

AS SEEN IN:



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Training on the Olympic distance suits both of us physically and mentally.

Listening to my body, implementing all the knowledge our chiropractor, Alex Heath, has taught us, and trying to set up effective but accurate training programs. Continuing the routine we already have set in place, but then tuning and reacting myself. You are always on edge for injury in our sport—there are less than a handful who have made it through their careers without incident. You are constantly pushing the envelope to become better, but making that fine line of injury. Because you are continually working on an athlete, you are never in the same place as you were the last time you experienced the training.

You're considered an expert on recovery and tapering. What can you share with the rest of us, especially the older athletes? I work very hard on nutrition. We make sure we "eat to train and eat to rest." We have ATP thiamine for compression boots for after hard workouts. We get two or three massages a week and try to use our chiropractor at least once a week. As for tapering, a lot of necessary techniques really revolve around the body's overall health. Generally you should have a plan that starts about the volume, yet I believe the number one thing in tapering

As the **top-ranked** American

on the ITU circuit last year, two-time Olympian Laura Bennett is the odds-on favorite to represent the U.S. in triathlon at the 2012 Olympic Games in London. She wrapped up the year ranked 10th in the world, was voted the best swimmer in the ITU World Championship Series, won the 2010 USA Triathlon Elite National Championships and was named the 2010 USA Triathlon Elite women's Athlete of the Year.

Her husband, Greg, a veteran ITU short-course triathlete from Australia, finished fourth at Athens. His dual citizenship and release from the Australian triathlon federation last year allows him to compete for a U.S. berth this year.

Despite her past success, Laura (who also barely missed an Olympic medal in 2008 with her fourth-place finish in Beijing) will be 36 in 2012. That means the Bennetts, who live and coach one another in Boulder, Colo., will be paying more attention to recovery and injury prevention than in the past. *Triathlete* spent time with Laura to talk about her plans and challenges for the coming year.

What's motivating you to qualify for yet another Olympic team in 2012? In the first go-around it was maximizing the whole experience, doing everything the Games had to offer. The race was the best we could do on the day, dealing with injury coming in, which is part of the challenge of being a part of the big day. Injury is no excuse, as everyone wants to perform on that day, and if your progress or emotional state of mind is not right and you get injured or sick, well, you didn't have what it takes! I personally feel like I handled my Olympic berth the best I could for my experience level at the time. I learned a lot from the injury I pulled up before the Beijing Games, and that's the reason I am motivated to go for another Games and achieve the pinnacle of my sport, the Olympic gold medal.

Will seeking Olympic triathlon berths on the same team present any special challenges? Greg and I both going for the same Olympic berth on the same team is definitely a positive. Despite the fact that both our countries in the past have been super supportive, allowing the other athletes in, they wouldn't let their own out. So we could never stay together if we both made the team for different countries, which is disruptive to our process, where we are very much a team. When not racing the same races, we have often tried to place peaks at the same time and even race weekends the same to keep the rhythm going throughout the year. Going for the same goal will only make us more focused.

Do you regard your age as a disadvantage? I honestly don't. I think if taken at face value it would be more of an indicator of experience gained. We are in an endurance sport, so the more time spent in it, the fitter and stronger you become. My strengths are speed and power. Greg and I are slow bloomers—we noticed that when we were in grade school, high school and college—which could be our key to our longevity in the sport.

It's become evident that with age, triathletes go long. We love the sport at all distances, but consider ourselves "oceans." We love to race often and love the close battles. As you get older, no doubt you have to restructure your program, as you don't recover as fast, but you do have plenty of muscle memory. The powerful

Laura Bennett's Olympic Odyssey

BY KIM McDONALD PHOTOGRAPHS BY DELLY CARR

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