

ACTION SPORT INTERNATIONAL

Susan Farago finished the Ironman Coeur d'Alene in under 12 hours. Her second-place effort at St. Croix landed her an invitation to the Hawaii Ironman in October, where the World Championship is decided.

TRIATHLON

Iron woman

'Human spirit' propels athlete to Hawaii's Ironman triathlon

BY DAN KLEINER
Sports Editor

The Hawaii Ironman Triathlon is not for the faint of heart. It's not for the faint of anything. It is a 2.4-mile ocean swim, fol-

lowed by a 112-mile bike ride, followed by a 26.2-mile run. The average temperature ranges from 82 to 95 degrees, with humidity hovering around 90 percent. Crosswinds on portions of the bike course can gust as high as

60 mph. Numbers like these would scare many athletes to death. But for Lakeway's Susan Farago, the Ironman triathlon is about life.

"I've learned more about See HAWAII, Page 25

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myself in the last five years than I have since my teens," Farago said. "You develop, and it changes your whole lifestyle."

Last May, Farago reached the peak of triathlon racing by qualifying for the Hawaii Ironman, also known as the Ironman World Championships. She took second place in her age group at the race in St. Croix to qualify, and chuckled as she recalled the experience.

"When I saw that I got second place I thought there was some kind of mistake," Farago said. "Going to the banquet I was so excited just to get my plaque. When the announcer called out my name and asked if I wanted to go to Hawaii I immediately threw up my hands, screamed out 'yes,' and ran up to the podium. My coach said he's never seen me run that fast."

Race officials placed a lei around Farago's neck when she reached the podium to symbolize her future at the race in Kona. Some athletes train their whole lives to earn a spot at the prestigious race, but Farago made it to this point a different way.

She was an active athlete in high

I think this race is about the human spirit.

- SUSAN FARAGO

school, but at one point it appeared those days may have been behind her.

"I put being active aside for a time to pursue my goals in the corporate world," Farago said. "I was doing 80-hour work weeks and it was just awful. I decided something had to change. I went to Indianapolis with a friend who was running a half-marathon and went along with it. At that point, I couldn't even fathom a half-marathon. I did my first triathlon in 2000, and when I finished I just had to do another one."

While Farago has progressed

from race to race, her only competition remains within herself. The spirit of the race and the lifestyle of the triathlete are what appeal most to Farago, not medals or accolades.

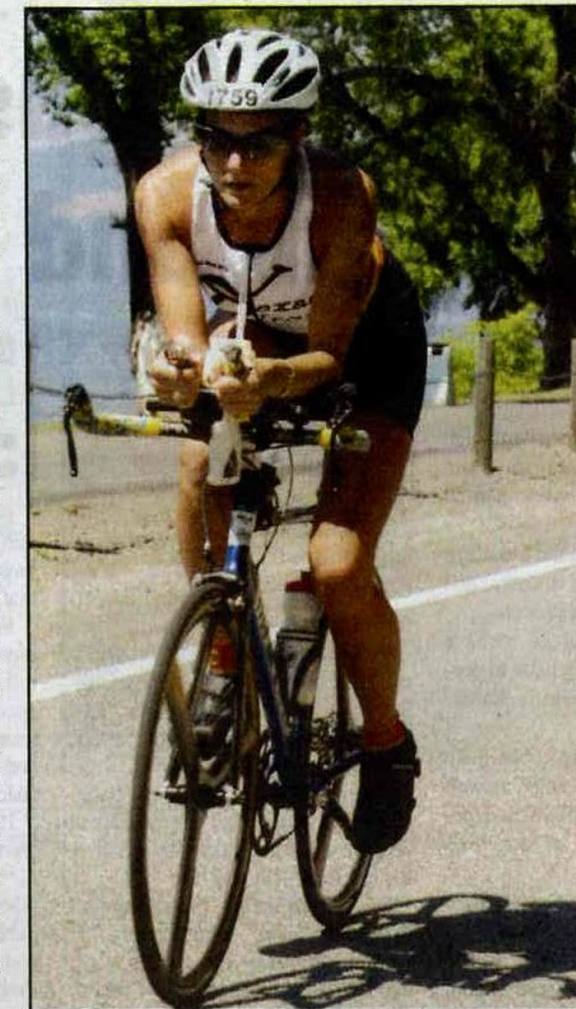
She describes the race with words like "open," and speaks of the spirit of the race with visible passion. The lifestyle she embraces goes far beyond being in shape and challenging oneself.

"I think this race is about the human spirit," Farago said. "When someone is struggling, there is no hiding it. If you need help, others will see it and help - whether it be giving someone your salt tablets or a spare bicycle tire. If someone is having a bad day, you pick them up. That's the spirit."

So when Farago heads to the scorched earth of Kona she has that spirit to look forward to, along with the 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride and 26.2-mile run. But it's the lifestyle she says is most important.

On Oct. 15, she will represent Lakeway in the world championship of triathlons - but representing a lifestyle of triumph and health is just as important.

"My friends and I are anomalies," Farago said with a laugh. "But you don't have to do all that to stay healthy. Anything you do that is active counts."



Farago will race in the Hawaii Ironman this coming October. The race is the world championship of triathlons and is currently featured in a Gatorade commercial.

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