Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge IGCSE™

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/11**

Paper 1 Reading **May/June 2022**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

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Read **Text A**, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–1(e)** on the question paper.

Text A: Endurance events

I'm not sure when endurance events like triathlons, adventure races and ultra-marathon running races (through jungle, desert and mountainous terrains) started to become popular, but they are here to stay and continue to challenge the limits of every competitor.

Not so long ago, a marathon runner was a mythical beast – we all knew someone who knew someone who had run a 42 km marathon, but most of us had only actually seen them on TV. Now everyone knows a marathon runner and they just look like normal people.

Somewhere along the way, marathons became commonplace and a whole new breed of extreme activities arrived: the Ironman triathlon, crazy ultra-marathons and adventure races that defy description, like the Tough Mudder. While a lot of extreme challenges are to do with ultra-endurance, the Tough Mudder is short but involves getting hurt. Sometimes by electric shocks. And fire. Why would you?

I've no idea what has made extreme sports such a phenomenon, but I do know what happened for me. After many years of corporate life and habitual laziness I found myself with a large belly, unable to get to the buffet without puffing. Horrified, I signed up immediately for a 10 km run, then a marathon. And then an Ironman. It becomes a rapidly escalating obsession. What seemed like a hardcore event reserved solely for proper endurance fanatics soon becomes just within reach.

My personal theory for the rise of extreme sports is that life has become sterile. The chances of getting an adrenaline rush in the average workplace are minimal, so, tired of the rat-race, people search out ways to re-engage with life.

After completing two Ironman events, I can testify that the feeling of sweeping down the finish chute after 226 km to pumping pop music, flashing lights and a cheering crowd is the ultimate buzz. But to the true athlete, finishing a classic marathon, quietly in an empty car park, in pouring rain, is easily its equal for an overwhelming inner sense of achievement.

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Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on the question paper.

Text B: Tough Mudder

Jayden Dee is a participant in Tough Mudder, an obstacle course endurance race. In this article, he has been interviewed by his local newspaper, the Redmond Gazette (RG).

Jayden Dee knows about hard work and dedication, as the 27-year-old athlete and army captain is keen to prove. Despite missing the deadline to enter this year's Tough Mudder World Championship, airing on national television this weekend, he repeatedly emailed the company responsible for the event, asking to be included in the endurance contest. Eventually, they gave in and allowed Dee to compete.

Tough Mudder isn't his first competition. Dee, who spent four years at a prestigious military school on a wrestling scholarship, competed in his first Ironman triathlon a few months ago. But the Tough Mudder event is something different altogether. It's billed as 'the most insane race around', featuring obstacles with names such as 'Kong' and 'Devil's Beard'. Participants bench-press sandbags, climb walls, crawl and run through mud, among other things that will make them wet, tired and dirty.

Tough Mudder was held earlier this summer, with entrants competing for a substantial cash prize. We spoke to Dee beforehand about his preparation.

RG: How did you find out about Tough Mudder?

Dee: I found out online through social media, and I was like, 'I think I can compete with these guys'. I literally stayed up all night watching the one-hour special from last year's competition, and that's when I was hooked. I said to myself, 'I need to find a way to get into this.'

RG: Is that typical of you?

Dee: Well I was super-competitive through school, and then I kinda needed a break, which was good because I went to Hawaii. So the last four years in Hawaii, I stayed active, but also made a point to relax. I always knew I'd come back and compete in something. I just was waiting for the right time. Then I did the Ironman competition and got the bug again. I was in really good shape when I found out about this event. It seemed like now was the time to come back.

RG: How do you see yourself doing?

Dee: I want to win the whole thing! A lot of my role models, people I really look up to are in this competition, so I'm extremely realistic, but I also truly believe I can win. So I'm gonna do my best. I want to represent Redmond well. It's easy for people to forget where they come from, but I don't. This way while I'm home on leave I can get a chance to inspire kids as the 'Redmond Guy'.

Read **Text C**, and then answer **Questions 2(a)–(d)** and **Question 3** on the question paper.

Text C: What it's like to be married to a future Ironman

In this blog post the writer looks back on their husband's preparations to compete in an Ironman event.

I'm a little hesitant to publish this because there's a risk that I'll just be moaning and I'll come across as whiny, but it's information I wish someone had given me before we signed up for the whole Ironman thing.

My husband, Sam, started training in January for Ironman Canada at the end of July. He got himself an expert coach and monthly training plans. I felt reassured this meant he might at least survive the 3.86 km swim, a 180.25 km bicycle ride and a marathon (42.20 km) run, raced in that order.

His training ramped up as you'd expect. Initially, it didn't really impact our lives too much. If anything, it was a good thing. Now, we were both training for things – it felt like a real partnership as we plotted our weekends to give us time to train and time together as a family. It was fun. If we went away, we had to fit his bike ride of 1–3 hours into the weekend but that was totally do-able. We've a pool where we live which really helped – not having to drive to/from water at least saved travelling time.

By May he was training early and most of both weekend mornings. Being honest, I resented that. I agreed sullenly, yes, I still wanted him to do the Ironman, and no, I didn't expect him to drop out. I was just fed up with his absences.

June was all about Ironman. Endless weekends with Sam gone until 5pm each day. After exercise he would need to sleep for an hour or so, thus he was technically gone for longer. I was desperate for us to go away and have a break from it.

I tried to book a weekend camping but abandoned it. We would have spent the whole time fitting Sam's training around what we were doing, and it wasn't worth it. That year the kids didn't go camping at all.

My own freedom to run was curtailed. Saturdays became all about childcare. I only managed one Saturday trail-run with the girls from April onwards and that was thanks to wonderful friends who got up at 6.45 on a Saturday to watch my son. I got fed up with not being able to say yes to invitations.

We didn't do any family hiking for months. Sam justifiably didn't want to hike after exercising.

There was so much laundry ('different road conditions') so much extra food ('fuel') and so much gear (multiple pairs of goggles with different tints 'because you never know…')! Smiling understandingly, Sam assured me the next one will be cheaper. Next one?

'Because it's there,' I'd snarl to anyone who dared question why any sane mortal would tackle an Ironman. I enjoyed mercilessly shaming his less-than-supportive business partner into recognising the potentially boundless benefits of Sam's well-publicised adventure for their newly-established, fledgling travel company. A flurry of online articles described me as 'a runner married to a triathlete' – it took me a few moments to recognise our family and beam with immeasurable pride.

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Our son missed having Dad around at the weekends, especially if he woke up after Sam had left to train on a Saturday when sometimes there were tears. But he got used to the different dynamic. He was given an 'Ironman' superhero toy as a birthday gift by some relatives and immediately started making it swim, bike and run! The poor child thinks that this is how normal families operate.

Having said all that, watching Sam emerge god-like from the water, power past us on his bike and rocket down the finishing chute, head held high as our kids cheered with the crowd – utterly incredible and intoxicating, one of life's rare pinnacles of perfection. It had been an epic journey for all of us. I'm so glad we did it. And next year? Well yes, it's my turn…

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