Judge Cynthia Newton Remains an Ironman Gold All World Athlete Despite Injury

CLEARWATER - For the second year in a row, Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Cynthia Newton has been designated an Ironman Gold All World Athlete, which means she is the top one percent of her age group who compete worldwide in Ironman triathlon competitions.

Judge Newton, 52, has managed to hold on to her special distinction despite the fact that, in one of her races, she ran with a stress fracture in her left foot, a painful condition that required her to repeatedly pop 800 milligrams of Ibuprofen into her mouth as she bicycled and ran.

And that wasn’t the only injury she faced in 2018. Judge Newton learned she was a 2019 Ironman Gold All World Athlete last month.

The designation was based on Judge Newton’s performance in three races last year – a full Ironman in Houston, Texas, on April 28, a half-Ironman in Santa Cruz on Sept. 9, and a second full Ironman on Nov. 18.

For the uninstructed, an Ironman is a grueling, if often scenic, race. It consists of a 112-mile bicycle ride, a 26.2-mile run, and a 2.4-mile swim.

As she started training at the beginning of last year, Judge Newton hoped to perform better in the Houston Ironman in 2018 than she had in 2017, when her unfamiliarity with the swim course in Lake Woodlands cost her crucial minutes.

But then, in January, Judge Newton was diagnosed with tendinitis in her left foot, a condition her podiatrist attributed to over-training. She wore a boot for two weeks, hobbling to her courtroom in downtown St. Petersburg to hear civil cases. All told, she couldn’t run for a month.

To compensate, she trained more on her bike, and she swam more, too, thinking she might have to perform better during those two parts of the upcoming triathlon to make up for any possible shortcomings during the foot race.

Her plan worked.

She completed the swim portion that April day in one hour and 11 minutes, compared with one hour and 26 minutes the previous year. Likewise, she completed the bicycle portion in five hours and 18 minutes, compared with five hours and 44 minutes the year before.

And, as expected, she used more time running – four hours and 35 minutes, compared with four hours and 23 minutes the year before.

Stil, her overall time last years was better than it was the year before: 11 hours and 17 minutes compared with 12 hours and one minute, which was then her personal best for an Ironman.

After the Texas race, Judge Newton rested for a month, and decided to take a break from Ironman races by competing in a comparably shorter race in Cleveland in August – the Olympic Distance National Championship.

How much shorter? A swim .9 miles long compared to one 2.4 miles long, a bicycle ride 25 miles compared with one 112 miles long, and a run 6.2 miles long compared to one 26.2 miles long.

After the Cleveland race, Judge Newton felt comfortable enough to start training for Ironman competitions again, setting her sights on a half-Ironman in Houston, Texas, on April 28, a half-Ironman in Santa Cruz on Sept. 9, and a second full Ironman on Nov. 18.

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Three weeks before the Mexico race, however, while she was running in the hilly countryside of San Antonio, in Pasco County, she suffered a stress fracture. She couldn’t walk for hours. She stopped training. Her podiatrist gave her a prescription for pills containing 800 milligrams for Ibuprofen.

Judge Newton decided to go to Cozumel anyway. She had paid the $735 entry fee for the race, and there were friends there, too, as her coach came up with a plan. She knew she could swim, she knew she could ride her bicycle. It was a matter of whether she would be able to do the run.

She ended up taking four of the pills – one during the bicycle ride, and one for each of the three straight-and-back loops for the run.

“The last thing I was going to do was Not finish the race,” she said, and she doesn’t believe she has had one yet.