

Dog Is My Training Partner

At this year's Nautica New York City Triathlon, a new course record was blazed—by a dog. Jane, a 4-year-old Vizsla, won the event's Doggy Dash, a 5-mile sprint through Central Park. "She ran a 6:30 pace, which isn't particularly fast for her, but it was a hot day," says her owner, Biff Capune. Jane has been a constant training (and racing) companion to Biff and his wife, Tracy, since she was a pup. When the New York City-based couple was looking to get a dog, their research on breeds revealed that the Vizsla, a hunting dog, would be a great fit for their active lifestyle. And Jane hasn't disappointed. She'll often swim behind Biff during mile-long training sessions

in Lake Placid ("She'll tap my feet just like in Masters class, except she's got claws, so I have to swim fast," he says), and she runs a few times a week in Central Park with her owners. She's even accompanied Biff on training runs as far as 20 miles.

Hunting dogs, like Vizslas, can make great training companions because they've got built-in endurance and seemingly boundless energy. If you're looking to get a canine training partner, you may also want to consider one of these breeds: Boxer, Border Collie, German Shepherd, Siberian Husky, Labrador Retriever, Australian Shepherd, Dalmatian or German Shorthair Pointer. // JULIA BEESON POLLORENO



Jane and Biff at the Nautica New York City Triathlon Doggy Dash

OUR READERS SAY...

"I have a spotted Dalmatian who does every run with me, from 2.5-hour-long runs to track workouts."

—KEVIN DESSART

"Even at 10 years old, Syrus can run for two-plus hours. He's always willing to run no matter time of day or what the weather is like ... unlike any human training partner."

—NICOLE GANTZ WEIDENSAUL



TRIATHLETE SPOTLIGHT

Elizabeth Brackett likes to joke she's a jock who's old enough to collect Social Security.

"I've always liked to compete," says the 69-year-old, who is host for WTTW-TV's "Chicago Tonight" program and an award-winning correspondent for PBS's "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer."

The grandmother of four has won back-to-back ITU Age Group World Championship titles in 2009 and 2010 and hopes to three-peat in China at the Dextro Energy Triathlon ITU World Championship Series Grand Final in Beijing.

She's dedicating her race in China to former Indiana University men's diving coach Hobie Billingsley, who allowed Brackett to train as a springboard diver with the men's team in the pre-Title IX days before there was a women's team. Brackett came close to making the Olympic team in 3-meter diving, finishing 10th in the Amateur Athletic Union in 1963. "He was the one who believed in me as an athlete," Brackett says. "Even though I was a girl, he taught me to reach for the top."

At 49, Brackett started training again, this time for triathlon, competing in her first race a year later. After more than a decade, she won her first USAT National Age Group Championship in Portland, Ore., in 2008 which qualified Brackett for the USA national triathlon team at the 2009 ITU World Championship in the 65–69 age group in Sydney.

That trip—both the win and what was in the open water—surprised Brackett. She jokes that the last thing she heard before the open-water swim was "Welcome to Australian waters, just watch out for the sharks, killer jellyfish and crocodiles. Have a nice swim, ladies," says Brackett. "I was minimally terrified and I think it improved my time."

A year later, Brackett improved her time by six minutes and defended her world age-group title in Budapest with a 2:51:14 victory on the 1.5K swim, 40K bike race and 10K run. It was enough to put Brackett ahead of the second-place finisher by six minutes.

"It's wonderful to win, but really it's more important to feel like you've trained enough to run your very best ever and lay it all out on the line," Brackett says. "If you can do that and somebody passes you, there's nothing to worry about. And if you can do that and nobody passes, it's even better." // DAWN REISS