

She's off and running... and swimming and cycling and skiing

by Lisa Timpf

The Hawaii Ironman Triathlon sounds like something you'd only want to do once—if at all.

Comprising a 2.4 mile swim, a 116 mile bike ride, and a 26.2 mile run, the Triathlon is obviously not a task to be undertaken by the faint-hearted, or the unfit.

Dalhousie University Masters' Physiology student Patti Clune has been there once—and hopes to do it again next year.

Clune became involved in the event as a consequence of a combination of three factors. Her graduate advisor at Dal, Arend Bonen, was doing a study on reproductive hormone changes as a result of physical training. The project required subjects to run marathon distances, and Clune, as a consequence of becoming involved in the experiment, began serious training for running.

Already involved in cycling and swimming, she now had the three necessary skills for the Triathlon.

A second factor in becoming involved was the media coverage of the event. A third was the involvement of area athletes Dave Currie and John Carson in training for the event.

Clune's decision to enter the Ironman resulted in a training regimen involving, during the summer, eight hours a day of physical activity: cycling from 5-9 am, swimming from 11 am to 1 pm, back on the bike from 5-7 pm, and off for a run from 7-9 at night.

To some people not involved in endurance events, it would seem that insanity is a necessary prerequisite for involvement in the Triathlon and similar events.

"Triathletes as a group are perceived as being 'different' by a lot of people," Clune said. "Some athletes do find that it can really influence family life and relationships because of the amount of dedication and training required."

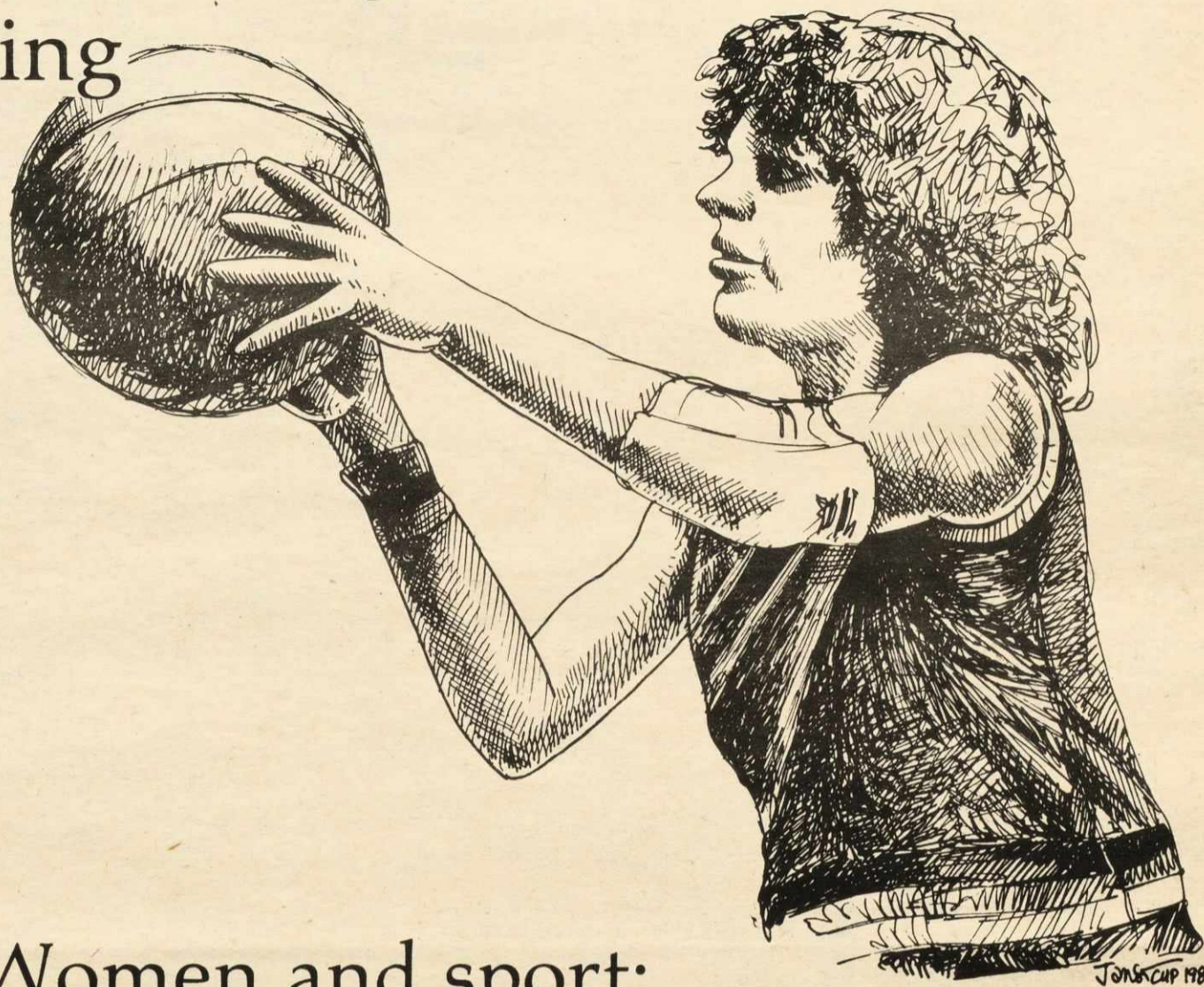
Many of the participants, however, don't really think that what they're doing is either obsessive or spectacular. "Most of them downplay it," noted Clune. "The image you get of the whole thing from the media isn't necessarily reflective of the participants' feelings."

