



A community for connecting women through the journey of endurance sports



Claudia Spooner is a certified triathlon, cycling, swimming and track and field coach who lives in Texas. She is a mom, and competitive athlete, who enjoys working with athletes of all abilities and ages around the country. We were lucky to interview one of her athletes for a previous article, and after everything she said about Claudia's skill in coaching her (that athlete is 48 years young), we knew we had to go straight to the source.

GT: How did you find a love of endurance sports?

I started running marathons when I was 23 years old, and I was at a crossroad in my life. I was not a “runner”, I had no high school or collegiate background in sports, but I knew I wanted to doing something significant. When I look back I realize life is an endurance sport, we are either in it to win or we just get by, I am here to win. Training for endurance events helped me to take the time for myself to find out what I was made of, who I was and who I wanted to be. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of others, a positive difference. I have never second guessed that and have no regrets for the road I have taken and the lives I have changes and made an impact on, including my own.

Most of your athletes are in the “Masters” category 40+ age Group. Why?

I feel like I have a large contingent of the Master's athletes, because I am also a Master's athlete and it's a very important aspect for an athlete and coach be able to relate. I am over 40, a mom, and I own my own company as well as compete at a high level in running and triathlon. I understand what it takes to balance all these things. It's like spinning plates, it takes a fine balance. I have the ability to coach athletes with the understanding that when one part suffers, all the parts suffer. I get it...the kids, the pets, the job, the out of town spouse, being tired.. I



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understand. This is what makes a big difference in my ability to coach, I build their training schedules around their lives and time available to train. I also understand the part of getting older and how training has to compliment our lives and not control our lives. I am understanding and compassionate and my athletes know, when they do the training, SUCCESS is INEVITABLE...That is my favorite part and why I do what I do... They succeed... It's AWESOME!!!!!!!!!!



Exiting the water with one of her athletes, Maya 70 years young, and who races visually impaired

What do you love most about training at this age?

I have never really thought much about training at this age being any different than any other age and that is speaking from 20 years of training. I think the one exception is that I train smarter and not necessarily harder. I don't do junk training like I did in my twenties or early thirties. I have a very specific reason for some of my training. Sometimes I do just run to run and swim or ride just to swim or ride but, I have a reason for most of my training and it's to be the best I can be for the event I am competing at. I have a goal and I stay focused on that. If I put in a training load that is just extra, I do risk injury or just being really tired and not being able to hit the training I want to for the next day or rest of the week.

I also really like the time for myself. With so many things on my "to do" list if I don't force "me" time, I will never get it, this' me' time is a priority, when we take care of ourselves, we can take care of our family with tons of joy and love. Feeling good about myself, feeling strong, feeling confident are results of this and it's a direct reflection on how we treat others.



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What specific things have you found are necessary for training without injury in this age category?

The biggest component is staying consistent, and not over training. Training must be done in a progressive type of training program with rest/recovery weeks, hard training needs to be balanced with easy and recovery training. I also think a good massage therapist is the magic key to recovery.

What kind of strategies do we need to consider for maintaining energy for our training, and for our recovery as Masters athletes?

Nutrition and hydration play a key role in maintaining energy for training and competing. I am a huge advocate of balance. Restriction is not the key to the world's best athletes. We eat good food, sweets in moderation. Eat tons of the green stuff, spinach, salad, avocados, fruits, and lean proteins. Stay away from fast food and fried foods. Trash in is trash out. Keep healthy snacks in the car for all those times we are hungry and on the move. Be prepared.

SLEEP.... We NEED sleep, get your rest at night, wind down with a good book, turn off the TV and rest your body so you're refreshed and ready to go the next day... This is your recovery time, make sure to make the best of it.



Claudia and a good friend after the finish at 2011 70.3 World Championships



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What about women who have never run, or been an athlete. What would you recommend they do to get started?

For a beginning athlete depending on what you're training for, I think finding a group or friends that can hold you accountable is the key to success. Training with a group builds lifetime friendships. I also think finding a coach and the right resources helps to avoid injury or burnout, especially when training for long distances events. All coaches have different coaching styles, find a coach the fits your needs and your lifestyle and that they create programs based on your goals and lifestyle and not what someone else is doing. Communication is crucial.



[Claudia]With Maya after her age-group win in the Visually Impaired category

Strength training... is it REALLY necessary?

Strength training is crucial as we get older, 2-3 times a week. We don't need to spend hours in the gym, a proper multifunctional training program that should take about 30 minutes is plenty for what our goals are as endurance athletes. As we age, we lose bone density, weight training and weight bearing exercises help to decrease that age related part of life.



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And in her own words....

I think the biggest question I get asked is “Can I do this?” My response “I can give you the tools to succeed the CAN DO is up to YOU...”

You have to want to change your lifestyle to reach the goals you have set for yourself. The choices we make determine our destiny, choose wisely and you will be amazed at what you can achieve.

How do you manage everything, Claudia?

I think the key to managing family, work, training, and competing is planning and organization. You would be amazed at what you can get in, in small amounts of time and how great you will feel when you have it accomplished. The wasted time we spend surfing the web and watching TV we could be out training, taking care of ourselves. Nothing gives me more energy than fresh air and a good strong training session... go out and hit the road, you will love yourself and everyone around a little more than you did with every step you take to making yourself a better, stronger, more confident YOU!

[To connect with Claudia directly, you can find her at www.irunitri.com. We are especially grateful for her responsiveness and accessibility.... So go on, shoot her some questions!]