



# Austin Triathletes Newsletter

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### Toughen Up by Training with a Group

By Tonyia Cone

My interest in triathlons began when I met a woman at a party last summer who had just finished her first Danskin Triathlon. Tired of the fitness classes I was taking, I was looking for something new to do to stay in shape, and when she told me the distances, I figured it was something I could do. I signed up for Dam '09, a mini tri in San Antonio, and the 2005 Dilloman and immediately began training by myself. In preparation for the races, I ran in my neighborhood, swam at the JCAA pool and rode my mountain bike around the Northwest Hills pool area, doing the distance of each leg of the race twice each week. I finished both races and learned that I loved doing triathlons, but I also knew I had not properly trained. Not only were my approach to training and equipment ridiculous, my diet was terrible and I knew nothing of recovering.

When spring rolled around, I was really excited about this race season. My husband bought me a road bike, and I wanted to try an olympic distance race. I knew I could not continue training the way I had last year for a longer race, and I signed up for a training group with Tough Cookies Don't Crumble Fitness, Inc. The Austin-based company offers training programs designed specifically for women for the Danskin and CapTex triathlons each spring, and training for other events, including marathons and longer triathlons, throughout the rest of the year.

The program began with an orientation session. Each member of the team of coaches, led by Tough Cookies founder Tzatzil LeMair, and each women enrolled in the program introduced herself and explained what she was training for and why she was doing it. I immediately felt a bond with other members of the group because they sounded as nervous about training for their event as I felt, and many of them had the same

reasons for doing triathlons that I do. The coaches seemed very down-to-earth, approachable and knowledgeable, and I got the impression that they would be able to answer any questions I had. I left the meeting feeling less apprehensive.

*(Continued on page 7)*



*(Photo courtesy of Even Cone. From left to right: Tonyia Cone, Rachael Willis and Cathy Stone.)*

### In This Issue

From the Board & Upcoming Events . . . . .	2
Race Calendar . . . . .	3
Member of the Month: Mike Cruzcosa . . . . .	4
Technical Article: The Triathlete's Pyramid . . . . .	5
Austin Triathletes Upcoming Events . . . . .	9
NEW: Triathlete Scholarship . . . . .	10
Thank You Sponsors . . . . .	11
USAT - South Midwest News Updates . . . . .	12
Bike Ride Calendar . . . . .	14
Training Services and Resources . . . . .	15
Swim-Bike-Pun & Top 10 List . . . . .	16
AT Committees & Coordinators . . . . .	17
AT Member Benefits . . . . .	18

*(Continued from page 1)*

I knew I would have the expertise of the coaches and support of teammates to rely on; it made training for and racing an olympic distance triathlon seem less like an individual sport and more of a team effort. I also knew the coaches understood other life issues that affect women triathletes because they said babysitting was available at some practices, and they offered morning and evening sessions.

Tough Cookie Rachael Willis said, "I like that the program is all women. I feel less intimidated and like the women-specific designed coaching. They understand women's issues." She explained that having a team of coaches means you have a choice of experts to go to for different things, like a coach who is good to go to for motivation or another who is good to go to for being pushed. She said another benefit is that she has access to the coaches and other team members via e-mail on the Tough Cookie listserv.

Our six-week training schedule was tough. It included a group run workout Monday evenings, a group swim workout Wednesday evenings and a brick workout on Saturday mornings. The rest of the week we worked out on our own. I swam Monday mornings, cycled Tuesday and Thursday nights, ran Wednesday mornings and swam again either on Friday evenings or Sundays. Since it was a structured schedule written by an expert, it was easier to make myself stick to the schedule than it would have been with something I arbitrarily came up with on my own. I figured if our coaches told us to do it, it must be necessary. While I never would have coaxed myself out of bed for the Monday and Wednesday morning workouts on my own, I knew I had to answer to any slacking when I went to my group workouts. I was also scared of the race; in the end, I did almost all of the workouts on my schedule.

Cathy Stone, fellow Tough Cookie, agreed. "It is easier with a group because of the support, encouragement and they keep you accountable," she said.

Since I never did anything like this before, I was glad I had experts to talk to about my experience. For instance, I was constantly so hungry, regardless of how much I ate, that I had stomach pains. I woke up in the middle of the night craving ice cream, and I would just crash throughout the day. When I finally acknowledged that something strange was going on and I probably was not eating right, I went to GNC, where a salesperson told me I needed more protein. I talked to my coach, Meredith Terranova, a registered dietician and endurance runner, who agreed that this was probably my problem. I started making smoothies with protein mix; my hunger pains almost immediately went away and I stopped waking up in the middle of the night hungry.