"There's a lot of camaraderie when you're running back in the pack. Most people are there for the recreation aspects. It's sort of like a carnival atmosphere."

Being a woman involved in what many would perceive as an odd or unique activity for women hasn't caused any problems for Patti.

"There's a lot of support and encouragement for women in the event," said Clune. "The only thing is that there are no changing facilities, but it's no big deal to pull on your riding shorts over your swim suit."

"It's sometimes hard to get equipment



Women and sport: Some questions of imbalance

by Lisa Timpf

Women, as a group, have not had equal access to sport nor has society promoted their participation in a manner equal to the encouragement given to males.

In keeping with the progress made in many sectors of society the time has come to strive for equal treatment—encouragement, accessibility and participation—for women and men with regard to sport and physical activity.

(CAHPER Position Paper on Women and Sport, 1978.)

Women's participation in sport has been traditionally restricted due to a number of factors.

Early clothing styles worn by women were extremely restrictive, and it is little wonder that women found it difficult to participate in physical activity while hampered and confined by voluminous clothing. As clothing styles changed, women were gradually more free to participate in sports or activities. Activity, in turn, enabled women to evolve more emancipated clothing styles.

Myths regarding the fragility of the female physiology were also powerful forces in limiting women's sport participation. Fear of damaging the reproductive organs, and hampering child-bearing ability, was a rationale frequently given for restricting women's participation in sport.

Ironically, women often performed quite strenuous tasks around the home, farm or factory which gave the lie to the

observation that they were "too weak" to participate in sport.

The major factor restricting female participation, however, has been and continues to be, social opinions regarding the suitability, or unsuitability, of sport as an activity for women. The apparent conflict between the sport role (suggesting aggression, independence and strength) and the female role (passivity, dependency and weakness) led many people to question why women would want to participate, and whether it was appropriate that they should do so.

It was also feared that sport would have a "masculinizing" effect on women, and would decrease their attractiveness to, or even their attraction towards, men.

Early advocates of women's participation in sport defended its worth on the basis of promoting physical health which would in turn better enable women to carry out their role as wives and mothers. Even some of today's promotion of sport for women is done on the basis of women's sex appeal. Women are 'sold' on sport and activity as a means of losing weight and looking more attractive, rather than being encouraged to see sport as an activity which can be done for its intrinsic value.

The women's liberation movement has been a positive factor in encouraging female involvement in sport. With a heightened awareness that being a woman also meant being a person, who ought therefore to be able to choose from the same range of alternatives as the rest of

society, more women selected sport and physical activity as something they wanted to try.

Yet women are not tully free to choose in the world of sport. People are still prepared to criticize women who don't play the femininity game. Stereotyped preconceptions of which sports are and are not appropriate for female participation still exist. And the sidelines, newspapers, and educational institutions still harbour individuals who are lying in wait to point the accusing finger and holler "lesbian" when a woman appears to deviate too far from the stereotyped view of feminine-appropriate behaviour and activities.

Women in sport continue to be packaged and the consumer demand for the acceptable models continues. The Dallas Cowgirls are better known to many people than the names of top female athletes, and *Sports Illustrated's* bathing suit issue continues to sell three times as well as its other issues throughout the year.

The media, by its selection of which female stars it publicizes and which it ignores, helps to shape society's perceptions of the female athlete, and what she 'ought' to be. Cutesy Chris Everett, for example, receives more press attention than Martina Navratilova, who is less easily packaged in the 'feminine' mold.

Sport has been a bastion of masculinity throughout history. Women were banned as participants and spectators in the early Greek Olympics, and if founder of the modern Olympic Games, Baron de Cou-

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