

HumanRace

NEWS, TRENDS, AND REGULAR RUNNERS DOING AMAZING THINGS →

NO KIDDING

At 16, Lussi has already completed 33 triathlons.



Youth Movement

A teenage triathlete sets his sights on making Americans—and not just kids—much fitter

BY MIKE WISE

ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO, during the last leg of a half-Ironman triathlon, a man running next to Hunter Lussi inquired about his age marking—the big, bold numbers in black, indelible ink on his spindly right calf. “Are you really 12?” the man asked.

Like any kid competing in a swim-bike-run grind of 70.3 miles—because, really, what child yet to reach puberty hasn’t already done a half-Ironman?—Hunter did the right thing when approached by a stranger. “Dad, can I talk to this guy?” he asked Craig Lussi, who was accompanying his son that day. “Yeah, yeah, sure,” Hunter’s father said. →



CAPITAL GAINS

Lussi setting his ChesapeakeMan PR and lobbying for a fitness tax credit.

After Hunter confirmed he was indeed 12, the stunned runner responded, "That's amazing. I just bought my kid a \$1,000 bike, but he won't ride it." Hunter made a suggestion: "Why don't you go ride with your son?" The man looked at Hunter and said, "HmMMM, that's a good idea."

Turns out, Hunter is full of good ideas to help get Americans—both kids and their parents—fitter. "There's no reason we have to be out of shape as a country," says the 16-year-old with three Ironman-distance finishes to his name.

To inspire change, Hunter has written a book, *America, Get Off the Couch!*, and launched his own fitness program, America's Tri for Health, through which he encourages people to try a beginner-friendly triathlon—swim 20 laps at a pool, pedal an exercise bike for 45 minutes or 10 miles, run or walk for 2.5 miles. He also has taken his campaign to Washington, D.C. Last March, he visited Capitol Hill to lobby for \$1,000 in tax credits for those who exercise 50 times a year. Then,

in July, Hunter sent a formal request to the White House to have Labor Day be named America's Tri for Health Day. Around the country people would train with virtual training buddies for multi-sport events to be held that day. (At press time the request was still under review.)

The Kensington, Maryland, teen is leading by example. He did his first triathlon (a 500-yard swim, 10-mile bike, and 2.5-mile run) at age 6. Since then, Hunter has finished 32 more, including the 2007 ChesapeakeMan Ultra Triathlon in Cambridge, Maryland, where, at 13, he became the youngest person to complete a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike, and 26.2-mile run. He'll attempt it for the fourth time on September 25.

Whether Hunter's a once-in-a-generation athletic phenom or a much younger and more tolerable Richard Simmons—or both—is unclear. But he's serious about getting Americans moving.

"If I can get people thinking about taking care of themselves, that is bigger than

any competition I do," says Hunter, a high school junior. "Like any kid, I love video games and TV. But getting off the couch is important. Parents say they don't have time, and teenagers say they don't want to be seen with their parents. But that's an excuse. I'm sure most teenagers would like to do something with their parents."

The Lussis are certainly an athletic bunch. Craig, 49, competes with his son—even though Hunter routinely drops his dad—while Mom Jeannette, 47, has done five Ironmans.

Controversy comes with being such a young man competing in such incredible endurance challenges. A member of the International Triathlon Union initially called Hunter's ultratriathlon entrance at 13 "child abuse." And the Ironman World Championship held in Kona, Hawaii, forbids competitors under the age of 18.

Hunter is willing to wait for his turn in Hawaii. Besides, he's plenty busy. This November, the kid is scheduled to talk with 600 gym teachers in Maine. Then he plans to hit the Hill again, which seems to matter more to him than any physical manifestation he needs to conquer. In March, before he left members of Congress, Hunter paused and thought, *If I was here every day, all day long, the country would be a lot healthier.* **EW**

HUNTER'S WEEKLY TRAINING LOAD INCLUDES 50-70 MILES OF SWIMMING, 90-100 MILES OF BIKING, AND 20-25 MILES OF RUNNING.

THE INTERSECTION Where running and culture collide

TALL ORDER

Shaquille O'Neal challenges 100-meter sprinter Tyson Gay to a race on his reality show, *Shaq Vs.*

GUEST OF HONOR

Prince Harry joins wounded vets at the Achilles Hope & Possibility five-miler in Central Park.

SIDE GIG

Marathoner Kara Goucher designs an inspirational greeting card and T-shirt.

PATRIOT ACT

At the International AIDS Conference, Bill Clinton reveals a bucket-list goal: "I'd like to run a marathon before I give out."

ROLE MODEL

Sprinter Allyson Felix is appointed to the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition by Michelle Obama in June.



THE LATEST

Updates on runners who've appeared on our pages



In July, **Andrew Hudis** (left) and **Phil Carlitz** (Heroes, December 2009) held the second Tribe-to-Tribe Marathon in Mae Sariang, Thailand. Proceeds fund an orphanage and pay school fees for Myanmarese refugees in Thailand. The high school seniors, both 17 and now applying to college, have raised about \$50,000 and are on track to reach their goal of \$262,000 by June.

SAFETY FIRST

I was disappointed to read Miles's advice about leaving a cell phone at home ("Ask Miles," October). On a run with two friends, I had a grand mal seizure. I shudder to think what might have happened if we hadn't had a phone. I respect the need to unplug on a run, but why not bring your phone and turn the ringer off?

—L.M., via e-mail

SEPARATE WAYS

I identified with "Mars and Venus Go for a Run" (October). My husband is my best friend, and I could spend 24 hours a day with him—except when I'm running. Aside from our paces being different, running is one thing I like to do on my own.

—STACY LYNCH, Aken, Texas

CHILD'S PLAY

I commend Hunter Lussi on his impressive physical achievements ("Youth Movement," Human Race, October). More impressive is his dedication to the health of the nation. As a nurse, I see many people with health problems that could be avoided. Keep up the good work, Hunter.

—MANDIE MYERS, Plano, Illinois

FOR THE RECORD: In "Youth Movement," we stated that Lussi swims 50 to 70 miles a week. He covers 50,000 to 70,000 meters per week (or about 31 to 43 miles).

[Send comments to letters@runnersworld.com. If published, you'll receive an RW T-shirt.]

CONTRIBUTORS



SARAH LORGE BUTLER

In profiling Special Olympics coach Lester Loner and 2009 New York City Marathon winner Meb Keflezighi for "Heroes" (page 67), Butler found similarities between men with different backgrounds. "They're humble about their achievements, and they deflect credit to others," says Butler. She also interviewed actor Scott Bakula for "I'm a Runner" (page 124).

KATY LEMAY

Photomontages have their own creative challenges, says the Quebec-based illustrator. "I like the fact there is a part that I don't control." In the artwork that accompanies "Get Fired Up" (page 58), she incorporates flames to represent "the feeling inside to go further." Lemay's work has run in Time, Elle, The Washington Post, and The New York Times.



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