



BRAVE

Shahrez Khan: 'Endurance is not just for the race.'

Pakistan's No. 1 triathlete inspiring a new generation

After a momentous qualifying race in the Philippines early in the 2025 IRONMAN Triathlon Series, a travel ban denied Pakistan's No.1 triathlete the opportunity to compete for Gold in the prestigious World Championship in Spain in November, yet for Shahrez Khan — the journey is far from over. *By Karen Collier*

Setting his sights on endurance competition at the elite level back in 2022 — Lahore-based triathlete, Shahrez Khan, has steadily built his reputation as one of Pakistan's leading endurance athletes. His international race campaign kicked off with the IRONMAN 70.3 race in Luxembourg in 2022, inspired by a motivating half-marathon he entered with close friends in Islamabad the same year.

Khan currently heads the Pakistan arm of leading Australian textile company, Simba Global, and is the CEO and founder of Oxford MedEx, an offshoot global healthcare supply chain company specialising in personal protective equipment (PPE). With strong ties to Australia, he often trains along Melbourne's scenic coastline during business trips.

Since his last trip to the region, Shahrez was the only Pakistani to qualify for IRONMAN's prestigious 70.3 triathlon World Championship in 2025 and the second Pakistani to ever qualify for a triathlon world championship. He currently ranks among the top 5% of IRONMAN athletes globally in the All-World Athlete Elite (AWA) Category.

Since his race debut in 2022, Shahrez has represented Pakistan in seven races across four continents: in New Zealand and Turkey in 2023, in Turkey and South Africa in 2024, and Oman and Puerto Princesa in the Philippines in 2025 — where he earned his place at the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship in Marbella, Spain, by finishing seventh in his age group.

Shahrez's results in 2025 and strong performances across seasons, are the result of hard work and determination, combined with a passion for sports he's held from an early age. Before realising his own potential for elite level



Competing in the 7th Tour of Islamabad multi-day cycling race (centre) in December, 2025. Opposite page: IRONMAN 70.3 New Zealand, 2023 - Shahrez Khan.

competition, he spent years building up his endurance on Cross-Country teams at the University of Oxford during his MBA studies, and earlier at his Almer mater, Aitchison College in Lahore, known for its world-class sports facilities.

After his milestone achievement in 2025 and just over three years on the international race circuit, it was unfortunate that a travel ban mid-season should disrupt Shahrez's competition plans and deny him of an opportunity to represent Pakistan and compete for Gold on the world stage at last year's World Championship in Spain — the biggest stage in world triathlon.

Against a backdrop of increasing state repression, on 21 August last year, Shahrez was offloaded from an international flight with his family, abducted, arrested, and briefly detained on accusations of involvement in Pakistan's 9 May 2023 riots. At the time of being offloaded from his



At the finish line of IRONMAN 70.3 Puerto Princesa in the Philippines qualifying for the 2025 World Championship - Shahrez Khan.



Top left: Training along Australia's east coast in Melbourne, August 2024. Top right: Participating in IRONMAN 70.3 New Zealand in 2023. Bottom: Mentoring young athletes in Lahore recently in 2025. - Shahrez Khan.

international flight, he was en route to Estonia to participate in the IRONMAN 70.3 Tallinn race. The incident was quickly condemned by international rights groups.

Shahrez is the eldest son of Aleema Khan, and nephew of the cricket legend and former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, whose ongoing imprisonment violates international law according to UN Experts, and recently prompted an investigation by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Dr. Alice Jill Edwards, into his detention conditions.

"Shahrez Khan's case is a high-profile example of the deliberate targeting of family members of political leaders and activists in Pakistan," says Amnesty International Australia's National Director, Sam Klintworth. Oblivious to the level of concern over his detainment as the ordeal went viral on social media, Shahrez stood as a picture of stoic resolve — a trait that runs in the family.

On social media he wrote: "Endurance is not just for the race; it's for times like these. I'll keep training harder and look forward to being on the

international race circuit soon!" Despite the turn of events, last year's challenges have set the stage for Shahrez's future pursuits and continued growth in his athletic career.

Raised in a family with a legacy of athletic excellence, Shahrez's early days were spent in Zaman Park, Lahore, the training ground of many sporting legends including his own uncle, Imran Khan. The infamous park is named after Khan Bahadur Mohammad Zaman Khan, Imran Khan's maternal uncle, and is also the place where Shahrez Khan's own journey to the world triathlon stage began.

His early childhood memories watching his uncle's training sessions in preparation for cricket world championships out of Zaman Park were masterclasses in athlete high performance. In a nation where cricket reigns supreme, Shahrez is forging a path for Pakistan in

endurance sports and is passionate about inspiring a generation he says, are stuck in sedentary lifestyles. His vision is consistent with the World Health Organisation's Global Physical Activity Action Plan, which aims for a 15% reduction in physical inactivity by 2030.

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Despite the barriers preventing many young Pakistanis from participating in sports and the country's current lack of triathlon infrastructure, Shahrez is committed to developing endurance sports and putting Pakistan on the global sports tourism map. Under the former Prime Minister, Imran Khan's premiership, the prestigious global luxury and lifestyle brand, Condé Nast Traveller, listed Pakistan as No.1 best holiday destination in 2020.

The Karakoram and picturesque northern areas of Pakistan provide natural high-altitude environments for endurance training, while long coastal roads and mountainous terrain offer varied cycling and running conditions. The lower lying cities of Lahore and Karachi unintentionally, build heat tolerance. Besides the existing potential for sports tourism in the country, there is still limited public awareness about endurance racing and little media coverage compared with cricket.

Currently, most endurance athletes in Pakistan are self-funded and train without access to cutting edge sports science, compared with the state-funded sports systems and formal pathways in Western countries. This bottom-up, grassroots development model makes performances by Pakistan's endurance athletes especially notable.

After shifting his focus to mentoring young athletes and competing in local events under the travel ban, Shahrez is now preparing to return to the race circuit for what will be Oman's first-ever Middle East Championship and full-distance IRONMAN race in the city of Muscat on 14 February, and another opportunity to represent Pakistan at world championship level ahead in 2026.

Never content to let his growth reach a plateau, in December, Shahrez welcomed the opportunity to enter his first pro cycling race at the local level, competing against the country's top cyclists in the prestigious multi-day cycling race, Tour of Islamabad. Satisfied with a podium finish third place overall in his age group, leading healthcare and sports brand, ACTIVIT — Khan's sponsor and steadfast supporter throughout 2025 — applauded the standout performance, the result of his unwavering discipline and the Lahori athlete's quiet consistency showing up race after race. He brought the new year in with a sub-3.00 debut and Top 10 finish in the Karachi Marathon, qualifying him for the 2026 Boston Marathon.

Beyond his own personal achievements, Shahrez is committed to guiding a new generation and teaching Pakistan's aspiring athletes of the enormous benefits endurance sports have to offer. "The mental and physical benefits and lessons that endurance sports have brought into my life are limitless," he says.



Medal and closing ceremony at the 7th Tour of Islamabad, Faisal Hills, 21 December, 2025 - Shahrez Khan. Opposite page: Aitchison College in Lahore, Shahrez stands in front of his uncle and inspiration, former Prime Minister and cricket legend, Imran Khan Niazi - ACTIVIT/Facebook.

"Dedication, grit, and discipline will take you beyond what you think is possible."

With this mindset — Shahrez Khan will be unstoppable in 2026.

Follow Shahrez's journey on Instagram @Shahrez.tri

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