

Meet Joan Kirkwood

Ocala Triathletes Club Member

Joan Kirkwood (Age Grouper 65-69) was born and raised in Scotland. She met her husband there and moved to England later in her married life. From there she moved to Wisconsin, USA for her husband's job in 2001. During her adult career, Joan was a teacher. They moved to Florida in 2016.

How she got started

In 2006 I was diagnosed with Non Hodgkins Lymphoma. I underwent Chemotherapy and afterwards I took a look at my life and made the decision to get fitter and do something I'd never done before. A friend suggested I do the Danskin triathlon...a women's only sprint triathlon. A triathlon!!! I can't do that! I can't swim, a long bike ride is 5 miles and I haven't run in years! However, she had planted the seed in my mind so I joined a triathlon group called Jill be Nimble and started training. By the time of the triathlon I could do a slow breaststroke, about 10 miles on my bike and a walk/run. I finished in just over 2 hours and I was hooked! After that I bought a road bike then a triathlon bike and went from sprint distance, to Olympic to Half Ironman. I had 2 recurrences of my Lymphoma through this but continued to race and train through 2 more chemotherapy treatments. I'm happily in remission now.

On her love for the sport and passing it on

I love the triathlon community, the friends I have made through triathlon and how supportive everyone is. It's a joy to wear the uniform and be a part of a family. Of course I love the bling and the adrenaline rush I get when I finish a race. I hate the early mornings when it is dark and cold and I'm on my way to a triathlon asking myself why am I doing this?!

My husband and I have 3 sons and 4 granddaughters. Two live in England and one lives in Nashville. We love to visit and spend time with our granddaughters. Our son in Nashville is a great runner. This year he ran Boston in 3:03. I recall the first race he did. I was doing the Oakland half marathon three years ago and I asked him if he would like to do it with me as he'd been doing a little bit of running. He finished in 1:25 minutes (an hour faster than me). He told me he didn't enjoy it and was never doing another one. A couple of hours later he was online looking for his next race! He's run marathons all over the world. I'm trying to get him into triathlons.

Our eldest son who lives in England has been very sick for a few years with a liver disease. Last year he went on the transplant list and in May 2016 he had a liver transplant. It has made a huge difference to his life and I seem to have inspired him to try triathlon. On May 12 I will be flying back to England for the summer and on Sunday he is doing his first, a super sprint triathlon with a swimming pool swim, and I am doing it with him! I am so proud of him and proud to do it with him. Now I just have to work on my youngest son!

Funny Story

My son always reminds me of how I did my first triathlon on a mountain bike with a pink basket on the front. It was handy for my snacks and for my phone. I did actually get a phone call during the bike ride and I answered it...well I was in no hurry! I still have the basket.

Race Nutrition and Bikes

I use Ucan powder which I mix into a drink for before and during the race. I also take peanut butter pretzels on my bike...salty and sweet.

I ride a Specialized S-Works Amira although I also have a Felt and a Raleigh, which I ride now and then. I love bikes!!

Best Triathlon Tip

The best triathlon tip I've been given is to stay in the moment. Only think about the part of the race you are doing at that moment and don't worry about the rest. I have passed that tip onto many people starting out and think it has been helpful.

Her Motivation

I am motivated by what I see other people achieving. Triathletes and runners my age and older who are fit and finding great enjoyment out of getting and staying fit. I want to stay fit and race for many years. This keeps me motivated to train.

My husband and I had not long bought our house in Florida in 2014 and I wanted to check out the triathlon scene. I signed up for a sprint in Clermont and when I racked my bike I met another lady who had just moved to Florida. Her name was Donna Maguire. We got to chatting and walked down to the water together. It was a 400m swim but as we stood on the sand and looked out over the water it looked really far. Ohhh dear we said, it's sooo far. Can we do it? I think we were terrified. The starting gun went and we were off! Of course we both finished. Donna always says I was finished and was gone by the time she finished but I don't think that's strictly true. We kept in touch and that's how I got to know Donna who is now an IRONMAN! She has come a long way.

Biggest Accomplishment

My biggest race accomplishment was racing at The Worlds in Chicago in 2015 on Team USA. Although I'm not an American citizen (I'm a National), I was so proud to represent America that day and to wave the American flag as I crossed the finish line. (See photo - from the World Championships in Chicago. I like it because it shows me trying to beat the Team GB triathlete in the bike!)

What's up Next/Bucket List Race

Last year I qualified again for the World Championships in Cozumel. However, I withdrew so I could spend the summer in England supporting my son. During that time I did my first couple of triathlons in England. The water in the lakes there is cold! Apart from that my triathlon life has been in America. This summer I am doing quite a few triathlons in England. My greatest wish is to qualify for Worlds on Team GB so 2 of the races I am doing in England are World qualifiers. A sprint and an Olympic. My bucket race is any race I can do on Team GB. And secondly race at triathlon World Championships in Australia 2018.



