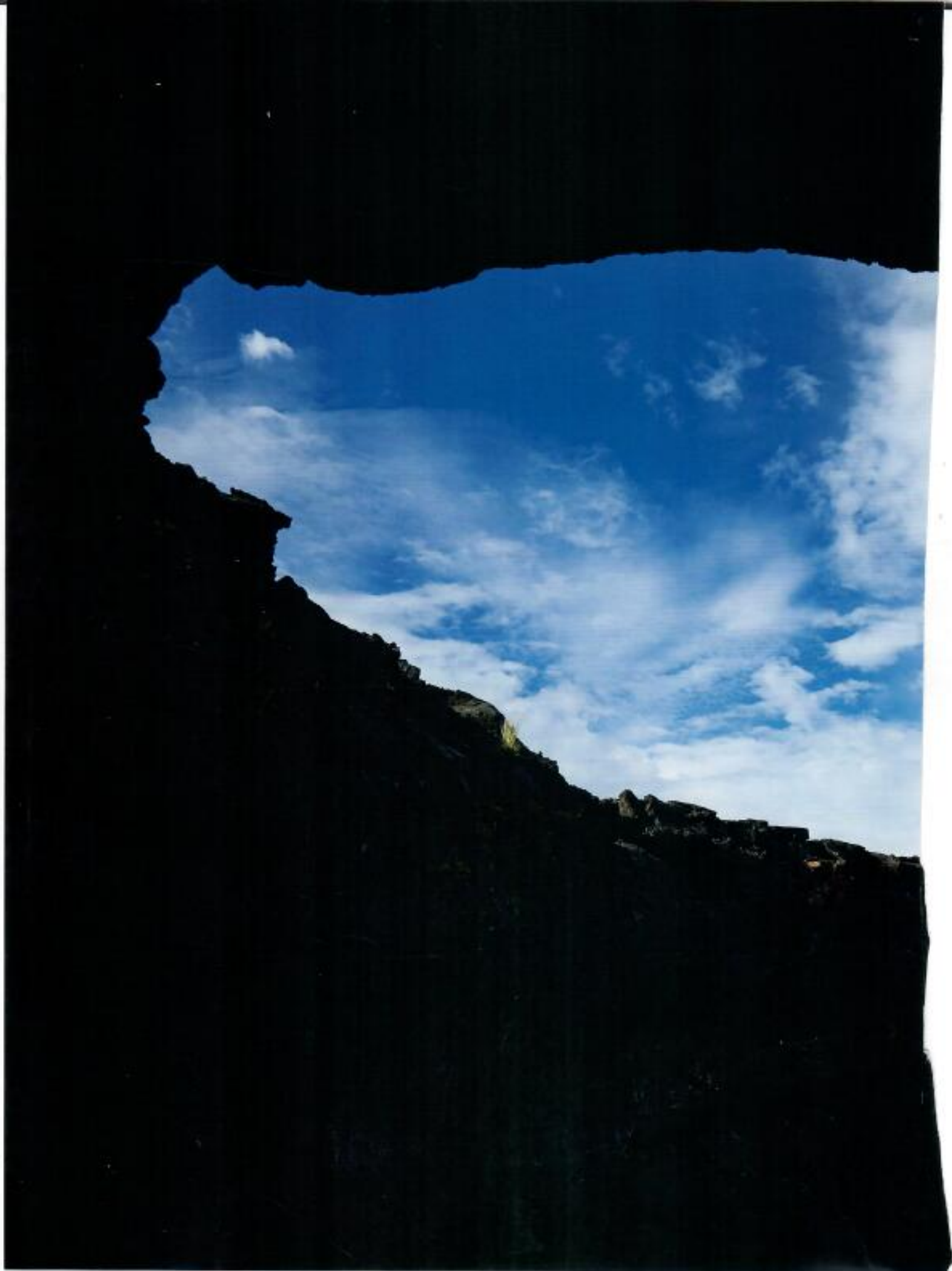
"When you're floating in Kailua Bay waiting for the swim to start, you're completely absorbed in IRONMAN," says six-time world champion Mark Allen, who won the race six times, five of them consecutively from 1989 to 1993. "You can forget that you're just a small part of a bigger thing happening. When you're in the water you're surrounded by thousands of other swimmers, but you can notice only the five or six immediately surrounding you. Everyone is on the same mission but we're all doing it our own way, at our own pace. An individual journey, together with a mass of people. It's easy to forget you're just a piece. In the midst of the grandeur, you're just a piece." On the previous spread, swimmers in the 2012 IRONMAN.

