

PREFACE

It was the second race in a row where I failed to understand a piece of information that ultimately led to a catastrophic event. Once again I fell short of my goal of finishing my fortieth Ironman. I came to the realization that athletes are conquered in a triathlon more often by what they do not know than by their physical or mental shortcomings. Pro triathletes, in general, reach their peak at age thirty and continue to excel into their mid thirties. What happened to their twenties and the prime age span for athletes in every other sport? Why is LeBron James peaking through his late twenties and Chrissie Wellington not reaching her potential until she is past thirty? The key, I believe, is experience and the lack of specific knowledge of my sport even though, at the age of thirty-two, I was a seasoned pro in my fortieth Ironman. LeBron James will be on the downside of his career at this age while I am still learning and peaking. Why is this?

My husband pulled me out of Ironman Coeur d'Alene because there was clearly something wrong. I probably would not have stopped on my own until I passed out, like my previous race at Ironman St. George. I had completed thirty-nine Ironmans and could not finish my fortieth and I had to remind myself that I was lucky to get to this point without any major setbacks. The enormous list of elements that needs to come together in order for a pro triathlete to achieve success on a particular day is astronomical; consequently, adversity comes with the territory of pro competition. This factor led me to the creation of the first two books in a series of triathlon books, *Life of a Triathlete: Race Preparation* and *Life of a Triathlete: Business*. I want to use my triathlon experiences to help better prepare both up and coming and prospective pro triathletes to deal with the peaks and valleys of an unforgiving sport.

No one knows what they are doing when they start out in triathlon, and the learning curve takes time, money, determination, and effort. It took me over twenty Ironman races to realize that I was floundering in the sport. This prompted me to enlist the help of my current coach, Matt Dixon, founder and head coach of *purplepatch*. A coach is a step in the right direction, although it is only one of the many parts of the puzzle that will help you achieve your goals in the grueling tri sport.

It seems ludicrous to me now that I had no idea that I needed multiple electrolyte tabs in the dry heat of St. George. As I left the

bike to run transition, I did not know I was a “dead man walking” because I was not properly prepared for the marathon “death march” in ninety degree heat. My body had somehow limped through other extremely hot races (participating as an amateur in Kona comes to mind), however, I was not competing at the level in those previous races that I was as a pro at St. George. Needless to say, I made it to the twenty-second mile and passed out, all alone in second place. The \$3,000 hospital bill and loss of podium and sponsorship dollars was an expensive lesson to learn. This was an estimated \$20,000-\$25,000 hit from potential earnings and paid expenses because of my lack of nutritional knowledge comprehension of how my body was reacting in the heat.

Mackenzie Lobby wrote the following in the June 2012 issue of *Triathlete Magazine* in her article “Better With Age”: “Despite the fact that age brings a loss in muscle mass, bone density, and maximal aerobic capacity, it also brings experience, which may play a greater role in triathlon than in other sports. Consider the fact that triathletes generally don’t pick up the sport until later in life, and that triathletes need to master not one discipline, but three.” She goes on to say that track athletes reach their peak at age twenty-six and swimmers at age twenty-one.

Lebron James has been perfecting his craft of playing basketball since he was old enough to hold a round ball. Sidney Crosby was skating before he could walk and had been playing organized hockey for twelve years before he became a professional. I did not ride a bike until after college and had no clue what an Ironman was until I was twenty-three. Triathletes do not have the support system in place that other sports do, so athlete’s learning curves happen in their twenties which is most likely why they peak in their early thirties. There are no mentors or instructional manuals on how to succeed in the sport. Many individuals have tried to write books, but they all focus on training. The focus in this series will be on *everything but training*, which is where I believe the majority of race day failures reside.

Life of a Triathlete: Race Preparation
Life of a Triathlete: Business