

Interview with Elizabeth Wittmaack

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INTERVIEW WITH IRONMAN ELIZABETH WITTMACK



Elizabeth Wittmaack, Owner of [Ridgewood Tri Athlete LLC](#), is a 6 x [Ironman](#) finisher, 2 x [Ironman World Championship](#) finisher, 21 x [70.3](#) finisher, 2 x [70.3 World Championship](#) finisher, and has numerous overall podium wins. Elizabeth is a [USAT](#) certified coach and a certified [USA Cycling](#) coach. She is a 4 x [USAT](#) All-American, ranking her amongst the very top in her field. Her love for triathlon and her continued service to the sport has enhanced her knowledge and fueled her desire to mentor and assist athletes in their quest to reach their goals.



Clearwater 70.3
World Championships

1- How did you get involved with the sport of triathlon?

I was camping on the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon several years back. It was December, the slowest time of year for tourism. I was two days in and had only seen 3 people.

The next two people to come trudging off the trail were, ironically, a couple from Long Island, NY! Of all places! We hiked out together and vowed to meet up again in NYC.

Fast forward 2 months. We reunite in NYC. Friends of the couple join us as well. In conversation, it comes up that these friends compete in the crazy sport of Triathlon! They swim, bike, AND run...all in the same event! I was amazed. I had so many questions. I could only remember back to my pool lifeguarding days—there was a Tri-family that would frequent the pool. They were so FIT! A Triathlon was such an alien sport to me. One for Super-Athletes!!

I left them that night with my mind made up. I was going to do one of these crazy, alien events.

Two weeks later, I ran my first “timed” mile. I ran around the Central Park Reservoir....as fast as I could and almost collapsed. It was far harder than hiking the Grand Canyon. My time...nearly 11 minutes. It was going to be a very...very long journey to get to a triathlon finish line.

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

also found my true love (my bike!) and I have never been the same since.

2- How long have you been involved with the sport? Almost 6 years



3- How long has your coaching business been around? This year! RTA is a brand new addition to the multisport scene! I was working in the medical field. But when I found myself wearing my Tri-shorts underneath my scrubs so that I could sneak out to ride my bike, I knew it was time for a career change. I found a wonderful opportunity to help coach for a great team in NYC which submerged me full time into a life of working with athletes. This was really where I found my sweet spot. 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 a wonderful experience in NYC, I decided to start my own multisport coaching company in Bergen County, New Jersey. I grew up in Ridgewood and coming back to the "Wood" was a no brainer. With the sport growing at such a rapid rate, I believe that bringing Ridgewood Tri Athlete to the area is a much welcome addition. I will help anyone the best that I can. Even if its simply answering a question about Transition setup or Wetsuit sizing, I understand that being a newbie can be daunting. I was there once and I am more than happy to give back and encourage your desire to explore a sport that has given so much to me.

a. What is the goal of your coaching business for you and for the athletes you train? I want to inspire anyone that I can to reach for their dreams. I want to be an example of entrepreneurial success to those who wish to start up their own business. I will mentor and assist anyone and everyone interested in swim, bike, or run...or all three! 5k to Ironman...I'll get you to your finish line.

4- What is the hardest part of your training? Getting in the pool. Once I'm in..im good. Getting there and getting in is 99% of my issue. lol (the interviewer is shaking his head at this answer b/c that is his problem as well)

5- How many hours per week do you train? Depends on what phase I'm in and what I'm training for. Totally varies.

6- Do you have an off-season? YES! Thanksgiving-January. But I love winter running in the snow and I am going to start x-country skiing this season!



Elizabeth and Jackson cruising along

7- What bike are you riding? I race on a [Cervelo P3](#)..his name is Jackson. I also have Cadence (my Cyfac TT) and Sam (my Jamis road bike)

8- What shoes are you running in? [Newton](#) trainers and racers

9- How do you balance life/work and your training? You just do it. The busier I am the more efficient I am. If I have a list put together and can check things off-I am in good shape. I always schedule my own workouts in my work calendar.

10- Best venue for a race you have either participated



in/volunteered in? Why? wow this is tough...[Kona](#) is incredible. [Rev3 Knoxville](#)—I did their inaugural half this year in May—it was spectacular..biked out to the foothills of the smoky mountains...[Cali 70.3](#) was AWESOME...and of course my bread and butter is [Lake Placid IM](#).

11- Best advice you have ever received? In life or in sport?

