

Ironman: Meyer overcomes obstacles

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"I got into triathlons because I like running a lot but I decided I needed to find something that isn't so rough on the body and I can continue to do throughout life," Meyer, a 2001 Dallas High graduate said. "I wasn't ready to give up running completely, so swimming, biking and running sounded good."

Meyer was proud of her accomplishment and hooked on the training lifestyle.

It wasn't long before people began asking her if she would attempt a full Ironman.

"For the longest time, I said no," Meyer said. "After about five months, I decided if I wanted to do (a full Ironman), now was my chance. I understood the training schedule. I had a good base. So, I signed up one day after work."

Then, the hard part began.

Training

Meyer, who now lives in Austin, Texas, spent the previous six months training for the Ironman.

Her daily schedule included waking up at 4:30 a.m. and working out before and after work.

Weekends saw five- to eight-hour long bike rides and up to 21-mile runs.

As important as her physical training was learning how to eat before, after and during her workouts.

"You have to eat to have the energy to train and learn how to eat while



PHOTO COURTESY OF MELISSA MEYER/for the Itemizer-Observer
Melissa Meyer celebrates reaching the end of the Ironman in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho on June 28.

you're out there," Meyer said. "You can't do a race that lasts 17 hours without food training."

Yet, for all the difficulty the physical training presented, that wasn't the biggest challenge she faced.

"I think saying no to friends (was the hardest part)," Meyer said. "Saying no to a dinner because it would go too late and I needed to get home so I

could train well the next day. Saying no was hard."

Half a year later, and race day arrived. This time, there was one more obstacle in her way — the heat, which reached 106 degrees and 140 degrees on the pavement, Meyer said.

Facing the Struggle

Meyer's swim went smoothly as she transitioned onto her bike.

"First 70 miles, I'm doing

great," Meyer said.

She entered the most difficult stretch of the bike ride located between miles 70 and 90. With little fan support and the hilliest stretch of the entire ride, Meyer's confidence started to fade.

"The hills are never-ending at this point," Meyer said. "People are literally dropping like flies on the bike. Some are convulsing. Others can't make a three

word sentence and are being pulled off the course. Ambulances are going non-stop. I'm not going to lie, I was a little scared at this point."

Meyer arrived at a medical tent at mile 85 only to find the tent had run out of water. After receiving some Gatorade and spending a few moments in the shade under the tent, Meyer had no choice but to push on to the next station.

"I began praying like crazy that the next station had water," Meyer said.

Luckily, the next station did have water. And, it wasn't long before Meyer took off for the final part of her journey — the run.

She's So There

When Meyer began her 26.2-mile run, one thought kept her pushing — she was going to be an Ironman.

But, 24 to 25 miles in, and Meyer was struggling.

It was then she heard a young girl shout, "Girl, you're so there!"

In that moment, something switched on for Meyer.

"Everything came flooding over me and I started," Meyer said. "... That was my tipping point. I couldn't believe that after six months of this, I was so there. I stopped crying and got super excited."

Meyer used her newfound excitement to race toward the finish, her family felt a rush of relief.

"Her (timing) chip failed to register at mile 21.2 of the run," Melissa's mother Lu Ann Meyer said. "Our entire family was convinced something was very wrong. You can imagine our excitement when we spotted her coming down the home stretch."

As Meyer celebrated, it became clear finishing the Ironman was more than just a race. It was an experience she'll never forget.

"The Ironman experience was incredible," Meyer said.

CYCLING

Cycle Oregon to visit Polk County during ride

Bikers from around the country to arrive in Polk County

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Thousands of cyclists are about to hit the road in and around Polk County.

Cycle Oregon will hold its weekend ride, dubbed Camp Cycle Oregonnado-good, this Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The group will set up camp at Western Oregon University, where cyclists will have access support to keep their bikes running smoothly.

"Polk County has excellent bicycle rides, including the Willamette Valley Scenic Bikeway, plus many small towns and open spaces that represents Oregon's rich history," Executive Director Alison Graves said.

The weekend ride will offer a total of six possible

Cycle Oregon

- Cycle Oregon will set up camp at Western Oregon University for its annual weekend ride Friday through Sunday.

- Cycle Oregon aims to show people different areas of the state as well as support cycling advocacy throughout the state.

- Cycle Oregon gives grants to support cycling projects throughout the state.

- For more information: www.cycleoregon.com.

courses over two days that range from 21 to 74 miles long, ensuring riders of all abilities will have a good experience.

Cycle Oregon has two days of rides planned that

will give cyclists a glimpse of the area.

Saturday will take riders through the Willamette Valley to Buena Vista County Park, Marion, Scio and the Ankeny Wildlife Refuge.

