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NEWSLETTERS

MERE MORTALS

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November 1, 2021

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MASSAGE THERAPY BY
JAMES FRITSCHLE

Greetings!

Happy November everyone!

It's hard to believe that the year is closing in on us. We were so fortunate to have an in-person Mere Mortals season as well as great weather and conditions for the Members Only Tri and the Santa Rosa Island Tri. After all that hard work, we had a fantastic end-of-year party to celebrate our accomplishments. To each and every one of you, I say, "Congratulations for all you've achieved this year!"

As we move in to the colder months and potentially in to solo workouts, now is a great time to talk about safety. If you're running in the dark, reflective gear and lights are a must. I personally carry "Knuckle Lights" which are easy to carry, help me see and be seen, and yes, if it comes down to it, they are shaped like brass knuckles... Amazon carries them if you're interested.

As humans, we are all creatures of habit which means you likely run or ride the same route over and over. Try to change it up, even if all you do is complete the route in the opposite direction. Alter the time you start, even if just by a few minutes. And make sure someone knows where you are and what time you're likely to be done.

Men, I remember reading an article in Runners World years ago, written by a male, who wrote about every time he went running, he found it offensive that the women he passed would cross the street when they saw him. It took his wife explaining to him that it wasn't personal but out of general safety concerns that may be specific to female runners. He then made it a point to be the one to cross the street so that the women didn't have to. I'm not saying you need to go that far but if in a similar situation, please don't take it personally.

Last point I'll touch on: headphones. I know we talk about it at Mere Mortals all the time and you're probably tired of hearing about it but please, on the bike, just don't do it. People were bad drivers before the pandemic. Going 2 years without practice didn't improve things, lol. If you can hear a car approaching, you can ride defensively.

These are just a few tips and there's a ton more to be found on Google. My intention is merely for you to take care of you so that we can all be together again next summer.

Until next time, I hope you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Dani

Dani Hoffmann



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IN THIS NEWSLETTER

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Fittin' in Fitness



Mere Mortals is over for the season, but most of us continue to train into winter. It's extremely important to continue to take steps to stay active and train safely. Jeff with Subway has some simple suggestions.

Shorter daytime hours impacts our body's rhythm to decrease efforts and do less during the fall to spring months. This is good for recovery if you had a long, hard summer of training with increasing load. BUT, the body doesn't need months to recover unless you have a major injury. What can be done to stay or even increase fitness during this time of year?

Many turn to indoor training!

Swimming:

Luckily for Pensacola, we have three indoor pool options. These options are NOT free like open water, but they are accessible during winter.



- University of West Florida (Main Campus)
- Pensacola State College (Main Campus)
- YMCA Downtown

If you have a wetsuit and/or are tough, there are folks swimming all year in open water around Pensacola. The water temperatures generally drop to the mid/low-50s.

Biking:

- Peloton has multiple ways to work out on their platform.
- Zwift has formal training plans now and varied course options each day.
- Trainer Road has personalized plans for making you faster.





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- Just your basic trainer and a coached plan can work wonders in the off-season.
- Spin classes at your favorite gym are effective.
- Bright lights and winter gear make it possible to ride outside all year. [The West Florida Wheelmen typically maintain rides all year.](#)



Running:

Dreadmills [Treadmills] are great for inclement weather and are in abundance at any fitness club. Crank up the incline and make it challenging!

Our weather is great for running outside in the winter! Reflective clothing/lights are a must. Get outside!

Resistance Training:

Invest in the time to increase your strength! Lift weights. Lunges, Squats, Dead Lifts - oh my body hurts just thinking about it! There are so many exercises to choose from. Compound movements that work multiple muscles at the same time will provide the most benefit. It is also more fun with a friend or two to share the pain and gain.



Stay active, try new things, and let's get back together next spring. TRI GULF COAST!



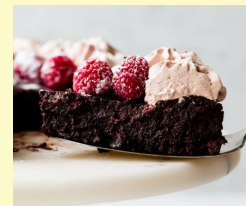
Jeff Boulton
Subway
Triathlete
Endurance Cyclist

Don't Let Your Brain Hibernate



The days are getting shorter, which means our bodies and brains want to curl up and sleep away those 14 hours of dark outside our windows. Don't shy away from the dark; embrace it like an old friend who gives you a different perspective on life. Not only is the fall a perfect time to engage your body with new activities -- like trail running or cold water swimming -- it is also a time to engage your brain in new ways. Here are some fun ways to keep your mind from hibernating:

- **Pick Up a New Skill.** Maybe this is your year to learn to bake a flour-less chocolate cake or make candles. Yep, that's right you can spend time learning a skill that isn't always about running, biking, or swimming. This allows your brain to explore outside of your usual daily grind.

