

tri and excel

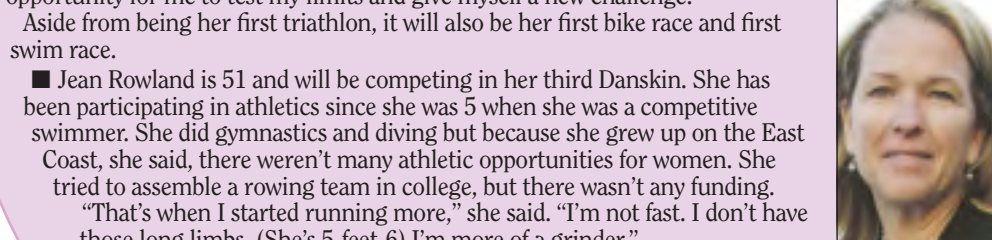
Two women tackle a triathlon, and learn what it takes to make it through the competition



Ande Lowden, 33, trains for a triathlon this summer.

The competitors

■ Andrea "Ande" Lowden is 33 and Sunday's Danskin Women's event will be her first triathlon. She played soccer in high school and also competed in track and field events, shot put and discus. "I have run, I would say, on and off since college," she said. "In October of 2004 I ran my first marathon." Then her foot got in the way. Two bunion surgeries, one in late 2005 and the other in the spring of 2006, curtailed her running even though it removed the pain. ("My whole body would ache even just going out for a mile.") "I decided I needed a shake up. I was kind of putting a lot of time in running, and I was looking to shed a few pounds and it wasn't happening." She dropped in on a spin class, became a regular, and heard all her classmates talking about what a wonderful experience last year's triathlon had been. "And so I just thought, 'Well, this is a perfect opportunity for me to test my limits and give myself a new challenge.'"



Rowland

Aside from being her first triathlon, it will also be her first bike race and first swim race. ■ Jean Rowland is 51 and will be competing in her third Danskin. She has been participating in athletics since she was 5 when she was a competitive swimmer. She did gymnastics and diving but because she grew up on the East Coast, she said, there weren't many athletic opportunities for women. She tried to assemble a rowing team in college, but there wasn't any funding. "That's when I started running more," she said. "I'm not fast. I don't have those long limbs. (She's 5-feet-6) I'm more of a grinder." She runs four days a week, bikes when she doesn't run, plays competitive tennis several days each week, and fast-walks when her knee hurts too much for running. She had her second knee surgery a year ago and has recently returned to running but it's still painful for the first half mile.

"I would love to do a bigger triathlon, but with my knee ... I think the run would just kill me."

the training

When she did her first Danskin Triathlon three years ago, Jean Rowland went with her best friend. "We didn't really know what we were doing. We would bike, we would swim, we would do everything separately. And we really didn't follow any manuals. Now I'm much smarter about it. And it's just the fear, the first time. You get over the fear. You look across the water, it looks really long."

What has made a big difference for her is the early morning boot camp training at Anchor Fitness in Racine. The run starts at 5 a.m., and she's not a morning person. Aside from the run there are a variety of activities which vary by the day. She's also learning about what she needs to work on to improve her triathlon performance. "The bike to the run (transition) — they call it the brick or the wall," she said. "It's really really difficult, and if you can get past the first half-mile, you're good."

"Well, I like my life and my personal life and the people in it so I vowed this will not consume me," Ande Lowden said. Although some people in her life would say it has.

"I think I have taken this more seriously than the marathon." She was 28 then. "My whole

thing was I wanted to complete a marathon before I was 30."

She's at the gym at 5 a.m. Monday to Friday, and if she doesn't finish the workout she has scheduled, she'll go back later. She rides with a friend of her boyfriend, and his love of the sport has helped push her. Friday evenings, Saturday and Sunday she tries to get outside, perhaps to bike.

"Usually even on my day off I'll do some light walking," she said. "I give myself a day off when my body is screaming at me."

