

UP AND COMING

Natalie Lucas caught up with a budding new and very talented triathlete

PERFORMANCE

Nikki Bartlett has been involved in sports her whole life, but was a rower at heart. She had never thought about attempting a triathlon. However, during an injured period, she took up cycling to keep her fitness up. A friend asked her to enter a Half Ironman and with no training she won! That's when Nikki fell in love with the endurance sport.

Likeable Nikki grew up in Cheltenham in a very close family. Her dad spent most of his life driving her from one sporting event to another. At school Nikki could mainly be found in the PE department. She worked hard at school and went on to study Sport and Physical Education at Birmingham. She was into athletics but found herself attached to rowing and represented the University at the European University Championships and was honoured as a Sports Scholar for two years. She graduated in 2008 with a First Class BA (Hons). That same year she entered Girls for Gold, an initiative to find Olympic Gold medal hopefuls. And she did rather well receiving the highest testing results in the country for her age category. She was fast tracked onto the rowing GB World Class Start initiative.

Unfortunately whilst on the programme



Nikki winning The Little Woody Half Ironman in 2010

she was plagued with injuries. This is when she started cycling and in 2010 won the aforementioned Half Ironman. Her half marathon time in this event was a very respectable 1.27. "My swim was rubbish, all I kept thinking is I'm so cold and why is everyone swimming on top of each other?" remembers Nikki, "I came off the bike in third place and the run just felt so easy and comfortable. However I was very surprised to win!"

BELIEVER OF FATE

Nikki's injuries had cleared up so after the win Nikki went back to rowing. She got herself a new pair of trainers, which randomly entered her into a competition to win a place in the London Marathon last year. Nikki won her place. "I thought I'd better do some runs and ran around four or five times." I pointed out to Nikki that I spent six months training for the London Marathon a few years ago and I ran four or five times a week! With just a couple of training runs under her belt Nikki unbelievably came in at 3.03. A tad quicker than me!

"I'm a big believer of fate and wouldn't have done the Half Ironman if it wasn't for being injured, so I thought I'd better try a full Ironman." However, Nikki was injured again and couldn't really train for it. "I had raised a lot of money for Cancer Research and felt I needed to take part. I went into the event not being able to walk properly and I was really in pain." Remarkably against all odds, Nikki won her age group. This meant Nikki won a place in the Hawaii Ironman World Championships. Unfortunately Nikki had suffered terribly at the Ironman

with a foot injury and was on crutches when the event in Hawaii took place and couldn't enter.

WATCH THIS SPACE

Finally the penny drops: "I started thinking maybe I have a natural talent for triathlons so gave up rowing." This young athlete has made the right decision and still has time to shine, because at 24 she is young in her sport. The top professionals tend to peak in their early thirties. Plus she appears to have the energy to do well, as Nikki is non-stop on the go. She has very little downtime but when she does she might be caught eating ice cream or chicken jalfrezi, or possibly watching one of her favourite TV programmes which include Miranda or reading anything by Carole Matthews.

What now? Nikki now has plans of becoming a professional long distance triathlete. Any sponsors that are reading this, get in touch, this young girl is going places.



BAND ON THE RUN

Halo Headbands keep sweat and sunscreen out of your eyes and off your glasses whilst training.

You look cool and feel cool! Priced at £12.95.

Visit www.haloheadbanduk.com.