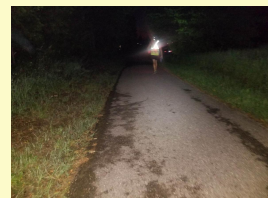


- **Stop and Listen.** The fall weather doesn't only mean cooler temperatures; it also means sounds travel further. This is a great time to reconnect with the world around us. Throw your yoga

mat in your day pack, go for a walk, find a spot, and sit and listen. This doesn't have to be out on the nature trail, maybe just your front yard or downtown. Take a moment to listen to the traffic, to the lights buzzing, to the waves, to the squirrels running in the trees. Maybe even turn those listening ears on yourself and hear your heartbeat and breathing, letting yourself connect outside and inside.



- **Change IT Up.** This can be anything from eating ice cream for breakfast to going for a bike ride in a new place. For those of you who like patterns, pick a day to commit to change. Maybe you need to tell a friend to surprise you with a new running route or ask your partner to pick a fun date night activity. Little things matter here. Believe it or not, these little changes spark our brains into action.
- **Go Out After Dark (Safely).** When you look outside at 5pm, and it is dark, it is hard not to crawl under the covers. Instead, make an evening plan. Maybe you go for a walk; be sure to have on proper reflective gear. Perhaps you play a board game; you know, not on your phone. Maybe you sit on the deck and watch the stars of clouds. Making a plan for the dark is better than sitting in the dark. Oh, and watching TV doesn't count!!



Doing these little things will help to engage your brain through the “not-so-daylight-hours” of fall, helping you to sleep better, improving your mood, and overall keeping you engaged so you aren't a moody grizzly bear come Spring.



Teresa, LMHC
Licensed Mental Health Counselor
Mere Mortals Co-Chair
Endurance Swimmer

My Unexpected Journey with Joey so Far...



I met Joey through Michelle Tierney at Mere Mortals on June 30, 2019, when she asked if I would be willing to swim with her blind friend. Little did she know, I was pretty burnt out on triathlons at that time – my mojo for road triathlon had gone by the wayside, and I was considering switching to 100% off-road racing. So – a new challenge sounded damn good!

- That day, we swam just over 350 yards at a whopping 4:15/100 yd pace.
- Then July 7th we ran 2 miles at a 9:54 pace.
- Then July 28th we rode a tandem bike together for the first time - 10 miles at 11mph.

September 22, 2019 was our first triathlon at the Tri Gulf Coast Members Only Tri (MOT). Success! Admittedly, it didn't hurt that Joey shares my off-color humor and insane ability to laugh at himself, me, and others – we had so much fun together! And yes, I maaaayy have enjoyed this new challenge just as much (if not more...) than he did!

Then...2020 happened. We all know what 2020 did to training and racing – we had to basically take a year off, just when we were learning how to navigate the ‘training as a team’ that we needed to keep moving forward. Joey had some setbacks with a couple of surgeries as well, though, so we were determined to come back strong when the way

cleared, and we could get back at it.

2021 arrived, and we started back with a swim and a bike on April 27 – with a new bike, that later we realized just wasn't the right fit (Thank you! to the guys at Truly Spokin' for ALL their patience and persistence with getting us happy on the bike!) and training schedules in place. Joey signed us up for Augusta Ironman 70.3, and we re-started our new journey. We added several events to our schedule to prep us for the big one and ended up with 6 triathlons for the year: 3 sprints, 2 Olympics, and 1 Half-Ironman.

Things we learned during training:

- The proper bike REALLY matters – thanks to Bob Walker, we had a great bike to use!
- Joey really hates to run in the summer rain – for some reason, it overheats him.
- Rednecks ANYwhere believe that spandex + tandem bike = gay (maybe the purple and pink accents help that belief too), and they don't like it and want us to know how much they don't like it!
- Joey learned that if he eats on the bike, he can run after he bikes! ☺
- Oh yeah, and motorists don't like to move over and believe we should not be running side-by-side; I guess they can't see the leash between us, and the bright yellow vest that says Blind Runner doesn't give it away either...



