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# Trying is: Relearning to Persevere

BY KIM R. JESSUM

**A**s the new editor-in-chief of this magazine, I have some big shoes to fill. Each editor-in-chief has been as prestigious as the next. Our last editor, Debbie Weinstein, was responsible for the past year's quality issues. We appreciate her leadership and thank her for her dedication to the magazine.

As I considered what to write in my first column, I thought about what most impresses me about attorneys in Philadelphia. My first thought was how hard-working attorneys also excel in extracurricular activities ranging from sports to music. Although I do not claim to be as talented as many of them, I can certainly relate to the desire to not only do well in one's profession, but to also do well in an activity outside of work.

I have been a long-distance runner since 1999 when my then colleague, Dean Flores, asked if I wanted to run the Zoo Run for Wildlife 10K. Since then, I have run several marathons, and after qualifying and running the Boston Marathon, I needed a new goal. I knew several people who participated in triathlons. Since I had been bike riding for more than a year and could certainly handle any run, I decided a triathlon would be my next race. I registered for the SheRox sprint triathlon, an all-female event, at the end of May and immediately started training.

Training for the biking and running legs of the race was quite easy for me. But the swimming training was a completely different story. Little did I know that being a diver in high school, a lifeguard in my upper teens, and a certified scuba diver did not automatically prepare me for a half-mile swim in the Schuylkill River (yes, the Schuylkill River and it is clean – I am living proof that one can survive after swimming in it).

During my first training swim, I could not swim freestyle for more than two laps at a time without catching my breath. At the time, I thought, how could I ever swim half a mile? I had to keep working at it because I already registered for the race and for me, once I register for a race, I am determined to complete it.

After several weeks of swimming and receiving encouragement from my coworkers at Stradley Ronon - Dave, Caroline and Sheila - I developed the cardio necessary to swim

a half-mile and even more. The next step was to participate in an open-water clinic. I had to abandon the comfort of seeing the line at the bottom of the pool and being able to swim to the side of the pool or stand if I needed a rest. Two weeks before the triathlon, I jumped into the Schuylkill River with about 15 other women for a mock swim event and, to my surprise, I became

anxious and could not catch my breath.

My feelings of anxiety had been present since day one of the swim training, but elevated as race day approached. A woman who I had never met, but was designated as a mentor for the clinic, asked if I was OK and, feeling helpless, I said "no." She offered me a board so I could float and told me it is extremely common for people swimming in open water for the first time to panic. It even happened to her, a competitive swimmer. She calmed me and after a few minutes of rest, I proceeded to swim and complete two-tenths of a mile in the water where I could only see my hands in front of me.