*(Continued on page 8)*

## AT Newsletter Contributors

We would like to extend a special thank you to these people for their contributions to this month's AT newsletter:

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*Photos, unless otherwise noted, are courtesy of AT newsletter editors  
Susan Farago and Leary Walker.*

## AT Newsletter Submission Guidelines

This is your newsletter so we would love to hear from YOU!

Austin Triathletes is looking for your triathlon or fitness-related articles, photos, jokes, race reports, or whatever! For those of you who are aspiring authors, please review these guidelines:

- Submit writings using Microsoft Word or text file.
- Try to keep it less than 1500 words.
- Articles written above 1500 will be returned.
- Photos in JPEG, GIF, or TIFF format (300+ dpi).
- Submit on or before the 12th of each month.
- Be creative (humor, poems, recipes, photos, etc.).

Articles are written predominantly by members, for members as a great way to share experiences and information. Send all items to: [newsletter@austintriathletes.org](mailto:newsletter@austintriathletes.org). We reserve the right to edit for structure, content, and length. Articles that require significant revisions will be returned for rewrite.

If you are interested in promoting your business to AT members or for information and guidelines about AT club sponsorship, please contact Robbie Gullede at [robbie.gullede@austintriathletes.org](mailto:robbie.gullede@austintriathletes.org).

*(Continued from page 7)*

Other things I went through during the program, like soreness, I may have thought were reasons to give up if I were on my own. Since I had other teammates who talked about going through the same things, though, I knew it was normal. My teammates had the same pain I did and since they still showed up and were doing the workouts, I knew I should too. Their support kept me from making excuses and giving up, and on my roughest days, I looked forward to the social aspect of seeing my friends at practice. Stone said, "Triathlon can be isolated if you don't talk to people. This makes it more fun and social."

A week before the race I had cold feet. I began having serious doubts about whether I was ready for the race and thought maybe I should drop down to the sprint length. When I mentioned this to my friends in the group, they all said to stick with it, but two things changed my mind that I would not have experienced if not for training with Tough Cookies. First, I swam the Austin Triathletes Open Water Swim at Mansfield Dam about a week and a half before CapTex. That went really well, and being there with the team made it fun. The atmosphere and camaraderie that came with being there at the group made me feel really excited about CapTex. Two days after that, at our Monday run workout, we ran a timed two mile. We also ran one at our first run practice, so we could compare our times, and I dropped more than a minute off my two mile run. If I would have trained on my own, it would not have occurred to me to compare something like this, and it gave me a lot of confidence to know that I had improved.

When race day rolled around, I was excited and very nervous. Before the race, I found my friends from Tough Cookies to hang out with. We joked around, encouraged each other and asked each other questions, and by the time we began the race, I felt relaxed. On the bike course, my friends and I cheered each other on when we passed each other, and I recognized other Tough Cookies by their "uniforms," bright pink tri jerseys with the Tough Cookies logo. It was nice to not feel isolated throughout such a long race.

Willis said that having the coaches waiting for Tough Cookies at the finish line motivated her. "Having a crew at the end makes me feel like a special person," she said.

I had definite goals in mind for CapTex. I wanted to finish the one-mile swim in 40 minutes, and I finished it in 33:04. My goal for the bike was 1:30 to 1:40, and I did it in 1:29. I hoped to finish the run in an hour to 1:10, and my time was 1:08. Not only did I meet or beat all my goals, I felt better during and after this race than I did during and after the sprint and mini tri I did last year. I was thrilled, and I know I could not have done it without the expertise of our coaches and support of my teammates.

Since my race, the group has still been very helpful and supportive. I still ride and run with some of the friends I made there, and after Danskin, Tough Cookies held a celebratory party for everyone in the group. Danskin was held a few weeks after CapTex, so the party was several weeks after my group finished. Even though I was looking forward to my race being over so I would have free time to catch up on some books I wanted to read, friends I wanted to see and movies I wanted to watch, I found myself feeling kind of down and not knowing what to do with myself. I thought something was wrong with me, but when I saw the people I had trained with at the Tough Cookies party and heard that some of them were going through the same thing, I felt better. Once again, the support of my teammates got me through an aspect of triathlon I had not experienced before.

Having trained alone and with this group, I would recommend joining a training program to beginners as well as those looking for a way to stay motivated and anyone who wants to take their training to the next level. The expertise of a team of coaches and the support and motivation of my teammates led me to beat and meet all my goals for my first olympic distance triathlon and showed that no woman has to be an island, even in the sometimes isolating sport that is triathlon.

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