That isn't necessarily pain but fatigue. She had recently planned a walk with a friend followed by a jog, but when the walk was over she didn't feel energetic enough for the jog so she didn't do it. It can sometimes be hard, she said, to separate real fatigue from mental sloth.

In 1994, the British Journal of Sports

Medicine published a study of triathlon injuries. Overuse was the top cause, although depending on the study the precise site varied from, for example, foot and ankle to knee.

There's no question that overuse is still the main reason for injuries in triathletes.

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what it is

The Chicagoland Danskin Womens Triathlon on Sunday is a sprint event consisting of a half-mile swim, 12-mile bike ride and 3-mile run. The event begins at 7 a.m. at the Lakeview Rec Plex, 9900 Terwall Terrace in Pleasant Prairie.

More information on the Chicagoland Danskin is available at: <http://www.danskin.com/chicagolandmain.html>

By contrast the Spirit of Racine race coming up on July 19 is a 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike ride, and 13.1-mile run. There are also sprint events, including a women-only sprint, offered as part of the Racine triathlon weekend. More information about the Racine triathlon events is available at: <http://www.spiritofracinetri.com>



A wave of female triathletes dash into Lake Michigan as the men wait their turn at North Beach Park during the 2007 Spirit of Racine Triathlon.

the experts

- Dr. Andy Peterson, pediatric and sports medicine fellow at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics.
- Dr. Scott M. Dresden, regional director of occupational health for the south region of Aurora Health Care.
- Dr. Anne Z. Hoch, director of the womens sports medicine program and associate professor in the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin.
- Dr. David Geier, director of the sports medicine program at the Medical University of South Carolina.

what to eat

Ande Lowden doesn't stick to a specific diet — high carbohydrate or high protein or anything like that while training. She said she tries to eat a balanced diet and takes a multivitamin. Dinner is typically a salad with fish, chicken or lean beef. "I consume massive amounts of water."

She'll eat high-calorie foods but in moderation, and she won't give up caffeine.

She doesn't use any of the special sports foods on the market except on the day of a race. When she was running marathons she tried cutting energy bars into chunks, but she couldn't get used to eating while exercising.

She uses water instead of commercial sports drinks, but if she feels the need for an extra boost she'll dissolve a Lipton drink packet in her water bottle. "Usually it's just water — or diet Coke."

▶ Do you need special equipment for a triathlon? — **4B.**

▶ Wrapping it up — **4B.**

Instead, she buys drink packets which contain vitamin C.

Breakfast is typically a shake which she makes with soy milk, protein

powder and a banana. Even though she doesn't eat before her morning training, she can't see not eating on the day of the race so she'll have a shake that morning, too, and in her water bottle she'll put some energy drink.

She admitted that her knowledge of nutrition is lacking, but she also isn't sure that she wants to know. In her first Danskin triathlon she was in the top quarter of her age group, and her goal is to do better there.

There's a great deal of information available about nutrition, but it's not getting to the right place. When Dr. Anne Z. Hoch, did a study with colleagues, they found that more than

50 percent of women in a Milwaukee triathlon club were not getting enough to eat. On average each woman was eating about 500 fewer calories than she should have, and that deficit affects athletic performance as well as menstruation, Hoch said. About 30 percent of the women had some history of menstrual irregularities. Calorie deficits may also lead to reduced bone density, but the women studied were fine, she said, probably because of the exercise.

Also notable was the group's expected knowledge. "The average education level of this group was a master's degree, and most of them were in the health profession," Hoch said.

Caloric deficit can be difficult to diagnose because there is no weight loss; your body resets its metabolism. Fatigue is typical, she said, but it can be hard to assign a cause because it may be the result of thyroid problems or a lack of sleep.

What athletes eat and drink is also as important as how much. Immediately after training, one should eat, Hoch said, and the meal should have a 3-to-1 ratio of carbohydrates to protein so your body can recover quickly and you can train well the next day.

Eating before races is necessary. "That's important for anyone who's just

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