



## LONDON CALLING: LISA NORDEN

Lisa Norden didn't have a greatest start to her 2011 season when injury kept her out of the results and eventually out of the game. Sensibly, she took time off and recovered properly. Norden, who is one of the strongest all round short course female athletes, returned to racing mid season at the 5150 Hy-Vee event, which she won. If this wasn't enough she went on to take fourth at the ITU World Championship Grand Final in Beijing, before going on to win the LA Triathlon and the US Open Triathlon in Dallas. It showed the time off not only helped her recover from the injury, but also helped her return to the sport even stronger. Norden, originally from Kristianstad, Sweden, now spends much of her time training in Canberra, Australia under the watchful eye of coach, Darren Smith. This year she promises to be in the shape of her life as she prepares for second Olympics in London this August.

### **Tell us about you sporting past before triathlon?**

I was always good at sports in school, enjoyed being outdoors and active. My main thing was horse riding and obviously that took up a lot of my time. I started when I was six and got pretty serious about it. I did some running to maintain my general fitness and stay in shape.

### **How did you get into triathlon?**

Back in 2000 I cycled to Italy with my mum. The trip there was a bit of a dream of hers and she turned 40 the day we reached the Mediterranean. When I came home I saw this advert for a local triathlon and thought: "I could do that because I've spent all summer on my bike". I had a terrible swim (I breaststroked my way around) but made up some ground on the bike. In general I enjoyed myself, but it a couple of years before I started to train more seriously.

### **How did your 2011 season go?**

My base phase and pre-season was totally destroyed by injury. I spent most of my time either in the pool, at the physio or rehabbing some part of my body. I went through various MRI's and appointments with doctors, but never managed to pinpoint what was wrong. More importantly, I never managed to get back into run training. I went through the motions at the races in Sydney (finished ninth) and Madrid (finished 12th) on just water running. By the time we moved into June and I'd still not sorted my troubles I realised I had to pull the pin. I went over to Ireland to see Gerard Hartmann hoping he would be able to help me, which he did. Hartmann did far more than diagnosing an inflamed flexor hallucis longus. He made sure I got the right treatment, rest and rehab for it, but also gave me a bit to think about in terms of

who I am and what I want to achieve. I left Ireland lighter and richer in many ways.

### **How long were you out for?**

It took a further four weeks rest before I could resume my run training. It was baby steps to start with adding small increments each week. I raced in London mainly as a tourist and for the chance to inspect the Olympic course. Then things started to pick up because I had kept my self in shape through swimming and biking, and my overall fitness wasn't too bad.

### **Tell us how you turned this around?**

I found out I had been given an invitation to race Hy-Vee in Des Moines just 10 days before. I took the chance and rebooked my flights to Beijing. From there I had a run of good results. I won Hy-Vee, came fourth at the Beijing World Championship Final, came seventh at the WCS in Yokohama, won the LA Triathlon and won in Dallas. This run of races is one of the biggest achievements in my career. To kick back from the injury, and then manage myself through the travels and training to come out stronger was an amazing experience. It was a challenging task. I was playing on new ground and had no idea what to expect from myself. It was great to be able to finish the year in that way. This was a complete turnaround from the first part of the season.

### **You had a bike crash early season, which left you with stitches. How did that affect you?**

Apart from being a bit beaten up it wasn't that bad. In the grand scheme I had much bigger problems than a few bruises and stitches. Mentally it was challenging because it felt like so many things were working against me. It also kept me away from swimming for a bit - one of the few things I actually could do. >







"It will be my second Olympics, being there representing my country is a huge honour"



## CheckIn



**Which results over recent years are you most proud of and why?**

The Hy-Vee win has to be up there because I had to work so hard on the day. It meant so much to me to win there. It was far more will than fitness that got me through, and I think I dug deeper than ever before. The Hamburg WCS win in 2010 is another highlight, again this was a return from injury, and great revenge to finally beat Emma Moffatt in a sprint.

**What is it like doing the big ITU races?**

To be honest it is a bit scary. There are so many good girls out there and the depth is impressive. You know you are likely to get the crap beaten out of you in the swim and the run will be redlining for most of it. But once

the gun goes I tend to enjoy myself quite a lot. That excitement, and later, the feeling of accomplishment, is what gets me out training every day.

**What have you learned from racing the big ITU races over recent years?**

I guess I have calmed down a bit and learnt more tactical skills. Having done quite a few I have learnt to race more conservatively. The past years have also highlighted the importance of staying injury free and getting uninterrupted phases of training. Consistency is the most important part of training in our sport.

**You also raced in the team event last year. How was that?**

The team event was fun, but hard! I find the

short distances very painful and a bit of a shock to the system. I have taken the first leg both times and there's a lot of pressure not to screw up. You always want to hand over to your teammate in the best possible position.

**Do you think this has a future in the sport?**

I really hope so. I think it is exciting to watch and it's a great showcase of our sport.

**Would you like to see this added to the Olympic roster?**

Definitely.

