

HUMAN () RACE



NEWS, TRENDS, and REGULAR RUNNERS doing AMAZING THINGS



THE TRANSFORMATION

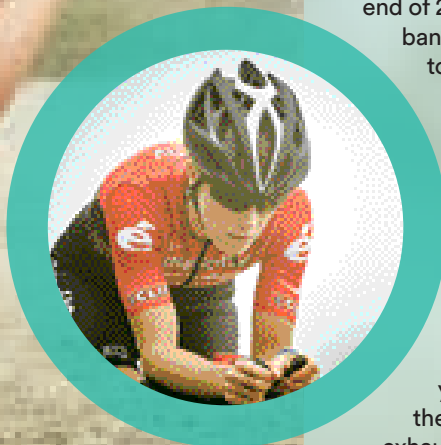
CAREER CHANGE

A former Wall Street financier now earns a living as a pro triathlete.

Sarah Piampiano was at a SoHo bar in 2009 when a longtime friend threw down a challenge: He bet she couldn't beat him in a triathlon. Maybe it was her competitive drive or her cocktail-influenced judgment—or both. Regardless, the decision to do the race changed her life. Back then, Piampiano worked in acquisitions and mergers at HSBC Securities in New York City. Her career was so consuming that she routinely sacrificed sleep and food in the name of the job. Piampiano won the bet—beating her friend in the Olympic-distance triathlon—and had an awakening. She stopped smoking, made lifestyle changes, and by the end of 2011, after nine years in banking, moved to California

to launch a new career—as a pro triathlete. In April, she won the Ironman 70.3 New Orleans for the third time, and this October, she'll compete in the Ironman World Championship in Kona (2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride, and 26.2-mile run), where she finished seventh last year. Like her old career, the new one is intense and exhausting. But that's where the similarities end. Turn the page to see how Piampiano made the switch.

—NICK WELDON



"Winning Kona is my long-term goal," says Piampiano, who is sponsored by Saucony, Clif, and others. "I will get there. This year, I'm aiming for a top-three finish."

PHOTOGRAPH BY FINISHERPIX/COURTESY OF SARAH PIAMPIANO (RUNNING IN WETSUIT)



Piampiano before making a lifestyle switch (near right) and winning Ironman 70.3 New Orleans in April (far right).



THEN	HABIT	NOW
 <p>"I averaged one to three hours a night. I'd get home from work between 1 and 2 a.m. I'd often have conference calls with China in the middle of the night. I'd pull all-nighters."</p>	<p>SLEEP</p>	 <p>She's still up early—sometimes at 4:15 a.m.—but it's to swim or bike. And it's always after getting eight to 10 hours of sleep. "I'm in bed between 7:45 p.m. and 8:30 p.m."</p>
 <p>She worked six days, 100 hours a week. "I had a gym membership for four years, but the only time I went was when I gutted my apartment and had to use the gym's shower."</p>	<p>WORKWEEK</p>	 <p>About 30 hours a week are dedicated to training (including strength work). An additional 10 are divvied up between her massage therapist, chiropractor, and nutritionist.</p>
 <p>A typical day was grilled cheese for lunch and a sushi roll—ordered into the office—for dinner. She never cooked, and she guzzled Red Bull—three or four cans a day.</p>	<p>DIET</p>	 <p>Ten well-balanced meals and snacks. "I'm pretty much always hungry." She now cooks everything herself. She even makes her own almond butter and applesauce.</p>
 <p>"I used to sleep with my BlackBerry set to vibrate on my chest so that I would wake up if anybody called. I was accessible at all times."</p>	<p>DEVICES</p>	 <p>Polar V800 GPS watch and Power-Tap Joule cycling computer. As for her phone? "I go into 'ghost mode' a few days before an event. I operate best being in my own headspace."</p>
 <p>She picked up smoking to get breaks from her desk. "It was part of the culture. It wasn't uncommon for me to smoke two packs a day." She quit cold turkey after her first triathlon.</p>	<p>RITUALS</p>	 <p>"I always wear a new pair of socks on race day."</p>
 <p>"Having a relationship was challenging. The only people you could really date were also in banking, but even then I couldn't have a quality relationship because of the hours."</p>	<p>RELATIONSHIPS</p>	 <p>She lives with her chiropractor boyfriend. "Mike is very accepting of the athlete lifestyle, which is extremely structured. He's an avid cyclist and we often ride together."</p>
 <p>"My friends and I would go out to dinner, drink a ton of wine and mixed drinks, and stay out until the bars closed at 4 a.m."</p>	<p>FRIDAY NIGHTS</p>	 <p>"Mike and I may go out to dinner at 5:30 p.m., have a glass of wine, and buy some non-dairy, non-exciting ice cream to take home."</p>
 <p>"I was attracted to the cutthroat culture, long hours, and intensity. I love to be pushed to my absolute physical, mental, and emotional limits, and banking did that for me."</p>	<p>LIFE SATISFACTION</p>	 <p>"I love, love being a triathlete. Competing pushes me more than banking did, and it enables me to have a healthier lifestyle. It's so demanding, and that brings me happiness."</p>

COURTESY OF SARAH PIAMPIANO (PARTYING); FINISHERPIX/COURTESY OF SARAH PIAMPIANO (RACE WIN); D. HURST/ALAMY (CLOCK); MITCH MANDEL (DUMB BELLS, BIKE, RED BULL); BERT FOLSOM/ALAMY (TOAST); COURTESY OF POLAR (WATCH); RYAN OLSZEWSKI (SOCKS); SVETLANA FOOT/ALAMY (ICE CREAM); NIKREATES/ALAMY (MEDAL); PHOTODISC (CALCULATOR); ALAMY (WINE); IMAGE CLUB GRAPHICS (BRIEFCASE); MICHAEL BURRELL/ALAMY (CIGARETTES); IAN DAGNALL/ALAMY (BLACKBERRY); MILE ATANASOV/ALAMY (SHOWER); BLOKWINN/ALAMY (MOON)