

Not Your Usual **Athlete**

By Rhonda Cohen

Lauri Fauerbach Adams is not an athlete in the traditional sense of the word. But an athlete she is, and she's already accomplished more than one hundred forty races. Her goals are in a class with the finest endurance athletes on earth. She races triathlons, marathons, adventure races and ultramarathons (50 miles). Lauri's goal is to compete in a hundred mile marathon and she has tentatively scheduled twelve marathons between September and December.

She has competed in the Ironman Lake Placid and the Ironman Arizona back-to-back, though she did so with an unusual objective. She intentionally was second-from-last in Arizona, and finished with only a few minutes to spare before the cut-off time, because she wanted to enjoy it, kiss her husband along the way, and chat with the volunteers. Lauri is very outgoing and makes new friends wherever she goes.

At 5'7", thirty-six year old Lauri races in the Athena division (over 140 lbs). Her winning smile and great attitude are compelling. Her job has thrown some wrenches into the training mix, because she travels so often. "But I can usually plan a recovery/run-heavy week for the weeks I'm on the road, or I make do with stationary bikes and local pool places I can find on the Internet."

Lauri's training schedule ranges from nine to twenty-eight hours a week. That is like another part-time job on top of her already very busy life. Lauri started running when she was sixteen. "My best friend and I went to cheer his brother's girlfriend on as she ran New York City Marathon. As we partied on the streets of Brooklyn, we promised each other we'd run it together one day because- how bad could it be? That's my catchphrase with sport; it gets me into trouble sometimes! Just before my best friend died, he reminded me of that promise. It took me eighteen years, but I fulfilled that promise. I started doing triathlons simply because it seemed a logical progression, and because I wanted



to do an Ironman. I'm always looking for new ways to test myself, so 50K ultras seemed like the next step after marathons. I love them the most. Nothing shows you what you're made of, especially mentally, than the ultramarathon. Nothing else shows how crazy you are, either."

Training so many hours per week and having such ambitious goals can take its toll on a relationship. On top of that, add the challenge of working a full time job and having a social life. "My husband is the most understanding, flexible person out there. He's a paramedic, so he inherently understands a busy schedule. He also pitches in a lot when I'm training heavily. During Ironman training he carried us, doing all the laundry, cooking, and cleaning. I'm blessed with such a great partner who loves me enough

to put up with the training. My friends know how important sport is to me, and are flexible with their schedules so I can see them. I may not go out and play poker one night, but I can meet for breakfast the next day after a workout. I may not hit a party with my girlfriends, but we can meet up for coffee on a weekend day after a race or a workout. Thank goodness for email, IM, and text messaging, however! I treat all aspects of my life, and all the people within it, as priorities. All parties concerned know and respect that, as they know if I've made an effort to meet up with them I've switched some things around just for them."

I asked Lauri what keeps her motivated?

"Constant improvement is important to me. That means covering more distance than I've ever done, or covering it faster, or covering it more smartly than I have previously done. Plus looking at the race confirmations which show how much I've paid for events helps."

What are your ultimate goals?

"Goals for me are always changing. First it was to do marathons. I trained hard and ran Philadelphia as my first in 2003, with the ultimate goal being New York City Marathon in 2004. As soon as I crossed Philly that first time at the finish line I thought, "What's next?" and "Ironman," was the answer. Once I did that, I thought, "What's next?" and "Ultras," was the answer. I've done two 50ks and am looking to max out at the hundred mile next April. Sometimes my goals are time-based, other times just for the experience, other times merely to have fun, still others to raise money for charities. It all depends."

How did you learn what to do?

"Trial and error; I learn a lot from my mistakes, and I've made a lot of them. People who have been there, done that before me have given me tons of solid advice. I read a lot, too."

When we think of a super-athlete, we usually see very skinny, gangly-type bodies. Lauri doesn't fit that mold. "I know my body, I know its strengths, and I work the limitations. I can't help it that nature blessed me with a chest and curves. In other aspects of life, they serve me well," she says humorously.

Lauri is an inspiration to everyone. She sets lofty goals that seem unreachable to most of us, yet she is committed to pushing herself past what she had originally perceived as her limit. She continues to raise the bar and challenges both her body and her mind to go the distance.

"I've been so fortunate to meet the people I have met, see the things I have seen, and take part in the wonderful events I've done," concludes Laurie. "My only wish is that I could do more!"



Rhonda is a local freelance writer and a triathlete.