

Age Group Profile

Photography by Action Sports International



SWEET FINISH: Rider wins her category in Kona.

Rider achieves her Hawaiian dream

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Using sheer determination and an unwavering belief, age group triathlete Teresa Rider fulfilled her dream at the Ironman World Championship in October. At 48, she won the 45-49 world title in Kona for 2006—after eight attempts at the event and some big life changes.

"I wanted to win this year more than ever—part of the reason was the fact I had come second in 2000, 2003 and 2005 and to be honest being bridesmaid was starting to grate on my nerves, but also because over the past two years there have been some very personal and difficult challenges to face which in the end made me all the more determined," Rider said.

One of those challenges was her decision to leave a secure, well paid job. Rider, who worked with Sydney law firm Baker McKenzie for 20 years, recently quit her job as an IT trainer to devote more time to triathlon and to embark on a new career in health and well-being—a move that has paid all sorts of dividends.

Rider attributes many things to her win—including taking a year out from the sport in 2004 and doing other events like Trailwalker and the Six Foot Track and Gold Coast marathons, which instilled fresh energy and motivation. But the one thing that took her to the next level was life change. "There is a quote which was passed on to me by a good friend and Sydney triathlon coach, Kristian Manietta. Benjamin Franklin's definition of insanity is 'doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results', and this applies to every aspect of life."

Rider believes age-group athletes must balance a unique mix of life stresses to succeed, and that makes achievements like hers all the sweeter. Since getting into the sport more than 10 years ago, she's amassed all sorts of training knowledge that she's happy to share.

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—Teresa Rider

"As an age-grouper there are pressures. You have life's unexpected hardships, you have your training as well as a full-time job because unfortunately we have to work to pay for what is a very expensive sport," she said. "But when something happens in your life it forces you to reflect and make changes—you need to turn it into a positive and that is exactly what I did. I am very proud of that."

It has certainly been a long journey for Rider. The Englishwoman began triathlons in 1991, and

like most of her friends from the mother country swimming was not a strong point.

"With my partner at the time, we saw an ad in a sports magazine and we just did it," she said. "We were both looking for a new challenge. I could not swim; I could only do breaststroke. That did not feel good when you looked at all the other Aussies doing freestyle. Freestyle is a stroke that looks cool—and breaststroke, well, that doesn't look so cool."

But they leapt into the sport on hired bikes and shortly got hooked.

"We hired a bike on the Saturday, and as far as running was concerned I was a sprinter at school," she recalled. "We did another short one and then another, and I was still doing breaststroke in the swim. We really got into it—I bought a bike and learnt to swim."

Even the most optimistic person would struggle to predict these were the beginnings of a future Ironman world champion. The step up to Ironman came in 1993.

"In 1992 we were at the Nepean, one of Sydney's most popular and ancient races, and we were talking to this guy who was going up to race Ironman. We went up and watched, got inspired and were on the start line in 1993," she said. "The first one, I remember being really scared and nervous. Back

then, we were seeking advice from Kieran Barry. He was an Olympic distance coach and Ironman was as new to him as it was to us. Therefore my longest ride was 125km and my longest run was 25km."

She believes it's important to enjoy your first Ironman and not put any expectations on yourself short of finishing.

"I remember it being a great experience. I still have my photo from the finish—you never forget your first. Which is why I think you should just enjoy the first one, go in with no expectations," she said. "Just enjoy the experience, the emotion. Nearly every Ironman I have said I will never do this again. Then hours after you are thinking of ways you can improve. I have never had a baby so I kind of associate it with that. Women must be in terrible pain, but they go back for more."

Rider's memory has worked wonders, deadening the pain enough to help her rack up 18 Ironman finishes. "I am up to about 18 now—eight Hawaii, one Germany, two UK's and seven Forsters. It is amazing how quickly they build up," she said.

Over the years she's also worked out how to fit training around a demanding work schedule, slotting in the swims, rides and runs before and after office time.

"During my corporate life with Baker's, my hours were flexible. I was able to do all my training before work," she said. "My alarm would go off 5am every morning for years—I would do a run, bike or swim or even swim/run before work and then start at 10am. I tried to do all of my training in the morning and not have any in the evening. It is hard to train after a full day of work. I would run 30km before work and sit on the bus and all I could think about was having a

nap. And the only thing that saved me was that one cappuccino upon arrival to work."

With the benefit of hindsight, she's changing some things these days. "Now I would not do 30km before work, you can do double runs," she said. "I started to run home from work. Why spend 45 minutes on a bus when you can run home and get one of your runs in? Things like that—all those years teach you different ways to do things."

Those years of 5am starts got Rider thinking—and she decided that to make the jump up another step on the podium she needed to train like a pro. She had a training block in Boulder, Colorado, in the U.S. this year and credits her world champion >>

Photography by Jason Davis



ALL SMILES NOW: Rider runs in Sydney.

Teresa Rider

Main image by Jason Davis

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status to that stint. She also brought a new coach on board—Sydney's Mark Newton, who also has coached the likes of multiple world champion Peter Robertson—and credits him with a new training approach that has helped her achieve success in the last two years.

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"I took some time off work this year and trained in Boulder—being away from work and those difficult personal challenges enabled me to eat properly, getting the recovery. I was able to take power naps and eat more regularly and it made a big difference," she said. "I think the different preparation was the key, and mentally believing that winning was achievable. Race day is all about believing you can do it, drawing on your mental strengths."

And while that training block may have been the final puzzle piece she needed to win in Hawaii, Rider now sees that the consistent training over 10 years was just as critical.

"I was very fortunate last year to take time out and it certainly has contributed to my successes these past two years but when I look back over my triathlon career, I recognize that I was consistent with my training, I put in the hard work and I had the 'never give up' attitude," she said. "And the person who helped me do that was my former partner, now level 2 coach, John Hill, who coached me for over five years. We all know we need someone to kick us out of bed when we feel like being lazy, provide support and encouragement."

Knowing she cannot compete in Ironman forever, Rider is determined to give back to the sport that has given her so much. And her crusade is to raise the profile of age group athletes.

"At 40 I won the Forster half outright," she said. "Age group athletes do not get enough coverage. We are the backbone of the sport; we are the reason the sport is growing. There are people out there achieving amazing things. Chris McCormack and Michellie Jones are amazing athletes, the *crème de la crème* and people to look up to, but they need us. Without us there would be no sport." 🏃



OUT TRAINING: Rider enjoying her scenic runs.

Teresa Rider