"The landscape of the lava fields is hot and dry," Allen says. "It's not gonna help you. You can't buy your way across it. On this island, you have to earn it, and it won't be easy." At right, cyclists pedal through a parched moonscape of pāhoehoe lava on Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway. On the following spread, a lone cyclist powers past the entrance of a lava tube.

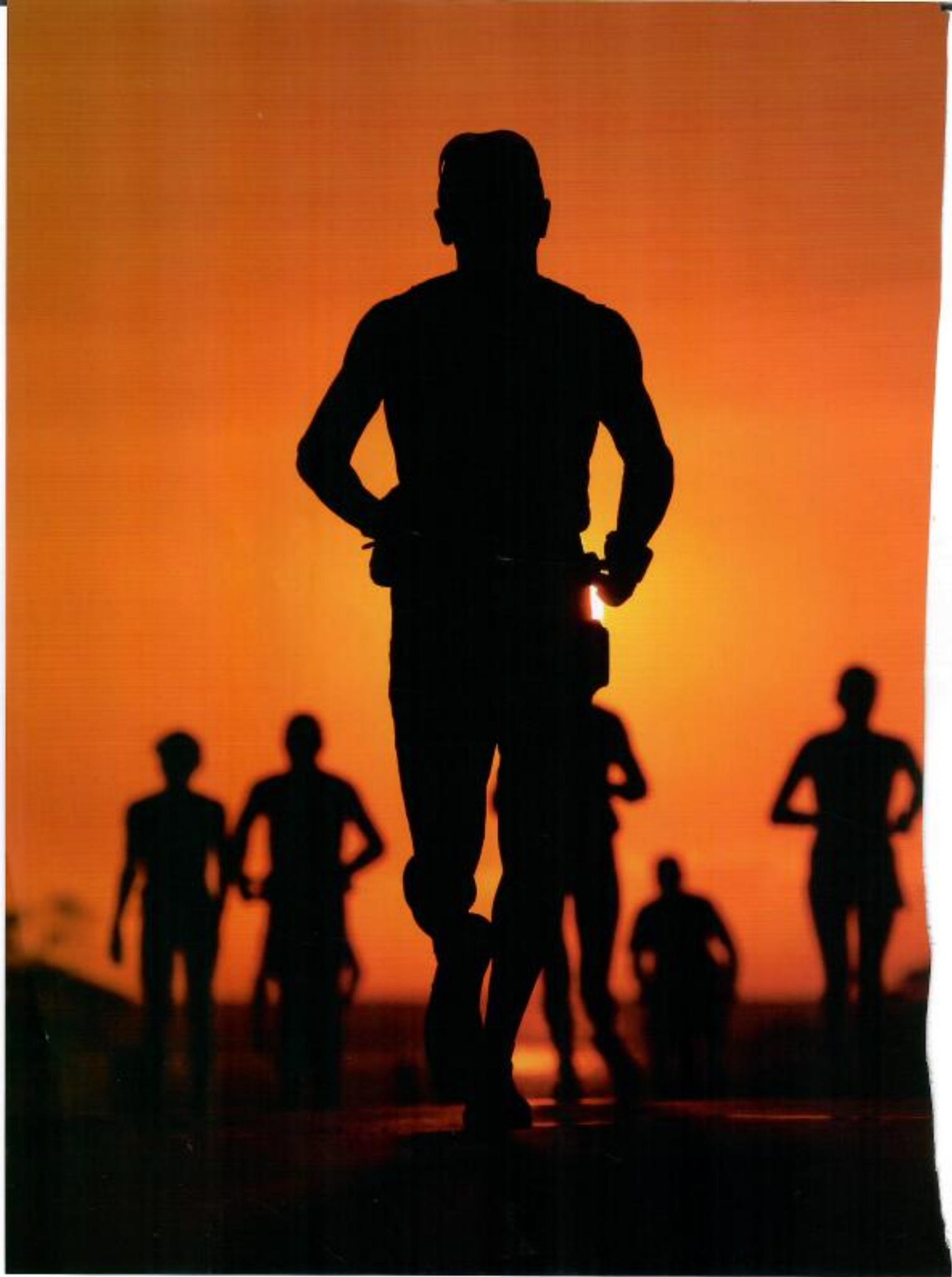


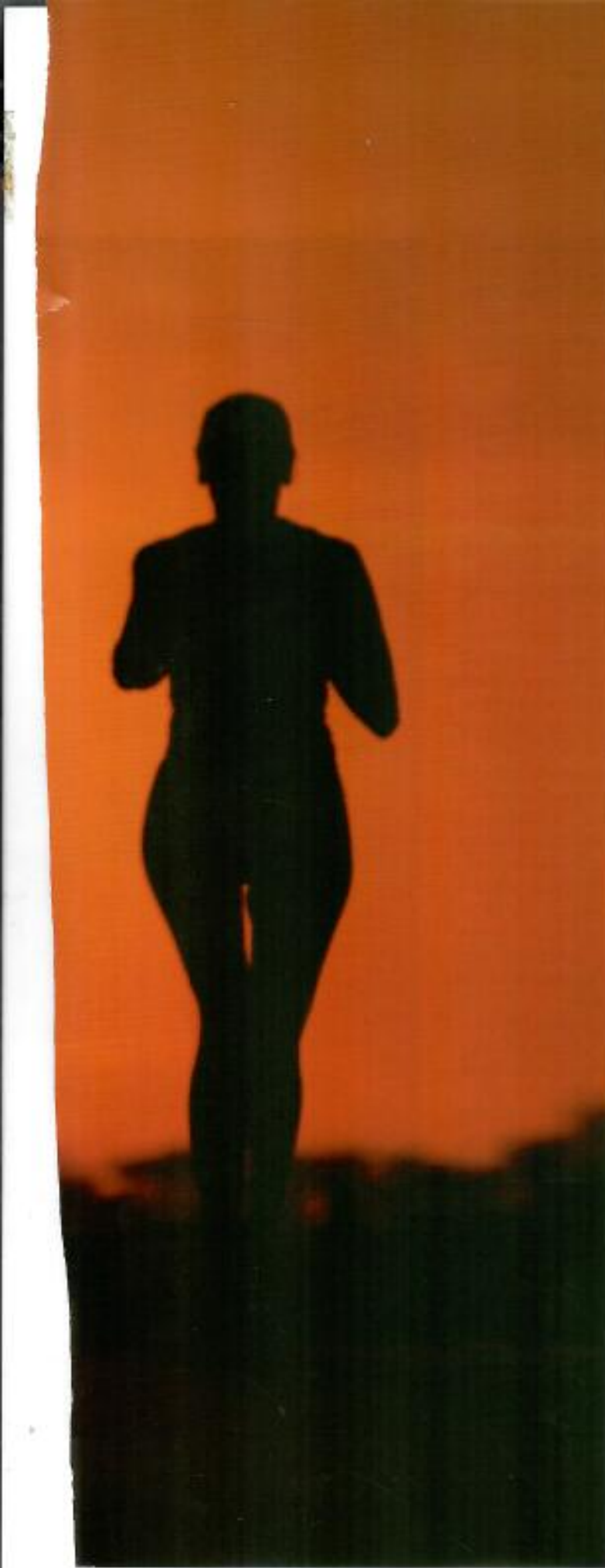












#### QUEEN KA'AHUMANU HIGHWAY

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"When you're deep into the marathon," Allen says of the image at left showing runners at sunset in 2010, "it forces you deeper and deeper into yourself to find more to keep going. Unless you've done the race, you can't really understand the grit it takes."

