



» Profile «

JESSIE DONAVAN

With three kids (ages 5, 8 and 9) and a full-time job as an enrollment analyst at the University of Vermont, Jessie Donavan isn't your typical Ironman champion. She never swam growing up, never owned a bike and didn't run cross-country or track. In her first triathlon, she swam breaststroke, was last out of the water and rode a mountain bike. But given her background as a competitive Nordic skier, she always believed in herself as an athlete. Turns out she was right: Under the guidance of QT2 Systems coach Jesse Kropelnicki, she finished in 9:24 in her first-ever Ironman (Arizona, 2011), and she's been on fire ever since, placing second at Ironman St. George and winning both Ironman Lake Placid and Mont-Tremblant this year. Next up, she'll tackle Ironman Cozumel, with her sights set on Kona 2013. **By Jené Shaw**

» Early last year I sat down with my husband and remember saying, "I really, really want to do an Ironman this year." Of course they were all sold out. I realized if I could get my pro card I could get into one. So I did Mooseman 70.3, Rhode Island 70.3—at both of those I was the top amateur by 10 or 15 minutes—and the New York City Triathlon. I got my pro card and registered for Ironman Arizona.

» I feel like an age-grouper because I can relate to them—I've got the kids and the job. In Arizona, the pros were all calm, cool and collected. I wanted to be like, "I'M ABOUT TO DO AN IRONMAN!" and be around other first-timers. Even at the finish I wanted to yell, "CAN YOU BELIEVE I JUST DID THAT?"

» In all my hours in the pool, I used to think to myself: "Maybe I could win an Ironman. And in my speech I'm going to say, 'I don't do flip-turns!'" and give hope to everyone out there.

» I like living in Vermont to keep triathlon and my other world a little bit separate. The kids' school is 1 mile from the house, the pool is 1 mile from the house—I'm trying to set up a life that's as efficient as possible. I can swim during their swim team and I'm often running with at least one of the kids, sometimes all of them, biking next to me.

» In 1999, my husband and I ran the Boston Marathon as bandits. I had a bit of a stomach bug leading into the marathon, so I drank jugs of water to make sure I wasn't dehydrated. About 7 miles in, I said to my husband, "My legs feel really weird." I remember going by Wellesley [College] and I couldn't hear the people screaming, I couldn't bend my legs. I finally got to the finish and I started throwing up. It turned out I was having exercise-induced kidney failure. I was in the hospital for eight days, and I couldn't even bend my legs for about a month.

» I get a lot of women who say things to me like, "How do you find the time? Who's taking care of your kids?" They don't come out and say it, but they're definitely judging me. Even before I had kids, I would say it's important not to live vicariously through your kids and to try to live your own dreams. One of the things I tell my kids is, "You guys see how hard I work. If you want something that bad—if you really want to be a professional soccer player—it doesn't just happen. But if you really want it to, you can make it happen." If I didn't have my success to share with them, I don't think those conversations would be as valuable. **❶**

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