



LAURA SOPHIEA, 55 → Birmingham, Mich., Kona PR: 10:35:59, 2005

For 30 years, **Laura Sophia** was a dedicated grade-school teacher. During the latter half of that time period, she spent summers and occasional weekends accumulating various hardware from the triathlon racing scene, ranging from her age-group titles at the 1995 nationals and 1996 worlds that were held respectively in Cleveland, Ohio, and Muncie, Ind., to the Ironman World Championship 50-54 record she set in 2005 at the age of 50 (10:35:59) to her second-place finish in the 50-54 division this year in Kona.

Sophiea actually started triathlon 23 years ago. Asked what athletic background she leapt into multisport from, she gives a rare answer: “Does being a couch potato count? I tried out for track in ninth grade but quit because I thought it was too hard.” Cheerleading, Sophiea remarks, was the closest she came to sports until she discovered triathlon. She apparently got over the pain thing.

Having recently retired from teaching, she has opened a coaching business and is closer to the sport than ever.

Also during her teaching career, Sophiea raised three daughters, now 19, 25 and 28. Her oldest is pregnant. “My first grandbaby,” Sophiea says brightly, “so I guess being 55 is OK!”

Sophiea has been part of groundbreaking generation of age-group women including Donna Smyers, Missy Lestrangle, Kim Rouse and Lydia Delis-Schlosser. “They keep me going each season,” she says. “I enjoy seeing them and really love racing with them.”

Sophiea believes her injury-free consistency is in part due to having been blessed with good biomechanics—“Only two major issues in all these years”—and her training philosophy is a simple one. “Get a good aerobic base and do some lactate threshold work. Quality over quantity.”