

University of Dayton

From the Selected Works of Maureen E. Schlangen

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Trying a Triathlon

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Trying a Triathlon

I did something totally out of character today: a triathlon.

I know. I can't believe it, either.

I think it's some sort of annual thing for the Dayton Boat Club Masters, which I've had the pleasure of rowing with for the past two months. Such an endeavor — rowing, running and swimming — takes a lot of training, both mentally and physically. I was most worried about the swimming component, since I haven't been in a pool since 2008 and haven't swum a lap since ... oh, circa 1985.

For me, the mental preparation (read: anxiety) began on Wednesday, when the coach broke the news of the workout. The physical preparation began yesterday, when I drove to Dick's Sporting Goods to buy myself a pair of goggles. After I picked some out, I briefly considered a proper suit to avoid what happened in 2008, which can politely be described in 2004 Super Bowl parlance as a "wardrobe malfunction."

When an associate in my sons' age range noticed me looking around, he asked if I needed help.

"Yes," I said. "I'm looking for the swimsuits."

"Right over here," he said, leading me to the swimming section, which is basically one rack. "We really only carry competition suits. If you're looking for something more fashionable, you may have to try somewhere else."

Obviously, he didn't see the goggles in my hand.

"What makes you think I'm not looking for a competition suit?" I asked him, smiling, feigning offense in a friendly, motherly way.

"Oh, sorry," he cringed, sheepishly.

I browsed the meager selection, instantly remembering that competitive suits don't come with things a 46-year-old woman has come to expect and frankly need, like padding, underwires and a technology known as "tummy control." I decided I'm not sinking another \$50 into this winter rowing adventure; I'm just going to chance it with my prissy polka-dot fashion tankini from Lands' End.

I was so nervous and jumpy this morning that I nearly threw up. I completed the FAFSA just to keep my mind on something else.

But it turns out I had nothing to fear. Everyone else was nervous, too. The first two legs went fine, and when it was time to swim the 11 laps — not that many, really, though it sure felt like a lot — both the suit and the goggles worked out just fine.

And I finished third. Heck ... I finished. That alone is a point of pride, considering that I was the kid for whom participation ribbons were invented.

It's been a winter full of nice surprises just like this one. I've rowed distances I never imagined I could, and I've gotten to know some really nice people; we all seem to doubt ourselves at times, and when we're running low on steam, we encourage each other. I'm happy I had the courage to give this a try.