

The three disciplines: Family, triathlon and work

Profile:

Marta

Family status: Married, mother of two: girl 6 years and boy 8 years

Agegroup: 35-40 years

Triathlons: 7 sprints, 4 olympic, 1 70.3

Training: 14-17 hours/week in high season 10-12 hours over the winter

Occupation: laser engineer

Working hours: 80% (=100%:)), Monday and Friday afternoons off

Here am I, picking up my race number for my first ever 70.3 race (Balatonman, Fured, Hungary). Looking around me, the usual feeling of being inadequate is running across my mind and I am asking myself, what am I doing here. Dragging the children halfway across Europe to cheer for me. I could not leave them behind and now I cannot let them down. After struggling with a total of 50 kg luggage through the bus, train and airport with the two of them, I already feel I have finished a race. Not even mentioning the stares I get for the 'corpse-carrier', as I call it, which I got from my husband as a present to get the bike safely to Hungary. This proves to be a problem for our favorite airline, let's call it 'AwkwardJet' for advertisement reasons. We nearly miss the plane. The kids taking all obstacles with calmness...me, trying to pretend the same.

We arrive to Hungary safely. My 2 meter tall brother manages to fold himself into the drivers seat of his two-door car, which now is entirely taken up by the corpse-transporter. I head off with my dad to see the family quickly and to drop the kids off at my sisters. They will come midway through the race, when I need them the most.

Settling into the camping just 3 km from the race, bike assembled, spare bits attached, actually ready to go for the thing for which I have been preparing for for so long. After moving country, starting a new job, finishing my PhD I was well ready for a new challenge. We kind of agreed, with a friend jokingly, when I left from my previous work, that we will meet in Kona in 2019. So three years ago I completed my first sprint triathlon over a course of a day with resting...maybe even sleeping and eating in between the three disciplines. I was not strictly speaking out of shape after having the kids, but I was not in my fittest form either. All I had was flexibility from the yoga I was practicing religiously and my every day mountain biking to work. I also did a few short runs per week, but each time I broke into a sprint I felt my insides traveling South. There was a lot to be done.

So we moved to Switzerland for my job. I am a physicist, working as a laser engineer. Working hours are a bit varied, but this means, that additional activities and increased training can also be made up for at other times. 80% allows me to be more with the kids as well as to get the house into order before the weekend starts. A nanny takes care of the kids for three days of the week. Well, saying the least, she think we are a bit 'special'. The magic English word, when one wants to be polite, rather than rude. Anyway, with target in mind we were looking for a place to rent here, which was the right distance from work to keep my cycling going. I even purchased an old racing bike and some books on triathlons. At least I could learn, that brick training does not mean, that you have to put a few bricks into your rucksack, before you head out cycling. My first sprint in Uster (2012) went well. I came in the midfield and my transitions were extremely fast. Here you are! One advantage of being a mum, that one learns to put three pairs of shoes on as fast as possible to get the the bus on time. One pair is not even a challenge any more. My fitness was getting better and better and gave me extra motivation to carry on. But to ever get to even 'half way to the possibility to get to Kona' I needed to train more. So where can we find the time? I cannot drive, so I always cycle everywhere. I started to find longer routes to get home after work. If the kids were out on their usual activities, then I even stuck a little run on the

end. I jogged to the shops with the kids cycling beside, which by the way they really enjoy. We got them a bikecomputer, so they could tell me how disappointing I was and push me to go harder. Kids love to be their parents' bosses. We would run around the school ground: me doing the 1km loop my daughter joining for the last 200m sprint, while Benjamin measuring the splits. We bought two tandems, so we could each take a child and go for longer rides, without being worried about them getting tired. Some of my morning rides would be replaced by running to work. I could arrange with the local gym for an early start over the winter to get to work still on time. I would cycle everywhere. But my swim was still miserable and I could only swim breaststroke. So while others were cheering beside the lake each time it was announced, that the water is freezing cold and we can use the magic suits, which makes us float, I was reluctant to put on my stray jacket, which I could hardly move my legs and made my kicks, almost above the water useless. This why I joined the Baden TriClub. I could already swim about 1.5km in crawl learning it over a weekend course and from books, practicing the exercises, while the kids had their swim lessons over the weekend. The TriClub taken another evening away from home, which my husband has covered with the kids, but it was also time for me to have a quick chat with the nanny on the train to Baden about the events of the week with the kids. I was scared at first. I have never swam 3.8km in almost one go, let alone doing it in front crawl. The first few weeks were more survival than swim, but I soon got the hang of it with the help of the veterans, who are very patient and helpful. For me this was not the slow lane and for sure it is not beginners. Some of these guys were triathloning before I was in school. I look forward to the Wednesday night now. This is true 'ME TIME'. I even have a chicken kebab on the way home.

But you asking now, how about the race. So for the first time ever I slipped into the wetsuit with confidence about swimming the whole distance with crawl. I actually exited the water 5 minutes before my estimated time and although I still had issues with swimming straight towards the buoys - which by the way were for some strange reason chosen to be white- I was well chuffed to have made it. The depo area was tight, but I quickly ripped of the suit, run to the loo, took a gel, put my shoes on and was ready to go for the bikeride. I enjoyed it thoroughly. Lots of joking and flirting along the way, giving me a chance to speak Hungarian, which gave me boost. At around 3 hours, me blasting along the road I was trying to remind myself, that there is still a long way to go, but I would not listen. The bike was hilly and windy and it was not so easy to make up downhill, due to the road quality, but who cares. The atmosphere was great. At the last roundabout I spotted a huge banner with my name on, with what seemed like about 20 people shouting my name as well. Apparently my family arrived only about 3 minutes before. I came in smiling and with some happy tears exactly on target and was ready to run. 6 laps with family cheering at each round. Should be easy. The legs were fine, but I was too carried away. I run the first 7km about 5 minutes faster than planned and suddenly I got dizzy..very dizzy. I told myself, that I told myself before, that I should be wiser, but it was too late. I started to walk. Guys walked past me telling me, that I was supposed to run. Ladies would be a bit more positively encouraging. At the next station I took some caffeine gel, drunk and was determined to start to run again by the time I pass the family again. They must already be worried. However my instructions were, that however 'SH*T' I look like, they should tell me, that I am doing great. My daughter confessed afterwards, that round when I got dizzy, I looked blue on the face, old and all my veins were sticking out. Must have been a sight. In the end I sprinted through the finish line at 6:05 minutes into the race. Not fantastic, but not bad for the first time. To my surprise I was 4th in my agegroup with the best bikesplit and 11th in the overall national ranking of the race. Then after downing about 2 liter of fluid off to the beach with the family! I was only passenger on the pedal boat though! I did not regret to take the kids with me and the preparation and support was a real bonding time also for my family at home in Hungary.

So what is Next? XTERRA, here I come. This year I would like to run through the finish gate before they deflate it. Still it was nice last year to be patted on the shoulder by a 65 year old, who finished at the same time and then enjoy the curtain-less mixed shower with all the beer bellies.