Sunday will see cyclists take a trip through Polk County to Dallas and Falls City as they ride toward the foothills of the Oregon Coast range.

This weekend's ride sold out of spots, a common occurrence for the weekend rides, Graves said.

Organizers hope that the ride shows off the area's natural beauty to people from around the United States and beyond while learning about a region's culture.

"We see how communities are maintaining their small town connections and exploring different econom-

ic strategies," Graves said.

But Cycle Oregon does more than bring tourists to the state.

The group also offers financial support to communities through its community and signature grant programs.

The grant programs are aimed at preserving and supporting community development projects.

Graves said \$62,500 has been invested over the years in Polk and Marion counties.

As cyclists prepare to hit the road, Graves said she hopes both the riders and the towns they visit have a worthwhile experience.

"We have found through the years that one of the things that both riders and community members enjoy the most is meeting people from different places," Graves said.

SPORTS BRIEFS

CYS to host youth football signups

INDEPENDENCE — Central Youth Sports (CYS) will hold football registration Aug. 10-14 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Panther Stadium. Signups will take place at the concession stand.

There will also be an opportunity for registration on Aug. 15 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. CYS youth football is open to students in grades K-6. Cost is \$125 per child.

Rogue Revolution Ride coming

INDEPENDENCE — Space is still available for the 2015 Rogue Revolution Ride on July 19. The 50-mile bike ride begins at Rogue Hop Farms in Independence and travels through a covered bridge, by multiple wineries and Monmouth and Independence. There will be mechanical support and two rest areas that will offer snacks and refreshments. An after party featuring music from Ty Curtis will be thrown for all participants.

The ride begins at 9 a.m.

The event is an Oregon Bicycle Racing Association-sanctioned event, requiring membership to participate. One-day OBRA memberships are \$2 during online registration.

Cost is \$40 online, which closes on July 17. Late registration will be available on July 19 for \$50. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Arthritis Foundation.

For more information: www.riderogue.com.

Signups for basketball camp open

DALLAS — Registration is open for the Dragon Basketball Camp July 13-15.

Dallas girls coach Dave Brautigam and boys coach Trent Schwartz and the coaching staffs will instruct participants on a broad range of topics.

The camp will include focusing on ball handling, shooting, post and guard breakdown moves, defensive positioning and more.

The camp runs from 2 to 6 p.m. each day at the Dallas High School gym and is open for students entering grades four through 12. The gym will be open at 12:30 p.m.

Cost is \$50 per person.

Registration forms can be found online at www.ci-dallas.or.us/index.aspx?NID=425.

For more information: David Brautigam, david.brautigam@dallasor.gov or Trent Schwartz, trent.schwartz@dsd2.org.

Serve: Players will offer tennis camp

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"We're excited to get to compete," Christensen said. "If we do well, we'll get to take this one more step, which would be absolutely exciting. To be honest, I think we continue to get better."

While they experience success on the court, Christensen and Cole aren't just content in having fun. They're looking to pass their passion on to a new generation of players.

While Christensen and Cole look to quench their competitive thirst, they share another common goal — helping others learn about tennis.

For Christensen, that calling has been every bit as strong as her desire to keep playing.

Christensen ran a youth tennis program for Kids, Inc. for 25 years and served as an

assistant coach for Dallas High's boys tennis team during the spring.

"I think tennis is a great sport for kids," Christensen said.

Christensen and Cole will offer a kids tennis camp Aug. 10-15 to help youth players regardless of skill level.

The camp costs \$30 plus two new cans of tennis balls, and is open to students in grades 1-12 (Contact Christensen at 503-507-9303 for more information).

Christensen and Cole are keen on getting players of any age started.

Christensen, Cole, Bibler and a host of others meet each Wednesday at 6 p.m. at Roger Jordan Community Park to play.

Christensen said the public is always invited to join them, whether you're a seasoned veteran or picking up a racket for the

first time.

"We rotate people in," Christensen said. "Anyone can come play with us. It makes it easy for people who may not know many people who play tennis."

Just be ready to receive a few friendly tips.

"I have a real big problem wanting to coach everyone I play with," Christensen said with a laugh.

Christensen and Cole have seen firsthand the power of tennis to not only stay in shape but create new friendships on and off the court. It's why sharing that joy with as many people as they can has become their most important goal going forward.

"It's such a great sport," Christensen said. "That's why I love to get people involved because it's a forever sport. It's something you can play your entire life and have fun doing it."



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer
Alice Bibler (right) and Petra Cole are two of the numerous players who meet each Wednesday at 6 p.m. to play tennis at Roger Jordan Community Park.