Joey placed 1st in every race other than Augusta, where he placed 2nd. He came in as high as 4th in the 30-34 AG (general population) and 615th Overall at Augusta, which is in the top 26%! Every race he was in the top 30% and at Santa Rosa Island Triathlon he was in the top 14%!

So, a little backstory...

Joey has always been a “big” guy, as have I.

I started my journey of weight loss in 2011, when I started racing triathlons, and I ended up losing over 100 lbs. in the process. Joey got up to 365 lbs. after suddenly losing his vision in May of 2012, due to AVM, a condition he was born with but didn't even know he had – he was 25 years old! Imagine waking up one morning and never seeing anything ever again! He was devastated, and became incredibly depressed, even to the point of considering suicide. Ironically, he realized that with his ‘bad luck’, he might even screw that up...so he decided on a different path. He pulled himself through and started running. In 2018 he moved to Pensacola and began running with Lynne Virant and the Phat Girlz at Running Wild; he ran the Dopey Challenge at a weight of 360, and finally decided that gastric sleeve surgery was the way to go, since the running just wasn't taking the weight off. Surgery at the end of 2018, and things started to look up for him.

Fast forward to 2019 when we met. He became a triathlete, and a BADASS one at that. I am honored to be his guide and friend.

[Visit the Tripossibilities Blog for the full Augusta Ironman 70.3 Race Report and follow their journey.](#)

Contact Coach Dom or Coach Helen at 850-776-2685,
or via email at tripossibilities@gmail.com,
if you're interested in coaching on ANY level.



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2021 Award Recipients

Male Athlete of the Year



This individual joined TGC in 2019 to begin training for what was his first triathlon – SRITRI.

I distinctly remember him showing up to weekly morning swims, baby and Father-in-Law in tow, for our morning dip in the Sound. He quickly became a fixture at morning swims, mere mortals, and other TGC group runs or rides. He literally began to shrink as he adopted the healthier “multi-sport” lifestyle.

He was one of the select few to finish the infamous Dec. 2019 Last Tri You’ll Do... this Year, which may have involved a celebratory shot of authentic Scratch Ankle Whiskey from Milton. I could barely keep up with him then.

He continued through 2020 as he stayed more active than a lot of us throughout the pandemic.

This year, I had no chance at keeping up with him as he keeps getting faster and faster, even picking up podium spots along the way. He’s doing something right, and we don’t share an age group so I happily cheer him on.

He’s a positive ambassador for the sport and always a smiling & encouraging face on the course.

2021 Male Athlete of The Year – Ryan Crisco.

Female Athlete of the Year

Our next award goes to a deserving individual who hasn’t always been a triathlete. In fact, this person started out as a non-swimmer... meaning, I’m pretty sure they couldn’t (or at the very least wouldn’t) swim. On a paddleboard, she was a great asset for water support and gladly dedicated a season or more coming to mere mortals and working as water support.



I’ve always known her to be athletic. Road, trail, obstacle running, cross-fit, cycling, you name it, she’s done it. Then, I guess her Tri friends wore her down and a beast of a triathlete was unleashed. She’s dominating triathlons of every distance, with #4 division ranks at 2019 & 2021 Augusta 70.3, and even completing that 140.6 mile challenge many triathletes strive for.

2021 Female Athlete of The Year – Carol Gentry.

Male Rookie of the Year



There is a lot to be said for enthusiasm. This athlete has it by the truck load. The entire board noticed his infectious excitement about Mere Mortals and triathlon this season.

I’ve never seen him without a smile. Each week, I looked forward to his after-Mere Mortals social media post. Many of the board members helped take those photos for him!

When he’s not engaged in swim/bike/run, he’s actively transforming his front yard into an impressive, productive micro farm, of which those spoils are available at the Palafox Farmer’s Market or kayaking our local waterways.

2021 Male Rookie of The Year – Greg Miller.

Female Rookie of the Year

I’m not entirely sure what brought our next athlete to triathlon, but I’m glad she made the

leap to multi-sport.

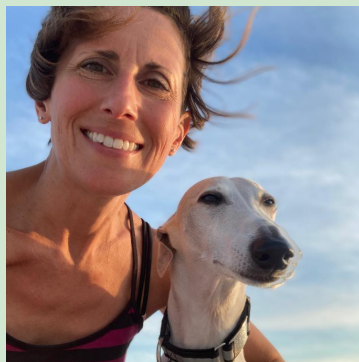
She brings an awesome combination of competitiveness AND encouragement that can be unusual toward the front of the pack.