Well a few.. 1) Be patient. 2) Keep your eyes and your ears open and your mouth shut. 3) Everything in life happens for a reason.

12- Favorite triathlon distance? Why? Probably the Half IM. The olys are too intense—although its great to be done in time for breakfast. The 70.3 is a good days work....IM is amazing but on a

whole different level.

13- Best swag you have received from a race? [Rev3 quassay](#) last year—I got so much stuff!!! A great bag, 2 gift certificates, a watch, a bathing suit, and a bunch of other things...



Lake Placid

14- Tips/Tricks you do prior to a race? I always stretch in bed after the alarm goes off—with the lights still off. Like I sit up...its usually a 3am ritual lol...and really try to stretch out...then lights on and I go right for the pb & j and coffee!

15- Least favorite sport to train for? Most favorite sport to train for? Swim is my weakness. I just love the bike...and the run. My wheels and my feet have taken me to so many amazing places.

16- What are you goals for the rest of 2010 and the 2011 racing season? I close out with [Clearwater](#) this year. Next year my focus will my on [Lake Placid IM](#) again..with a few 70.3s. I am going to race for my [Kona](#) slot.

a. What about for your career? I just want to keep developing [RTA](#) and get as many athletes on board as I can.



Mom and Elizabeth

17- How important is family and friends support for your training? My mother is amazing. She is my rock and I hope I can be hers. She comes to my races and I can hear her from a mile away. She's so cute..she makes cardboard signs and she jumps up and down and waves her hands in the air when she sees me coming. It brings a tear to my eye just thinking about it. My father passed away of pancreatic cancer a few years back. I think he would be really proud of me. I sometimes can hear him in my head on the side of the road cheering for me. I think if he was with me today, he would do a race. He was a great athlete and he had no fear.



18- How has training/racing helped you in your life? I am a TOTALLY different person. This sport humbles me and keeps me grounded.

a. How do you keep yourself motivated on down day's? I say to myself..."am I tired because I am really tired...or am I being lazy?" If I am tired...I take the day off. If I'm being lazy-then I think about my competitors. If you don't work hard, you can't expect to be on the podium come race day.

19- What is the one most important exercise you suggest nobody skip? Sleep.

20- If you could meet any triathlete who would it be and why?

Faris Al Sultan. I really dig his briefs.

21- What is your favorite recovery drink/food? Pb&J and I put banana on it. OR a good turkey burger with swiss, avocado, mustard, and jalapeños.

22- How closely do you watch your nutrition and how much do you think that helps? A lot. You are what you eat. I just try to stay away from junk.

a. During training days and off days? same

23- Is Kona the ultimate dream for you in terms of triathlons? Been there 2x. it is amazing-no question. At this point...probably yes—I missed it this year and I am going to fight like hell to be back there in 2011



24- Are you a member of a team and how did you get involved with them? I am now racing for my own company—TEAM RTA

25- Most important piece of equipment for a triathlete? Their brain

26- In terms of effective cost, what will help a triathlete shave the most time? A Proper hydration and nutrition strategy.



27- What would you tell a beginner to get them interested? If you don't try it...then you will go through your whole life never crossing a finish line.

28- Do you believe anyone can become an athletic person? Yes...I was never an athlete.

29- Do you believe there is an age limit for racing? Is there an age where one should stop racing? You should stop racing when it is no longer fun.

30- Finish that you are most proud of? My first 70.3. I dislocated my elbow the day before the race in Cancun, Mexico. I was alone. I couldn't extend my forearm—had to keep it at a 90 bend. So race day I swam with one arm. Biked in aero (kept it at the 90 degree bend) and ran with it bent. It hurt

so bad...but I finished. I couldn't even pack up my bike after the race because I only had use of one arm. The bellmen got a lesson in bike packing. Ironman Lake Placid 2009 was also a good one. I started puking on the bike at mile 100. walked through every aid station on the run. I was so sick—spent 9 minutes puking at mile 7. couldn't keep anything down. Finally I got really tired of being sick. I sucked it up and ran my way to a Kona slot....puking on myself the whole way to the finish line. haha



31- What phrases do you use to push yourself across the finish line? I use finish strong or go home! Sometimes I count my footfalls...or I tick off the miles. I don't even know what I do ...I just try to tell myself I have many more miles left than I actually do. I think it keeps my body going. As soon as I tell myself I only have 1 mile left, I can feel my body shutting down. I always just say 10 more miles...even if there are only 2 left.

You can find Elizabeth at her website or contact her via email using the links below.