**What's it like being on the huge Specialized team with so many top triathletes?**

It's very inspirational and a lot of fun. The best part is they not only have talent, but big personalities. They're all class acts and fun people to hang out with.

**What's it like when you see yourself in full page Specialized adverts?**

I must admit that is a bit freaky, and it made me realise how far I have come from the horsey girl who couldn't swim.

**What are your plans for the early part of the 2012 season?**

I'm working on re-establishing my base and I'm not in a great rush to get out racing. I'll compete in ITU events in Mooloolaba and Sydney before heading over to San Diego to race there. That won't exhaust me and it will keep me in the World Championship Series.

**Where will you be based (Australia?)**

I'm in Canberra with my coach (Darren Smith) and team right now, and will stay here until the ITU event in Sydney. There will be a shorter camp in the US before San Diego, then I'll be heading to Davos. It's like a home away from home now, I'm looking forward to spending the rest of the time leading up to the Games there.

**Have you qualified for your Olympic team?**

Yes, I'm all set to go. I was in the first group of Swedish athletes to receive their official nomination in November last year. My own ticket is booked, as well as most of my family and friends!

**Will you be targeting certain races in 2012?**

The Games will be the main one obviously. But I'll also look for a good overall result in the World Championship Series and defend my title at the Hy-Vee 5150.

**Is your training already building towards the Olympics?**

Yes.

**If so, what are you doing to get ready for this?**

Well, I tend to swim, bike and run most days (laughs). As I mentioned earlier I'm building my base right now. Then the plan is to take my fitness up another level from where it has been before. I'm working with my coach, Darren Smith, and he is a very smart guy. I know he has planned for London for a long time, and the past seasons have all been a part of the bigger picture.

**Are you doing anything differently?**

Not really. Trying to keep things simple. Just do it better.

**How many hours do you need to train etc?**

I tend to average between 20 and 30 hours a week depending on the intensity and the period.



**What's it like working with Darren Smith?**

He has set up a strong group of world-class athletes and apart from one we are all racing ITU events and working on making our respective Olympic teams. We are all from different countries and representing pretty much all but a few of the continents. Barbara Riveros (CHI), Sarah Groff (USA), Vicky Holland (GB), Kate Roberts (RSA), Anne Haug (GER), Bart Aernouts (BEL) and Andreas Gigmayer (AUS) are all on the team.

**What are your strengths?**

I'm a solid athlete now without any major weaknesses. I tend to run well off a hard bike, which is my major advantage at races.

**Weaknesses?**

I'm still not bulletproof in the swim and I have more to work on when it comes to pure speed on the run.

**How important is the mental side of racing?**

Super important. It's a lot about your own demons out there and what you choose to do with them.

**How do you deal with this?**

I tend to thrive in a race situation. I enjoy competing and being a bit nervous works to my advantage most of the time.

**What would it mean to you to make it to the start line in London?**

It will be my second Olympics, being there representing my country is a huge honour in itself. I am hoping to do more than just compete, though. I'd love to have the race of my life on the streets of London. The Olympics is the pinnacle of our sport, and to get that right, would mean a lot to me in terms of personal satisfaction and achievement.

**What would you like to achieve in London?**

I think a medal is what most of us work for. Anything else but a medal doesn't really matter in the Games. If I can walk away from Hyde Park feeling I've done myself justice, having got everything out of myself, I'd be happy.

**What do you think of the London course?**

Unfortunately, it's a very flat race. I would have loved to see a more challenging bike course, but it will be fast and very scenic. The crowd is in for a treat.

**You didn't seem to have a great race in London. What happened?**

I was still recovering from my injury and came in to the race after a four-week period with no running and very little biking. Anything better than 30th would have been a bit of a miracle. I was there to have a look at the course and work on my travel plan, not to be in contention. It was still a tough day mentally. I hate not being up near the front.

**What do you think it will take to get a good result here?**

A great swim followed by a supersonic speedy run.

**What are your goals and targets for this race?**

A great swim followed by a supersonic speedy run (laughs). I want to go home feeling like I have given it everything, both in the training leading up to the Games, and out on the course on August 4.

**What does Lisa Norden do to relax away from triathlon?**

I like my cooking and baking. A nice afternoon off would include an enjoyable coffee, a trip to the fresh food market and a home cooked dinner. I also spend a bit of time trying to figure out my Nikon D3100. I enjoy photography and it's a great complement to my blogging.

**How does it feel to be a triathlete when you wanted to be an airhostess or princess as a kid?**

Ha Ha. I think this option is pretty good. And

it is still not too late to marry a prince, so I won't completely discard that option just yet. To be honest I think I have one of the best offices in the world. I love to train and I love to compete. I wouldn't change it for the world. And really, after having flying across the world a few times I no longer have any desire to work as an airhostess.

**What you up to over the next month or so?**

Up until the ITU event Mooloolaba on March 24/25 I'll just work away on the basics, nothing fancy, just plain honest work. 

