



MENTALLY TOUGH, PHYSICALLY STRONG

Brad LeRoss

A few years ago I felt out of shape. I didn't have a workout routine or pay attention to my eating, and spent more time at work. I began to feel terrible and tried to convince myself that all I needed to do was just watch what I ate a little closer and I'd drop some weight.

Although I was starting to be concerned, I just wouldn't admit it. In 1997 my father had a massive heart attack, resulting in a heart transplant. I'm happy to say that he's doing well today. In addition to this 'red flag,' I also noticed that activities I once did frequently were becoming harder and resulted in soreness afterwards. In the early 90's, as a weekend ski instructor, I had skied throughout the winter. By the early 2000's this had dropped down to a handful of ski trips a season. I found I couldn't ski as long and my flexibility was terrible. I began to get concerned that I'd injure myself doing something that I'd always enjoyed.

So in the fall of 2003 I signed up for Winter Sports Conditioning to be more prepared for ski season. The class kicked my butt and after a month I began noticing the results. In January 2004 I started working with a personal trainer. I was feeling great and had started to drop some weight. By this time my wife was pregnant and I decided to remain active on my own without having a workout plan at the club. This was a big mistake. By that fall, I'd put on all the weight I'd lost and more.

At work, a few of my colleagues were actively involved in triathlons. I'd listen to their race stories and while I found them interesting, I also thought they were a little nuts. However, they inspired me to join Winter Sports Conditioning once again and get back into shape. In January 2006, I learned about the PRO Sports Club Triathlete Team. Encouraged by my wife and co-workers, I signed up with the intention of trying one race. This was the first time I had a goal other than just exercising and being good to myself. I started attending indoor cycling on a regular basis, continued with Sports Conditioning, and attended Boot Camp. I don't think I had ever run over three miles before Boot Camp. After six months of Sports Conditioning, I considered myself in pretty good shape, but the first few weeks of Boot Camp made me reconsider. The class was intimidating at first, but I stuck with it and started to get to know a few people who ran about the same speed as I did, and started pushing myself to go a little faster.

It wasn't until August 2007 that I signed up for the Beaver Lake Triathlon. I didn't set a land speed record, but I had great time. After this race I knew that I wanted to do more, but that I'd need to focus on my swimming.

I joined the revamped Triathlon Club this year and the new structure of the program was exactly what I needed. I do triathlons because I've found that it gives me a reason to stick to my workout plan, and the races are fun. So far this year I've competed in three triathlons (two sprint distance and one Olympic) and want to do at least two more before the season's over.

There are many reasons that people get involved in triathlons. Some want to do the long distance endurance events like Ironman, others do it for the social aspects, and still others do it just for a reason to stay in shape. I think it's important to find your own reason for doing a tri. It can be intimidating to see some of the very dedicated triathletes with bigger goals and all the latest and greatest equipment, but that shouldn't stop you from giving it a try. You don't have to be ultra competitive to have a great time.

Having family members who have faced some serious health challenges, I often remind myself how lucky I am to be healthy and to take care of myself. While I haven't gone on a hardcore diet plan, I find myself making better decisions about what I eat, drink, and how much sleep I get because I feel so much better.

My favorite quote, which is from Josh Fitchitt (Senior Director, Fitness Services), is "Mentally tough, physically strong." The mental aspect can be the hardest to overcome at times, whether it's the conversation you're having with yourself to go to the gym, or to keep running during hill repeats, or to keep your RPM's up there for the last 45 seconds of a sprint in indoor cycling. This has become my mantra when I push myself to work a little harder.