



Teaching lessons on and off the sporting field

By Keith Bourke

A Mayo school teacher is blazing a trail in the ultra-competitive world of duathlons and triathlons. Killala woman Lorraine Carey has established herself as one of the best in her field after capturing gold in Powerman Long Distance Duathlon World Championships in Switzerland. The Liquid Motion club member was the quickest in her 35-39 Age Group and crossed the line in 8 hours 8 minutes and 15 seconds — almost 20 minutes ahead of second place and almost an

hour ahead of the third placed athlete. Lorraine has been one of the strongest athletes on the domestic duathlon scene for a number of years and was the clear winner of the 2017 Duathlon National Series. She also finished second at last year's Duathlon National Championships. Lorraine is proof that it is never too late to come to sport and flourish in a chosen discipline. "I wasn't into sport in national school at all but I played hockey in Gortnor Abbey and thoroughly enjoyed that. I wasn't involved in any sport then for many

years until about 2010 when I gave up smoking, started running and learned to swim properly. After that, I bought my first bike and the rest is history," she told the

Western People. About three to four years ago she really stepped up her interest and training and some astonishing results soon followed. "I took part in triathlons first and only did my first duathlon in 2015 but I knew straight away that duathlons would be my favourite from then on. They still are," said Lorraine.

Spurred on by her husband, Lorraine was bitten by the triathlon and duathlon bug. "My husband got me interested in triathlons but once I had completed my first one I was completely addicted. He also entered me into my first Adventure Race and I have to say they are the most fun. They are so tough compared to triathlons but you get a great sense of accomplishment when you cross the finish line, just to have made it up and down the mountains and bogs."

She still recalls her first triathlon and how it whetted her appetite for more. "It was the Salmon Run Triathlon in Ballina. We had a practice run of the swim and I was the last person down the river hanging on to the side of David Horan's kayak for a few breaks along the way. I was delighted to actually cross the finish line on the track in Belleek and from that moment I knew that this was something I would be doing again," said Lorraine. The gruelling nature of the events Lorraine competes in would make many wince but she said that doesn't compare to the hours of intensive training required to get your body in peak condition for the challenges ahead.



Mayo woman Lorraine Carey has blazed a trail on the Ironman circuit in recent years.

"The events themselves are fine, it is the training and preparation that can be gruesome, day in day out it requires discipline on a consistent basis. You have to be prepared to put in hours of training if you want to see progressive improvement," she stated. "Training can vary from 15 hours a week up to 30 hours a week when Ironman training. My diet could be a lot better. I don't eat any junk food but I am not the best for eating proper dinners either. I eat a lot of eggs, bread, cereal and smoothies. I like to grab something and go," Lorraine added. Lorraine has won close to 30 titles and races over the last few years with the World Duathlon gold her crowning achievement. "The world duathlon was the toughest race I have ever competed in. The hills in Switzerland were incredibly tough," she remarked.

A teacher in St Joseph's Girls Secondary School in Castlebar, Lorraine encourages her students to get involved in sport. "They wouldn't know about all the racing I do most weekends but they would know about the national or international races. They had a lovely reception for me at school after I won the gold world medal. "I try to encourage them to get involved in any sport as I truly believe that sport enhances all aspects of their lives and gives them a better overall balance. I think it is really important for them socially, mentally and physically. They form long-term friendships with their peers and I think it gives them a platform to express themselves in a different way," she commented. Lorraine's exploits have brought out the very best in one of her students who is

now following in her footsteps. "One of my students is Maeve Gallagher. I brought

her to her first triathlon in first year. She is in Transition Year now and is Junior

All-Ireland Champion and was named Junior Triathlete of the Year." Sport has made a huge difference to Lorraine's life. "It has given me a new lease of life. I absolutely love it. I find that getting out in the fresh air for a run or a cycle clears your head," she stated. Lorraine hopes to utilise her experiences to coach young people and may tackle a stand-alone marathon in the future. "I would like to someday coach young athletes as they really are the future. At some stage, I might concentrate on running for a year and do a stand-alone Marathon. It would be interesting to see how that would go as at the minute I use running races as training after a long bike to get used to running on tired legs to mimic the triathlons and duathlons." While currently laid low by injury Lorraine hopes to be soon back on the duathlon and triathlon circuit doing what she does best. "I don't have anything on the cards for this year as I am recovering from surgeries (non-sports related). I am just trying to get back to some easy training, nothing too strenuous yet. I will probably look at something for next year just to have something to aim for. I can't wait to get back racing and doing what I love."

Lorraine Carey says sport has given her a new lease of life.



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Lorraine Carey pictured with her proud father John after receiving a Western People Sportstar Award earlier this year.

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