

Just tri it

Emily Ringoen, 10, Zoe Robb, 9, and Jamie Ringoen, 12, struggle with their swim caps before beginning the swim portion of a triathlon training clinic at the Boulder Reservoir. The youths were participating in a clinic organized by local triathlete Jane Cordle. The girls are getting an early start: Triathlons are becoming more popular with women.



Photo by Marty Caivano

The sport of triathlon, something Boulder is nationally recognized for, is booming and female participation is a contributing factor. Currently, 37 percent of membership for USA Triathlon (USAT), one of the main governing bodies for the sport, is female. What's more, the women in the 35-50 year old age-groups make up one-third of that percentage.

Women aren't just sticking to the sprint distance triathlons either. Of the participants at the 2008 Ford Ironman Championship in Kona, 27 percent were women. The sport of triathlon consists of swimming, biking and running (in that order) and distances vary depending on the type (Sprint, Olympic, Half-Ironman, Ironman) of

race.

Female specific triathlon races of all distances continue to pop-up all across the U.S. The largest and longest standing all-women's triathlon at 20 years, the Danskin Women's Triathlon Series (DWTS), has been a spring board for many females who have (re)discovered the athlete inside of them. Some people ask, why create a race that draws attention to gender differences? Don't women-only events cultivate a sense that women are too timid and weak to compete among men? While this is a valuable argument, many of the women competing are first-timers and have come out because they are more comfortable in a supportive all-female environment. The training focus is less on exercising as a way to

stay thin and attractive (a reason the media give women for fitness), but rather to create a healthy lifestyle and challenge one's athleticism. Women compete with, rather than against, each other and themselves.

The DWTS, which takes place in five different cities across the nation, will take place at the Aurora Reservoir on June 28. The Sprint distance race consists of a .75k swim, a 20k bike, and a 5k run. The DWTS is unique in that it provides "swim angels" in the open water portion who help distressed swimmers by swimming with them. The race also limits its waves to 100 women for safety; waves are divided by age group but there is a wave for cancer survivors and a mixed age-group category for those who want to start with

family members.

If you've caught yourself recently saying, "I'd train but I'm too old, too busy, too out of shape, or not athletic enough," 2009 is the year to find that athlete inside of you. Maybe she's never been released or perhaps she's been stuffed away. Training with Heart Zones U.S.A., whose program is designed for racing the DWTS, begins at the end of April and consists of two coach guided group workouts every week, online journaling with a coach, and eight weeks of workouts geared to help both beginners and veterans succeed at the DWTS race.

— By Amanda McCracken
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