

As the famous movie line goes, “Your mission should you accept it this message will self-destruct in 30 seconds”. There’s no chance of that happening when Felicity Abram is in the room. She’s set on a mission-like course for the 2012 London Olympics that will see her proudly stand on the podium with the national anthem playing in the background and Bob Marley in her head.

By Di Mace

MISSION OLYMPICS

Far from Impossible for Felicity Abram

As with any good mission though, there are a few 'small' obstacles in the road. The first would be her team-mate Emma Snowsill, the current World and Olympic champion. And of course then there's her other team-mate, Emma Moffatt, currently ranked second in the World Championships. However that won't stop Felicity. Since coming back from a lay-year in 2009, through the course of 2010 Felicity has already risen to 26th ranking in the world. The London Olympics is in her reach.

In triathlons, small is powerful. At just 54kgs in heavy training, like her Australian team-mates, Felicity Abram is built for success. In an interview with *The Age*, Triathlon Australia's head coach Bill Davoren said of the Australian triathlon women's team, "What we have found over the last couple of years is the smaller and lighter the frames, the faster the runner. They have to be fleet-footed, but they also have to know how to swim."

"Late in 2009 after most of the year away from triathlon, I felt there was something missing in my life and made the decision to return to what I love."

Felicity is all those things and more. At only 24 years she is already a veteran triathlon competitor, having started at the tender age of thirteen. Curiously, when she was younger she wasn't competitive. Her mother and father had to make her go to swimming, she hated the constant hours of training and chasing the black line. Then at age nine she saw the Atlanta Olympics on TV and decided that was what she was going to do when she grew up. Other kids wanted to be doctors, rock stars or writers. Felicity decided otherwise. She would be an Olympian.

Great coaches and mentors have made all the difference in Felicity's 'Mission Olympics'. As a state level swimmer, a chance exchange with her physio changed her focus from chasing the black line for hours, to trying triathlons. With a natural gift for endurance events, Felicity took to tri's with a passion. She then had three sports she could train for, giving her the variety she needed. A disappointed swim coach tried to discourage her enthusiasm for triathlons, but it seemed her heart had been stolen. However, he did give her a lifetime gift that she treasures and relishes with her current goal in sight. That gift was the toughness that he ingrained in her psych and mental discipline needed for training.

Work ethic and character are two big factors in triathlon success. Character and toughness is what can make the difference. After a tough year of disappointments in 2008, Felicity took 2009 off to reset her priorities. She says in her blog "..... at 22 after the disappointment of missing selection for Beijing, I needed to take a step back. The start of 2009 found me fatigued, restless and disillusioned with triathlon. If anything I needed a "mental" refresh. I stopped swimming, biking and running - for most of the year. Though I did run a marathon on "very little" training. Which hurt - to say the least! Late in 2009 after most of the year away from triathlon, I felt there was something missing in my life and made the decision to return to what I love." >>>

Felicity's Training & Nutrition Program

DAILY TRAINING SCHEDULE:

MONDAY - Swim, bike, run, Pilates
TUESDAY - Swim, bike, physio, run
WEDNESDAY - Swim, Bike/run, Pilates
THURSDAY - Swim, bike, run
FRIDAY - Pilates, massage, run (Fridays are generally easy days)
SATURDAY - Swim/bike/run, run
SUNDAY - Run, Run

LENGTH:

SWIM - anywhere from 3km-6km
RIDE - anywhere from 1-4 hr
RUN - anywhere from 30mins - 1hr 30min
GYM - 1hr sessions
PILATES - 1hr sessions

DAILY NUTRITION:

Before early morning training: Coffee (Black). If it's a hard/long session she'll have a sports bar or a piece of toast and honey.

During training: Endura Sports Rehydration formula.

Breakfast: A protein shake straight after training, then eggs/avocado on toast or oats/muesli.

Lunch: Salad with tuna/chicken, some kind of meat on a wrap or with some whole grain toast.

Dinner: Lots of fish/chicken or meat and salad/veggies plus some brown rice.

Snacks: Apples, nuts, Endura energy bars, Endura low carb bars.

