

## Doreen DeRoss



DOREEN EXITING THE WATER  
AFTER OPEN WATER SWIM

## DOREEN DEROSS

### 2008 Results

Napa Valley Sprint Triathlon  
**3rd in Age Group**

Loveland Lake 2 Lake Olympic  
Triathlon

My Way or the Tri Way Sprint  
**3rd in Age Group**

Harvest Moon Long Course Triathlon  
**4th in Age Group**  
**Qualified for Nationals**

Halfmax Nationals Long Course  
Triathlon  
**13th in Age Group**  
**Qualified for Worlds**

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Coach: Andrea Watkins  
Practical Coaching  
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## TRIATHLETE: TRAINING TO WIN

Imagine you are an average 49-year old woman and not in particularly great shape. Can you picture yourself competing in your first triathlon, finishing in the top five in your age group and qualifying for Nationals?

Neither could Doreen DeRoss except that is exactly what happened when she competed in the Harvest Moon Long Course Triathlon – 1.2 mile swim, 56 mile bike and 13.1 mile run in September of 2008. “My goal was just to finish the race. But when I wandered over to check the athletes’ times, I was amazed to see I had finished in the top five,” remembers Doreen.

Doreen had trained for only 10 months. After completing a master’s degree in community counseling, she was looking for her next challenge. “I had a bike, and had run on occasion but hadn’t swum since I was a kid in my cousin’s pool. This was going to be a first,” says Doreen.

“Doreen accepts the challenges of all her new experiences with an enthusiastic energy and that’s just what she did here. She pushed herself when others her age would have quit,” says her coach Andrea Watkins who coaches



athletes like Doreen through her business, Practical Coaching.

Only five weeks after completing her first long course triathlon, Doreen found herself at daybreak standing in the cold water of Lake Mead waiting to begin the Halfmax Long Course National Championships where she placed 13<sup>th</sup> in her age group, qualifying her for a spot to compete on the USA Triathlon Team representing her country at the World Championships in Perth, Australia in 2009.

“I was flabbergasted when I found out I was going to Worlds as an athlete. Me, who just a year ago, was overweight and not in very good shape!” Within her first year of competition, this natural athlete qualified to represent the US at the World Championships.

“What motivates me is the desire to learn and challenge myself. Training and competing give me the opportunity to take myself and my beliefs about myself to new levels. It’s the days and hours of training that get me to the starting line that I love.”

As a professional therapist who works at the Mental Health Center of Denver (MHCD) with persons with mental illness and substance abuse, Doreen knows all about hard journeys and challenges. “Where I work, we believe that anything is possible and that people can and do recover from mental illness. I see it everyday; people achieving goals in life they didn’t think possible, just like me.”



A typical week day for Doreen simulates the average 15-hour-day that is an Ironman race. She might swim for an hour at 5:30am, go to work for eight hours and lift weights during her lunch break and end her day with a two-plus hour run or bike ride. She takes one rest day a week. On a typical weekend, she’ll run 10-to-15 miles after swimming in open water for two hours and she always works in a 50-to-100 mile bike ride the next day.

“Training for an Ironman is grueling and time consuming. One day when I was running I was thinking about how self centered training like this is and has to be. I decided right then that I wanted all this hard work and self centeredness to stand for something bigger than me.”

“At MHCD, I work with people with mental illness so I decided I wanted to raise awareness and educate people that recovery from mental illness is possible. I see it everyday. I see people recovering and changing their lives and working just as hard as I do. When I think back to one year ago to being 49, overweight and out of shape and how far I’ve come, it is nothing compared to the strength and determination it takes to recover from mental illness. I train and compete to honor their hard work and inspire hope for recovery,” says Doreen.

Doreen’s next journey takes her to the Ironman in Cozumel, Mexico in November 2009. Doreen is dedicated to training and her passion for mental illness and recovery. “I’m determined to create awareness and dispel myths about mental illness with my training and competing . To help me do that, contact me at

[www.godoreen.com](http://www.godoreen.com).”