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INTRODUCTION

A little over ten years ago, my husband threw down the gauntlet one evening after dinner and blurted out, “I’m going back to triathlon racing!” Good for you, honey, I thought as I cleared the dishes, delighted that he had found a little weekend hobby for himself.

After all, the guy spent four days a week away from home, working like a madman as a management consultant to large health care firms around the U.S. Jay was terribly unhappy about how his physique had become, well, oversized is the most polite word for it. I figured this racing thing was his way of shedding some body fat.

Does this sound like something that has happened in your life? Perhaps your marathon running partner has just decided to start training for Ironman triathlons. But running a 26.5 mile marathon is a whole different ballgame than preparing for, participating in, and recovering from a 140.6 mile event that includes three challenging athletic disciplines. The time, effort, and cost associated with endurance triathlon training and racing is exponentially more draining than what is required of a marathoner.

So What Is a Devout Race Mate to Do?

That’s why I wrote this book! Ten years...and scores of triathlons later...I have learned a great deal about living with a triathlete. Racing isn’t just a hobby; it’s a way of life. And race mates – partners, children, parents, friends, and extended relatives – all play a crucial part in this lifestyle.

But when I got started as a race supporter I had no clue how to be a good race mate and still maintain my own identity. That’s why I wrote *Fast and Faster: Deliver rock-solid support to an endurance triathlete*.

My goal was to compile a comprehensive guide loaded with insider’s tips, tricks, and secrets to dramatically improve your insight into the sport and help you easily navigate races and life with an amateur endurance triathlete – before, during, and after events – so you can not only actively participate but also have fun along the way! And, if I may be so bold, I believe that incorporating just a few of these techniques can help your racer go even faster on race day.

Here’s some of what you’ll learn in this guide:

- Section 1 – The most critical thing when getting started as a race partner is mindset. From managing expenses to serving as personal “shrink,” you’ll have the tools you need to help your triathlete work through any obstacle.
- Section 2 – It isn’t just race day, it’s race week. And that’s when you’ll shine in your supporting role.
- Section 3 – Race day may be done, but there are still some important things to accomplish – your role in recovery is invaluable!

Let’s face it: Most of us who support a triathlete often do so at great sacrifice. Our desire for spontaneity to jump in the car and skip off to a summer fair on a Sunday afternoon or to host wine dinners and family outings is often dampened by our triathletes’ needs for weekend training fests and early bedtimes.

A triathlete’s race mate typically takes on the lion’s share of housekeeping and childrearing duties. In fact, legend has it that triathletes have more than their fair share of relationship problems because of this imbalance, relative to

the rest of the population. Our road to the podium is not paved with glory. Nope, ours is littered with stinky laundry rooms and weekends alone.

When I first took on this new role, I didn't know squat about effectively navigating around race courses for ideal viewing, what sort of financial investment to expect, the importance of pre-race nutrition, or – hugely essential – how I could help make certain he had a GREAT race the day of the event. I often found myself feeling anxious and even a little gun-shy about asking him questions that would make me look ridiculous.

Be Empowered

Knowledge is power. This saying is absolutely true when it comes to supporting an endurance athlete. No longer was it good enough for me to simply show up at these events, mindlessly follow the herds, and pray I'd get the chance to see my hubby out on the course. I wanted to take a more active role...especially since everything in my world was also changing as a result of his involvement in the sport.

Jay loved triathlon – the way it made him feel, look, and approach life made him a stronger, more confident guy. And it thrilled me to see that transformation take place right before my very eyes! There was no question at all in my mind that I was going to do everything in my power to ensure his success.

So I shifted gears and took a more proactive approach. I became a triathlon sponge. When seminars were conducted at events, I attended. When new books arrived on our doorstep, I browsed them (and devoured the ones on nutrition, my area of passion). I begged my husband to instruct me on how to help him with his training, whether it was with nutritional support, devising checklists, or discussing his training programs.

We attended countless triathlon, cycling, and running events together, and I've spent hours upon hours in hundreds of conversations with spectators. I've learned a TON in the past ten years and decided that the most important part of my education was to reach out and help others know, understand, and maybe even love triathlon as much as their racers.

The Big 3

So, here are my Big 3 Axioms – yep, I think about most things in “three's” these days! These are the ones you should keep close at hand when you take on your new role as triathlon race mate:

1. Triathletes belong to a distinct subculture. They have their own lingo, foods, and set of rules and customs. Don't believe me? Hang out with your athlete and her peers sometime and see how quickly the conversation goes off in a direction that leaves you wanting a translator or GPS. Why this is important: Tolerance for diverse cultures is the first step toward greater understanding.
2. You are required to become actively involved in this new world order. A common wail I often overhear by race mates is, “I didn't sign up for this!” Oh no, my friend, you most certainly did. When your athlete sends in the race registration fee you essentially go under contract as a member of the pit crew. Why this is important: Accepting your new role is a critical step in your journey toward incredible support and her success. Both you and your triathlete will have a better experience if you just don't fight it.

3. There is no “u” in triathlete. It will become apparent soon enough that for the next racing season you will breathe, eat, and think triathlon in tandem with your mate. Why this is important: Let me be clear here – it’s all about him. It took me a while to accept this because I always believed it was all about me. It’s not. When you finally grasp this, doors magically open! You’ll discover and embrace new opportunities in your own life, things other than him. This can be one of the most fulfilling and powerful aspects of your new life with a triathlete.

Race Mates Need Love, Too...

You and I are also members of a distinct cultural group. We’re the unsung heroes who scream for our athletes as they swim, bike, and run their way through lives, our hearts full of pride and admiration. This book goes well beyond guidelines for cheering on our athletes with cowbells and handmade signs... it is loaded with tactics to help our triathletes go from being fast to being faster. After all, if we’re going to contribute our time, effort, and money to triathlon, then we most certainly owe it to them and to ourselves to make sure they have stellar results.

Here’s my solemn promise to you: By the time you put this book down, you will no longer fret over washing out sticky water bottles and will come to realize that vacations following Ironman distance races are a lousy idea. Never again will you be confused by terms like “lactate threshold” or “splits.” No more will you feel like a confused newbie spectator. No, with your newfound knowledge from this guide you can march into the athletes’ village at any triathlon event and feel confident, poised, and cleverly able to distinguish between a gel flask and a Fuel Belt® bottle.

In the back of this book you’ll find a glossary of terms, so if you stumble on a word that you don’t quite understand, head there first to see if I’ve covered it. You’ll also find triathlon race rules, checklists, gift ideas, and other resources to make living with (and loving) triathletes a snap.

Ready to race? Let’s go!