Supplements:

All ENDURA sports nutrition.

- CoQ10
- Endura Hydration formula
- Endura Max Magnesium + powder
- Endura Gels
- Ethical nutrients Inner health plus

Race Nutrition:

Endura Hydration formulary on the bike (pineapple flavour)
 Endura Gel on the run (raspberry flavour)



PHOTO: SIMON GRIMMETT

"So a new coach, a re-location back to Brisbane and a new squad, gave me some new challenges and goals for 2010. To be realistic, I just wanted consistency for 2010 and to race as much as possible - finish each race, and try and regain some fitness!" With this renewed enthusiasm, she came back in the 2010 ITU Triathlon World Championship Series, and racked up some impressive results: 11th Sydney, Australia; 27th Seoul, Korea; 10th Hamburg, Germany; 23rd London GB; 15th Kitzbuhel, Austria. She amazingly achieved all of that after twelve months off resting and getting herself and her head in the right space to tackle the Olympic mission ahead.

Getting your head in the right space is imperative in the sport of triathlon. A gruelling training program of up to three workouts across three disciplines every day, six-seven days a week can take its toll. The hard work pays off though on the championship results board. But of course, success is a double edged sword. For hopefuls the results don't come easy. The challenge is to commit to

three sessions a day, and not treat it like a hobby. It requires a huge commitment of time, energy and focus. Like most elite sportspeople, what starts out as a love and often a gift of talent, quickly becomes a lifestyle and a dedication.

The best things for Felicity in her career of choice are achieving her goals, training and getting fitter at something she loves. She loves the travel, the friends she's made and can tell some great tales of the after parties of final races in a series. After months of deprivation, no alcohol and a strict routine, let's say the hair gets let down and they enjoy themselves to the max.

But she's also a very unusual girl of her age. She has a driven focus on achievement with seemingly no need to break out from the disciplined life; does not believe in taking shortcuts and does everything she can, so that she can truly believe in herself and abilities.

A highly principled person driven by her beliefs, Felicity sights her parents as the superheros >>>

TRAINING FREQUENCY

When training for a triathlon, according to the International Triathlon Union website there are some general suggestions for frequency of practices on a weekly basis. The amount of training depends on your ability, experience, and goals. Keep in mind that sports can be combined to reduce the number of overall practices. >>

For maintaining ability	Improving ability slowly	Improving more quickly
Swim: 1-2 times per week	Swim: 2-3 times per week	Swim: 3-5 times per week
Bike: 1 time per week	Bike: 1-2 times per week	Bike: 2-3 times per week
Run: 1 time per week	Run: 2-3 times per week	Run: 2-3 times per week

Training varies greatly, depending on what training and race season phase she is in through the year. As a general rule her training program would cover all three disciplines as well as Pilates and a massage.



PHOTO: MARTY EXON

Pushing Yourself to The Limit

Triathlon is an activity that combines swimming, cycling and running in one event. The three sports are performed consecutively with no breaks. The portion of a triathlon where athletes change from one sport to the next is called a transition. The terrain and weather can make every triathlon unique. Typically triathlons are broken into several different types; based on the distances travelled, rules, and depending on the available or situation terrain. There are some standard distances. The International Triathlon Union governs most competitions and represents the Olympic event; while the World Triathlon Corporation retains rights over all of the 'Ironman' or 'Iron' races. Some of the most common triathlon distances are: >>

Event	Swim	Bike	Run
Sprint Distance	750m	20km	5km
Olympic, or International Distance	1.5km	40km	10km
Half-Ironman, or Middle Distance	1.9km	90km	21km
Ironman, or Long Distance	3.8km	180km	42km

in her life. She easily admits that without them she couldn't do what she does. Her support network of family and friends is all important in her achievement psych. With a strong pedigree of slow twitch genes in a very sporting family, Felicity shares her athleticism with her twin brother Geoffrey. As a former contracted QLD Reds player and now a Personal Trainer, Felicity sights her brother as "always good at any sport." In her eyes he was blessed with the same slow twitch genes as her, but thinks that he somehow got Felicity's fast twitch ones as well, which she could occasionally use in a race.

