

# q&a: Megan Kearney

**Coach and Founder of Go Mama Go!**

By Laura Purcell

You can find Megan Kearney in her bliss on Sunday mornings. As the sun rises, Megan and 20 other women hoot and holler on their bikes, disturbing no one but the cows on the farm-studded back roads of Harford County, MD, just north of Baltimore. Megan founded the race team Go Mama Go! in 2007 to train women to compete in triathlons and other multi-sport events. Certified by the USA Triathlon League, "Coach K." helps women make themselves stronger through running, biking and swimming competitively, and is redefining what a triathlete looks like.



Megan racing at IronGirl.



### LEARN BALANCE IN THE WATER

You'll stop struggling and swimming will become effortless.

### BE FLEXIBLE

Sometimes stressing over your workout and getting it done will have the opposite effect.

### INCLUDE YOGA AND STRENGTH TRAINING

Both are invaluable tools for injury prevention and performance.

KEVIN KEARNEY

## You started competing in triathlons 10 years ago—what inspired you?

Triathlon was an easy progression; I was a swim coach who had just wrapped up my college sport career. I enjoyed mountain biking and running. Putting the three together in a race worked perfectly for me.

## What's the story behind Go Mama Go! ?

When I started triathlon, I was cool with training and racing alongside competitive men. That was me. For other women, I learned that wasn't necessarily the case. I started to meet more and more women who were intimidated and held themselves back due to fear and stereotypes of what a triathlete should be or look like. In 2007, some of my group fitness clients asked me what I was doing to stay in shape post-baby. When I said triathlons, they were intrigued and asked if I would train them. The rest is history.

## How many races do you compete in a year?

I try to compete in at least one triathlon race a year. That said, there have been years—between babies, jobs and house renovations—that I have taken off from racing, but I always continue to train. It's in my blood and I need it for my own peace of mind. This year, I'm racing early so that I can focus on the team for the most important races. I will probably do some running races and a couple of rides if I can, but I will stay flexible. That's the name of the game in motherhood!

## What's your morning routine?

My swim partner motivates me. Knowing that someone is waiting on you to show up is a huge motivator. Most mornings we are up at 4:30, so that I can coach the team at 6am I am also motivated just to get ahead of the day—working out before everyone else is up just makes me feel like I got my time in, so I can say, "Now what can I do for you?"

## How do you unwind?

My goal is inner calm, so I can be focused and present for my children and my husband. I enjoy reading books and listening to music. Massage, meditation, prayer and journaling help center me. I like the outdoors and hiking. I really enjoy yoga and am in the process of getting certified to teach.

## What's your routine the night before a race?

I usually try to get in a little activity on the actual racecourse. I grab a light carb meal with lean protein, do a bike check, lay out my clothes and finish with mental visualization and relaxation drills. Zen racing is the key—visualizing the race start to finish and overcoming any obstacles you can imagine helps keep race anxiety at bay.

## How do you keep up your training with three kids?

My husband and I are experts at coordinating schedules so that we can fit in training, and

we alternate mornings. We even use our iCal to schedule the training. Once a week, a relative watches the kids so we can do one workout together. I do the rest with the kids in tow or indoors. I invested in a trainer for my bike when I first started and it is the greatest! I also have a treadmill and I weight train at home. It's not as hard as everyone thinks and even the kids do it with me. The biggest step is making it a priority. Once you make that commitment, you just find the time to do it.

## What advice do you have for someone who's not terribly athletic but interested in a new challenge?

Anyone can do this and it doesn't take giving up your life to do so. Taking your time, learning the skills and balancing it with your life will not only help you cross the finish line, it will give you fitness for a lifetime.

## What's next?

Getting ready for an exciting season with a projected team of 75 women, and we've been really fortunate to catch the eye of some national sponsors. We also hope to host our first children's event this summer. Personally, I will *finally* be racing in the Eagleman Half Ironman in Cambridge, MD. An injury and a pregnancy deferred my registration for two years—this year, I am going to make it!