

Father And Daughter Bond Over Triathlon

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Zachary and Ariana Luterman

Zachary and Ariana Luterman share a love for multisport.

After a few years of winning kids' triathlons in the Dallas area, 10 year-old Ariana Luterman decided she wanted to try a sprint distance at an adult event. There was one caveat to her progression in the sport, however: she wouldn't toe the line unless her father, Zachary, was by her side.

"How could I say no to that?" Zachary laughs as he recalls his daughter's insistence. "I bought a bike, started running, took a swim class and the rest, as they say, is history."

Five years later, the father-daughter duo continue to toe the line together at a dozen races each summer. Ariana, now 15, specializes in the Olympic distance and often wins her age group and places in the top five females overall. Zachary is competitive in his own age group, and has expanded to racing half-Iron distances in recent years. Through her foundation, **Team Ariana** (www.teamariana.org), Ariana

Luterman has used triathlon as a way to raise more than \$80,000 racing on behalf of Vogel Alcove, a Dallas facility benefiting homeless children.

Competition and philanthropy drive Ariana and her dad to train and race, but not as much as family.

"Racing triathlon with Ariana is life-changing for me," says Zachary. "I love the sport passionately, but it takes an entirely different meaning knowing we are doing it together. Seeing her compete and thrive at those levels realizing it is entirely due to her own fire and drive for success is inspiring. I have seen her jump into 55 degree open waters with over 800 athletes in an extremely physical swim, get out and cycle/run in 40 degree weather with 25 MPH sustained winds...there is no way I could back out of that challenge. If she can do it, I can do it."

"Not many triathletes can say that their dad trains, competes and wins alongside them," says Ariana. "Having my dad somewhere out on the race course while I am competing just makes the experience that much better. It is different than just having him on the sidelines cheering."

Ariana inherited her father's analytical tendencies—before every event, the Lutermans can be found huddled in a corner of transition, reviewing swim strategies, transition logistics, course profiles, and nutrition plans. They also hash out a worst-case scenario: what to do if one sees the other stopped on the side of the road.

"Ariana has always said unless there is blood, keep racing!" Zachary laughs. "As competitive as she is and as much as she pushes herself, I always do a reality check to make sure she is having fun."

And, of course, there are hugs. Before the two separate into their wave starts, they embrace and share encouraging words.

"We have always been very close, but I truly believe triathlon added a new dimension into our relationship," says Zachary. "We get to experience each other at our strongest and, at times, our weakest. We are masters at picking each other up and helping to motivate one another through the pain. More importantly, we have a special bond after each race in celebrating victory with our stories of crazy encounters along the way."

"Racing triathlon together throughout each year has only brought us closer," says Ariana. "We know each other like best friends, athletes, competitors, and father and daughter. That is a gift that triathlon has given to both of us."

Read more at http://triathlon.competitor.com/2015/06/features/father-and-daughter-bond-over-triathlon_117781#SeDxOZUHIDDDzIQc.99