Music plays an integral role in her training program and life. She uses music to switch off as well as focus, and because it gives her extra energy she finds training without music boring. An avid fan of Bob Marley, her staffy dog is called 'Marley' in honour of the great muso. She admires his views on peace and unity in the world and the depth of those beliefs is obvious by the "One Love" tattoo on her right wrist.

The next twelve-eighteen months will be hard work for Felicity. She is taking it one step at a time, and trying not to get too far ahead of herself. Currently in recovery from a minor hip operation, the 2011 season starts in Sydney in April and getting on the Olympic team is her priority. With the selection policy not yet out at the time of interview, she wasn't sure what the key races were for her to make her mark, so she is more focussed on

performing well overall, making the team and holding a position in the top rankings by the second half of the series.

» **To follow Felicity in the 2011 Dextro Energy Triathlon ITU World Championship Series see the dates and details in our Awesome 2011 Event Planner on page 106**

Is she happy she made the switch from swimming to triathlons all those years ago? Definitely. She loves the variety, the places she can travel, the incentives and the life experiences it has given her. The excitement of two hours of extremely intense competition across three disciplines gives her the buzz she looks for in life. So she has the next eighteen months mapped out, but what will her life be after London? Is there life after elite triathlons?

At present she has only ever focused on Olympic Distance events. As a master of endurance, she still has the 'Ironman' class of events ahead of her as a challenge. At present they seem "way too long for me," which is understandable at nine hours of slow endurance torture compared to two quick hours of pain. But she happily reflects "Maybe when I try it, I'll find that two hours is too intense!"

Regardless of the distance, what is for sure is that she'll succeed in achieving her goals, and of course, Bob Marley will always be there to play the soundtrack of her life. **ufm**

About the coach: Stephen Moss »

Stephen is the current Assistant National Coach and Head Coach of the Queensland Academy of Sport Triathlon program. This program is Australia's most successful institute/academy program and 2010 QAS Sport Program of the Year. Having coached professionally for 12 years, Stephen is the personal coach of Felicity Abram and the Current U23 World Champion Emma Jackson.



For more Olympic sports personality profiles, visit www.ultrafit.com.au/articles/profiles/sport/stephen-hooker-he's-got-the-hair-the-girl-and-the-genes/

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Transitions

Transitions are a triathlon's fourth event. The clock is ticking while you go from swim to bike to run, so practise them just as you do the sports themselves. Training each week will make your race day smoother – do not wait until the night before the event to prepare for transitions. Here are a few tips from QLD Head Coach, Stephen Moss to help:

Out of the water and into your pedals – T1

Pull off the first and most important transition in a triathlon – water to bike

1. The key to success is in knowing exactly what to do and what order to do it in. Have a process and practice it. It will be different for everyone. Make sure you know what works for you. eg cap off, goggles off, wetsuit undone, know where your bike is, wetsuit off, helmet on... away you go.
2. Urgency is important. The most intense part of the triathlon is the transition. Run hard all the way through and you can pass a lot of people and make or catch up time. You won't win the race in a transition but it will make a big difference to the rest of your race.
3. Learn to jump on your bike quickly and practice it A LOT. This will save you a lot of time and give you the biggest asset in a triathlon - MOMENTUM, MOMENTUM, MOMENTUM.

Off the bike and hit the road – T2

Build on your momentum so far with the second transition – bike to run

1. Prepare for T2 before you actually get there. Be confident. Know where your spot is and be urgent. Again, know exactly what you are going to do when you get there (same as T1). Have a process, practice it and stick to it.
2. The dismount is important; maximise the distance travelled on the bike before you get off, but remember when you go to get off you can't hit the ground running at 30kph. Your legs won't handle the change from circles to strides. You need to practice this change, and you also need to know exactly how fast you can get of the bike running.
3. Every second spent standing still is wasted time. Take what you can with you and put it on while you are running - hat, sunnies and race belt - and don't put everything you have into the first km of the run. You should aim to be strong throughout the whole run.