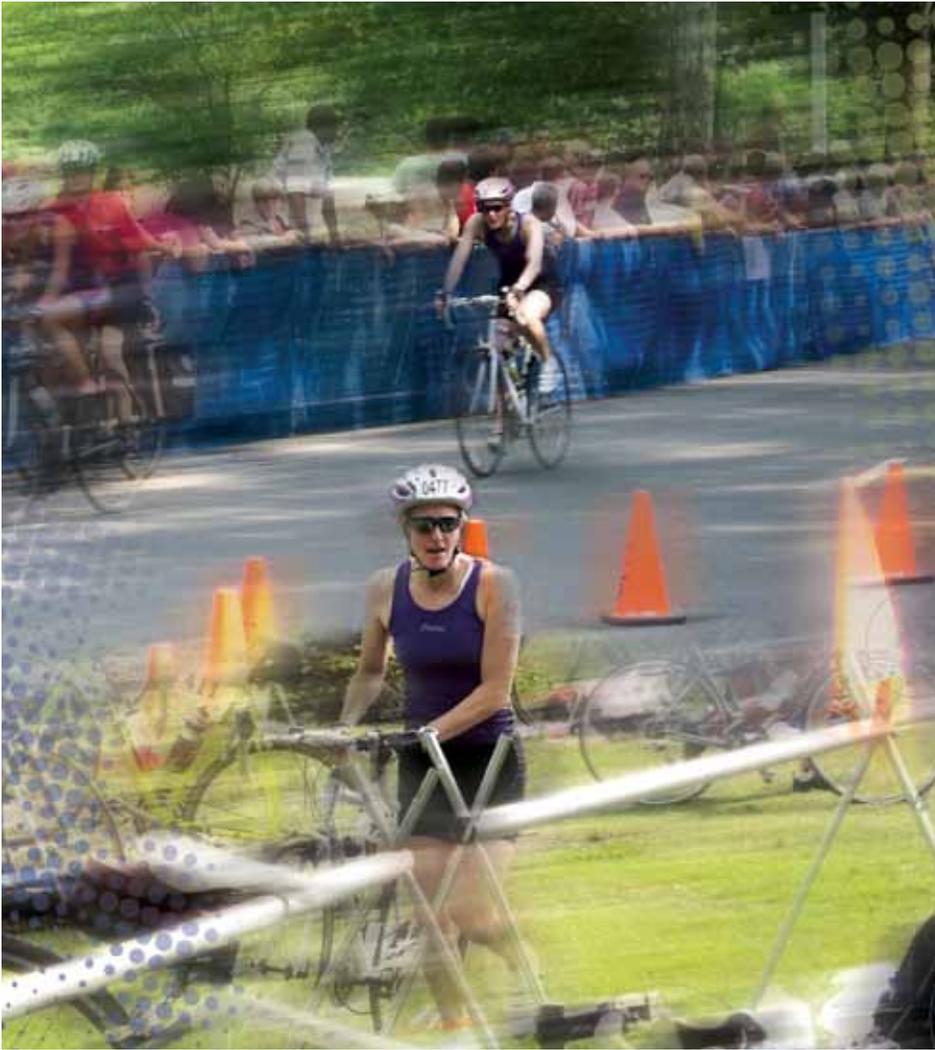
On Aug. 1, I woke at 6 a.m. excited and very nervous to do my first triathlon. It was a perfect day with lower humidity and cloudy skies. After getting dressed and eating my high-energy breakfast, I rode my bike to the transition area. Once there, I organized my racing accessories to quickly transition from the swim to the bike to the run. Then, I just had to wait until my starting time of 8:20.

At 8:16 a.m., I jumped into the water to get acclimated to the water temperature of 81 degrees, practice my breathing and wait for the sound of the horn. I positioned myself at the far side of the buoys, so I would stay out of the crowd of about 60 swimmers in my wave and avoid any kicks or slaps to the face or other body part. As I heard the horn, my excitement elevated and I started to swim. I was actually swimming and not panicking. At times, I was off course and had a difficult time passing some swimmers.

Nevertheless, I managed to complete the swim feeling confident and relaxed. When the two race volunteers helped pull me out of the river onto the solid land, I had a big smile on my face, acknowledged my personal spectators and proceeded to get into my bike gear and ride away.

The biking portion was a lot of fun. I managed to pass many of the swimmers who were much faster in the water than me and





tackled each hill in Fairmount Park like I was “queen of the mountain.” After just more than 15 miles, I was back to the transition area and into my running gear in two minutes flat.

As I started to run, I questioned whether I was actually moving or not. My legs felt like two lead weights and I was thinking, “how could a person who can run a marathon have such a hard time running a 5K?” After about a mile, I felt like a runner again and just concentrated on finishing. As soon as I saw the finish line, I sprinted as hard as I could and felt both relieved and joyful as I crossed the finish line with raised arms. It was one of the most stressful

races, but also one of the most enjoyable races I have ever done. I now plan to do more triathlons and challenge myself to do better, especially in the swimming portion. Who knows; maybe I will even do an Iron Man. I invite all attorneys reading this to send to the magazine their story about what they do other than work many long hours. I know that Philadelphia lawyers have so many wonderful stories to tell and I welcome those lawyers to share them with us. ■

*Kim R. Jessum (kjessum@stradley.com), of counsel to Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP, is editor-in-chief of The Philadelphia Lawyer.*

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