



## **Sweaty She Monday (6/1/09): Perks of Being in the Minority**

**By Susan Farago**

*Weekly Sweaty She postings can be found on "Sweaty She" on Facebook.com.*

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I just came back from racing at Ironman Lanzarote in the Canary Islands (volcanic islands off the northwest coast of Africa). Boasting to be “the world’s toughest Ironman”, this is a race I have wanted to do for a long time and let me tell you, it lived up to its claim.

Part of the appeal is that this is a relatively small race with 1200 athletes as compared to 2200+ for other Ironmans. This year was no exception – 1300 athletes. And I was one of only about 90 women participants. European male testosterone overload anyone? This was going to be fun!

Being my usual feminist, equal rights, “I am woman” self, I paid special attention to things around me just to see how “male” this race was going to be. Turns out, being in the minority DEFINITELY had its benefits.

1. No lines for the women’s restroom. Seriously! The photo below is of the men’s restroom line on race morning.



2. Women’s private changing tent WITHIN the men’s changing tent.  
I guess this would only be a benefit if you didn’t mind literally running past about 50 guys who were half to full naked on your way to the women’s changing tent. Talk about being careful not to bump into “anything”!

3. Being able to pick yourself out of the mass swim start because you are only one of a very few athletes wearing a pink swim cap.
4. The look of confusion crossing athletes and spectators faces when you tell them you are racing and not just a girlfriend or wife at the race in a support role.
5. The secondary look of confusion when the athlete realizes you will be competing against him...AND could quite possibly (and likely) kick his ass.
6. Otherwise docile crowds going wild when they realize the athlete that is about to fly by them is a female. Not to mention the amazing support and cheers from female spectators yelling, “Venga Chicka!!!” (go girl!) from cars, the back of motorcycles, and along the streets.
7. Not feeling weird when getting compliments from male athletes like, “I really like the sound of your race wheels” or “Come on Susan...let’s ride together through this wind” because they see you as an athlete, not a female. I think.
8. Getting a really good post-race massage from a massage guy who has no qualms that you are a female and proceeds to pull your shorts half way down your rear end because you told him your butt muscles hurt. Then without batting an eye, reminds you to pull your pants up when you hop off the massage table because most of your rear end is hanging out.
9. Being able to proudly wear pink (not that I did) and not be shunned for doing so because more male athletes were wearing pink than women. Then again, this may be a European thing.
10. Quicker reaction time from the guys when they hear a female voice yelling, “GET OUT OF THE WAY!” when running through the swim timing mat or the bike dismount line because for some reason the guys decide to stop and just stand there. And believe me, they do get out of the way!

Male dominated races may not be for everyone but in my experience, being in the minority has its benefits. But you do have to prepare yourself for certain things – like the co-ed showers post race at Ironman Austria. But then again, that’s where the great stories come from, isn’t it ☺.

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