



Coasty's Corner



Coasty is GC Tri's Official Mascot. You can see him proudly flying at all of our races. Each month, Coasty interviews one club member to find out what makes them tri so hard

Mark Smith
GC Tri Member
since 2011

How did you get into triathlons?

In 2005 a friend called me up in September (this is pre- smart phone era, it was an actual phone call.) after she had had her third child bemoaning the fact that she was so out of shape. She pitched the idea of doing a triathlon together (she had been a competitive skier at one point) and without knowing too much about triathlons I agreed. We set a date and picked a race for the following June. As the race date drew close she called me again to say that she was bailing, because in the preceding months her 3 kids had flu in serial order as well as her husband, and she was not ready. I carried on with the plan solo, bumbling my way through the race which was an Olympic distance and managed to finish, getting my ass kicked in the process. I decided at that time I had do a few more of these events, and here I am today....



Finish of 2016 Newport Half Marathon

What is your proudest accomplishment in the sport?

Maybe 5 years ago I did an Olympic Race under personally terrible conditions: little sleep for 2 nights preceding the race, red eye flight back from the west coast, and not great weather on race day. I was in the worst mood possible and was thinking I would quit about every 15 seconds . I managed to spoon feed my self incremental goals like "get to the next buoy, corner" etc. and finished the race. Checking the results on the way out of the paddock after what was the worst kind of a 'personal hell day' I saw that I had PR'd by 6 minutes and was in complete disbelief. Persevering through a completely miserable frame of mind produced a surprising result.

What is your favorite part about triathlon?

Cold beer afterwards? That's a hard question to answer. I do like the training and in the last few years I've learned much about myself from the training process. I have no athletic background so I've been figuring out how to put a race together for myself and that learning curve has been great. A friend of mine used the words "Its an honorable path to self knowledge" to describe this learning curve I've been on and I agree with that assessment.

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What are your goals for this year in the sport?

I'm going to do a 70.3 this year for the first time which is the main thing. After last year I decided to focus more on running so I'm adding in more running events and would like to get to a 1:40 half marathon. Improving as a swimmer is also on my list. I'd say moving beyond advanced dilettante racing wise is my ultimate goal.

Outside of triathlon, how else do you enjoy spending your free time?

Time off is spent hanging with friends, some travel, kayaking and occasionally some crazy building project. I have a small but productive garden and grow some delicious food during the summer.

What is your best piece of advice for someone just starting out in the sport?

When I started in Triathlon it was a solo endeavor, I was reading some books about tri's and just having a bash at it. I think the best thing some one starting out can do is join a club like GCTRI and get into the culture, learn from the people there, shared suffering builds bonds and strengthens the learning. Training with other people certainly makes the long rides and runs more enjoyable and for those of us who are on the less disciplined side, making a date with a friend for some training event vastly increases the chances of attaining your goals.

How do you balance your training with family and work?

This is the hardest thing for me. Up until about 2011 I didn't do a lot of racing, and training was spotty. Some years I did not race at all. After my daughter finished high school, I had more free time and started doing more races and this is about the time I joined GCTRI. Family wise balancing training is not so hard, but balancing training with work is crazy. I'm self employed and my schedule is extremely variable, can involve lots of domestic as well as international travel and the work I do tends to have long days that can be stressful. In 2015 I lived on a small ship for a month in the South Pacific during the month of June. So not only did I take a zero for the month training wise, I also can't make up the training gap in a couple of weekends when I return from a work trip like that. Basically I have to weave in training around work schedule which is anything but regular and makes training plans for things like 70.3 sort of useless. I do the best I can given the circumstances and when I have the time tend to put in more training hours.



Jumping rope Aboard Nai'a in some rare calm waters near Fiji.

If you would like to nominate a team member or volunteer yourself to be featured in an upcoming Coasty's Corner, please email Nicole at nogrosso18@gmail.com