To-date she has easily sailed through Sprint and Olympic triathlons and countless run races, all the while improving her swim skills dramatically.



She's a consistent fixture on the podium and a happy presence pre- & post-race & Mere Mortals & TPC Weekly Swims.

2021 Female Rookie of the Year – Lisa Aylstock.



Charlie Knight Volunteer of the Year

This athlete showed up early at one of the first Mere Mortals this year, asked what needed to be done, and then did it. Then she came back and asked for more. It was like this every weekend, from start to finish.

- Mix hydration – done.
- Setup mist tent – figured out.
- Kayak water support – easy.
- Pass out bag tags – more.
- Lend a hand at registration – yep.
- Build a bike rack – okay.

Looking back, I think she aided in every aspect of Mere Mortals at one point or another.

Recovering from an injury that kept her from training this year, this Ironman athlete wanted to stay involved and give back. AND she did at every opportunity.

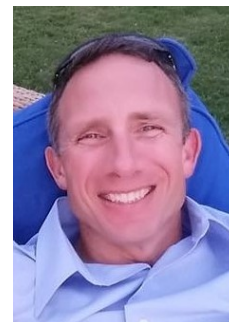
2021 Volunteer of the Year – Jeanette Plichta.

Grace Ruckstuhl Swimmer of the Year

This year's athlete is an extremely fast runner, decent cyclist, and an ok swimmer. He suffers from swim anxiety. It's not uncommon as many triathletes deal with these same issues before and during the swim.

His swim anxiety came to a head during the 2021 Pensacola Triathlon. There was some confusion at the canon that resulted in a false start. Athletes had to come back to shore and start again. As a result, he re-entered the water last but had a panic attack in that rough, choppy, washing machine swim. He pulled himself from the race, took the DNF, and worked the rest of the year so it wouldn't happen again.

Undeterred, he kept plugging away, joining in at almost every single TPC Friday morning swim and on Sundays with Mere Mortals. During 2021 he was able to continue racing and improve his swimming drastically which is why he has earned the 2021 Swimmer of the Year Award.



2021 Swimmer of the Year – Kevin Kropp.

Tom Henderson Mentor of the Year

As most of you know the athletic abilities of participates in Mere Mortals runs the gamut from absolute newbie to seasoned athlete. Many often wonder, "Why would a seasoned, iron-distance, athlete come to a largely short-course practice?" The answer is: inspiration and the opportunity to give back. A lot of us seasoned athletes see the excitement new athletes experience and get to re-live our own



feelings and memories from when we were just starting out. We also get to offer advice and help mold the next generation of triathletes.

This year's award recipient, for years has been out there encouraging and offering advice to athletes in need. One instance is seared into my memory. The swim is the source for most triathlete anxiety. A few years ago we had a particular athlete who just couldn't conquer those feelings. He would hit the water, swim to the first buoy, panic, and turn back. This year's mentor noticed and took it upon herself to get this struggling athlete around the course. She swam next to the athlete shouting encouragement and prodding him to swim farther... to the next kayak... to the next buoy... to the next turn. And the athlete was doing it. It was inspiring. As the athlete was almost done with his first successful swim loop, he stopped, went vertical, and projectile vomited. Without missing a beat, our mentor splashed the vomit to the side, looked the athlete in the eyes, and shouted, "It's okay. It happens. You're almost there. Keep swimming. You can do this!"

She has consistently helped a lot of new athletes get used to open water swimming and overcome other obstacles to become better triathletes. Her patience, persistence, and dedication to the club and our athletes is why she is this year's Mentor of the Year.

2021 Mentor of the Year – Teresa Hess.

Events

3rd Annual Swenson 10K Fun Run World Cup Extravaganza Invitational 5K

*TGC Nov. Group Run

November 21 : [REGISTER](#)



[Krul Lake Half](#) (trail)
November 20



[Pensacola Turkey Trot](#)
5K
November 25



[Ho Ho Hustle](#) 5K
December 11



[The Last Tri You'll Do... in 2021](#)

*TGC Dec. Group Workout
December 26



Check these resources for local events that span our membership area and beyond.

- [Pensacola Sports: Running Pensacola](#)
- [Run Pensacola](#)
- [Pensacola Runners Association Calendar](#)
- [RunningintheUSA](#)
- [TriFind](#)
- [USA Swimming](#)

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