

HUDSON VALLEY TRIATHLON CLUB

Passing the Torch

By Mark Wilson-Triathlon Coach

Who will carry the sport of triathlon into the future? Will it be former champions, age groupers or specific governing organizations? Is it possible for any one group to shoulder total responsibility? And should they? It seems that triathlon is doing very well among age group triathletes, so it seems feasible that they would be passing along their fitness interest to their children and surrounding neighborhoods, as well. Doing so will cement triathlon into the history of Olympic greatness as the 3 disciplines that co-exist within the event have done for many decades previously. What are the responsibilities that lay before us and who is to govern the established rules/laws? Let's discuss a few options now.

It feels appropriate to thank those early tri-athletes who "thought outside the box" of conventional sports. These athletes knew no limits because none had been set. As a result, these pioneers accomplished unprecedented feats of courage and dominance that may never be matched. So, are these individuals the ones we want leading the way for our tri-athletic youth? The answer is a resounding "yes" since these athletes "know the ropes" and have "been there" time and again. Their place in triathlon history is legendary and now we can only "keep the faith" and hope they can coach/mentor our youth in a way that will satisfy the Kona Gods as well as Olympic ones in 2008 and beyond.

The indefatigable age grouper powers-on week after week logging the miles and there's no good reason (except maybe for health, happiness and spiritual well-being) for a 40-something athlete to be puttin' out so much. It's actually dangerous! Regardless, the fact that there are over 40,000 of those individuals triathloning every weekend each summer is an astounding and impressive occurrence. This truth alone is causing major shifts in the consciousness of our youth that exercise is a cool thing, especially the kind one does all day! It'd be hard to find any 20-year-old that isn't in awe and maybe intimidated by his elder who can swim 2.4 miles, bike 112 miles and then run 26.2 miles back-to-back-to-back. It goes without mention that the age-grouper is likely the most pervasive and yet inconspicuous force leading the triathlon champions of tomorrow.

The governing bodies in triathlon are an integral part of the developmental stages for the "next generation." Without them the direction of the sport is at the mercy of who knows who. Leadership heads are the focus point of the grand ideal and maintain tremendous authority in determining the clarity along the path our youth is to follow. Therefore, the structure and execution of the master plan requires intense amounts of energy and determination; much like participating in triathlon itself.

It's evident that all three sectors (former champions, age groupers and governing bodies) are of equal importance when establishing the passageway for our adolescent triathletes of the future. For instance, a diamond has many facets and requires endurance throughout its developmental process. We can handle it. See ya out there!

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