

Chamber Spotlight: Ridgewood Tri Athlete LLC

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Some companies are in the business of helping others open a business. Some help clients run a business. Ridgewood Tri Athlete LLC's (RTA) business, however, is to help its clients run ... and swim and cycle.



Elizabeth Wittmaack, owner of Ridgewood Tri Athlete LLC, finishes an Ironman competition.

Founded by Elizabeth Wittmaack in May, RTA offers multi-sport coaching programs to help clients excel, whether it be in running, cycling, swimming or any number of other athletic events. The business caters to athletes of all levels, from first-timers to elites.

Wittmaack is herself a six-time Ironman finisher, two-time Ironman World Championship finisher, two-time Kona finisher, and has numerous overall podium wins. She is also a USA Triathlon (USAT)-certified coach and a certified USA Cycling coach, as well as a four-time USAT All-American, ranking her among the very top in her field.

She didn't, however, start out as a triathlete. Wittmaack, who grew up in Ridgewood, said she became interested in training for a triathlon several years ago after meeting a couple who competed in the event. She said she initially had doubts as to whether she could ever take part in a sport she deemed was for "super athletes." But, she soon made up her mind to compete in a triathlon. It was not an easy, or quick, road by any means, but she nevertheless achieved her goal.

"With some focus, wonderful coaching, and a full commitment to success, I found that triathlon finish line," she recalled.

Then, she was hooked. Although she was working in the medical field at the time, she had an opportunity to help coach a team in New York City, which ultimately transitioned to a full-time job working with athletes.

"This was really where I found my sweet spot," she said. "I wanted to take everything I had learned from the sport over the years and use it to help as many athletes as I could."

After the stint in NYC, Wittmaack saw there was a need for such a service and decided to "run" her own business.

"Triathlon is one of the fastest-growing sports in the country," she explained. "If you have a pair of running sneakers, a bicycle, and a set of goggles, you can learn to 'Tri.' Having assistance when getting started in multi-sport is really helpful and there are virtually no coaching services in the area."

And choosing the ideal location for her venture was obvious.

The village has also been good luck for another family business, this one originally founded by Wittmaack's father, called Man Around The House, which provides all types of home renovations and repairs. Wittmaack's brothers continued to build up the business after their dad passed away.

"I decided to start my own multi-sport coaching company in Bergen County, New Jersey," she recalled. "I grew up in Ridgewood, and coming back to the 'Wood' was a no-brainer."

Starting to train

So, what can clients expect when they sign on with RTA?

"Essentially, you tell me what event or distance you would like to do and I provide you with a daily training plan to get you to your finish line," she said.

RTA provides a variety of packages, such as Carbon, Titanium, Aluminum and Steel; all packages include one-on-one training to teach proper form and technique. Progress is monitored with an interactive digital training log, as well as weekly conference calls. RTA also offers "A La Carte" services that include 60- and 90-minute individual and group swim, bike and run sessions, and more.

"I have a strength coach who aids in triathlon-specific strength training," Wittmaack said.

Training takes place in a variety of venues.

"I actually don't have a physical location. I work with my clients to figure out a training venue," Wittmaack said.

RTA has a lane available for swim training at the Ridgewood YMCA, but Wittmaack said clients may also choose to be trained at their own pool. Biking and running training can take place on the roads, on Wittmaack's computerized equipment or on a treadmill at the athlete's gym or home.

"I understand that schedules can be hectic and crazy," she explained. "This flexibility really caters to the busy lives of the athletes. All programming is completely customized and personally written to meet the time demands of the athlete."

Wittmaack said that whatever the event, clients come first.

"My athletes are the most important part of Ridgewood Tri Athlete," she said. "They are why I got started in coaching. There is nothing in the world like watching your athlete 'get it' when you explain something clear enough that they can physically replicate it, and then you watch them change their technique and improve. The look on their face is just priceless."

As for future plans, Wittmaack said she hopes to continue to expand Team RTA and, as the business grows, bring in some additional coaches. She also plans to continue expanding group programming and hopes someday to have her own facility.

"I love my job. I love to help my hometown athletes," she said. "I am living my dream. Ridgewood Tri Athlete is everything I have ever dreamt of ... literally."

For more information about Ridgewood Tri Athlete LLC, visit ridgewoodtriathlete.com.