"There's no shortage of special places on this planet, but Kona is an extraordinary place," says Newby-Fraser. "Even the most cynical of personalities can't deny it. Because of the active volcano, it's never the same place twice. Every new environment is raw and unformed, vibrating with new energy. The IRONMAN is a focused, personal pursuit by each athlete. It's about growth and recreating yourself. In this way, Kona and the athletes are the same. Because of that, IRONMAN will be tied to Hawai'i forever; it's a bond, a history, a story and IRONMAN legends have been made here. This unique story cannot be replicated."

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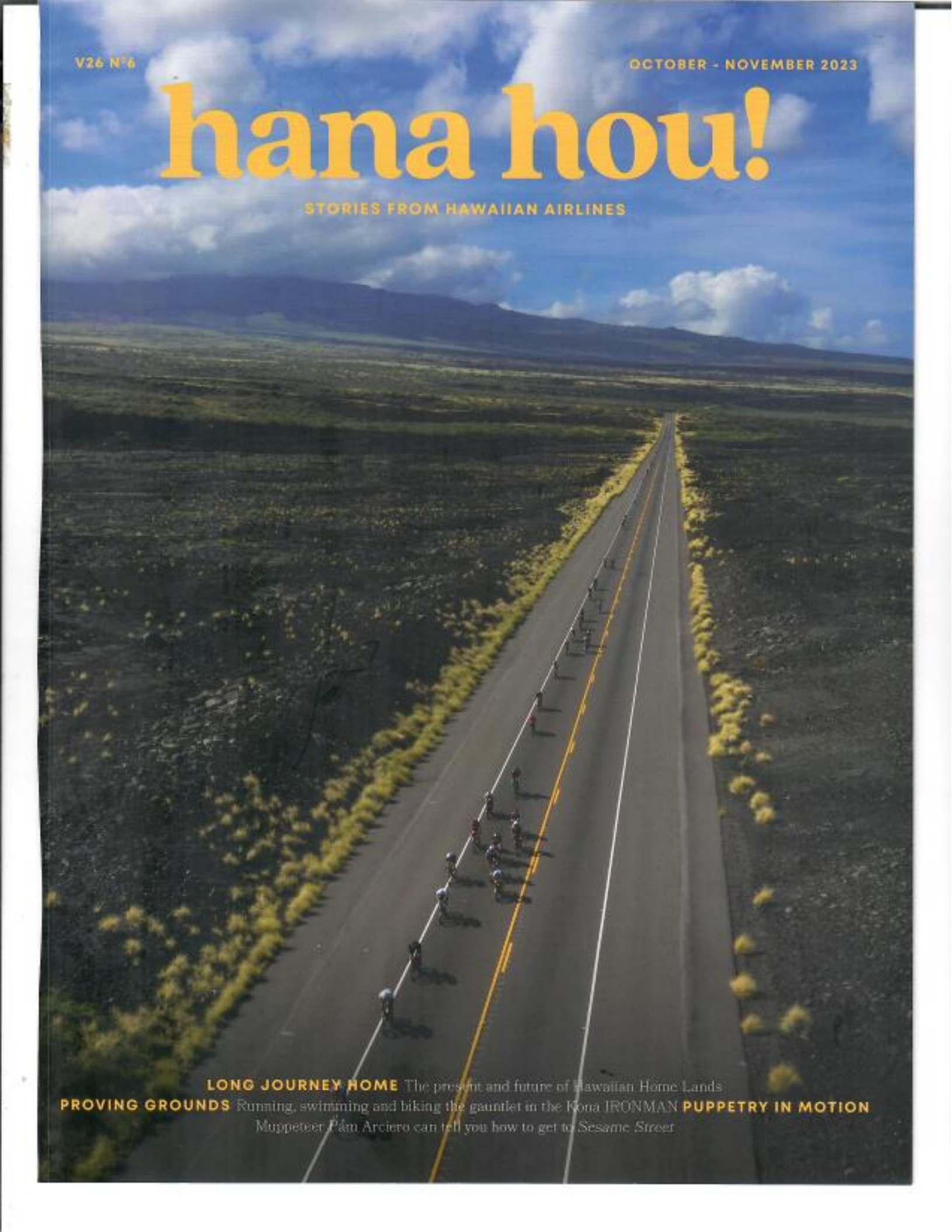
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# hana hou!

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