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September 16th 2016

## Natascha Badmann: The Biggest Smile on Ali'i

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*The Swiss triathlon legend will celebrate her last time racing as a professional in Kona.*

by Jennifer Ward

No fan of triathlon will be surprised to see Natascha Badmann's name on this year's IRONMAN World Championship women's professional start list. The six-time IRONMAN world champion turns 50 this year, and will celebrate her final professional race on the island synonymous with long-course triathlon.

Badmann was the first European woman to win the IRONMAN World Championship in 1998 (pictured below), and she went on to win in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2005. Badmann placed second in 1996 and 2003 as well, and came sixth in 2012 among a field including Mirinda Carfrae, Leanda Cave, and Caroline Steffen. Badmann also won the 1995 Duathlon World Championship, which she cites on her website as one of her proudest moments in sport—together with her first Kona win.



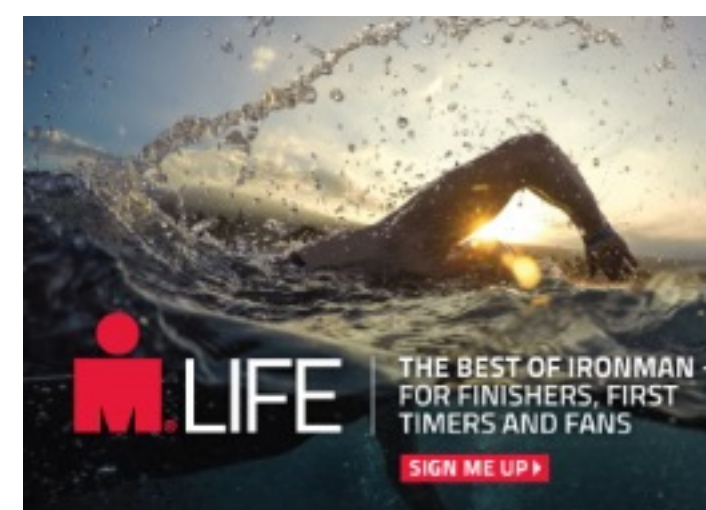
Born in Basel but currently residing Winznau with her husband Toni, (also her coach and nutritionist) and daughter Anastasia, Badmann has enjoyed a long career as a triathlete and social worker.

Also known as the "Swiss Miss," the athlete was a strong cyclist, and still holds two of the top ten women's professional course records (4:52:26 in 2002 and 4:52:00 in 2003). She rode a rare,

out of production Cheetah bike for much of her career, which propelled her to historic sub-5 hour splits on

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various IRONMAN courses. Badmann could follow her prowess up with a run to rival the best in the sport. Her time of 9:07:54, which won her the crown in 2002, remains her best time at the distance.

In addition to her talent and fierce competitiveness, it was rare to see the athlete without a wide smile on her face—a smile she wore proudly from the start all the way to the finish line. Off course, Badmann was the same: gracious, spunky, and full of joy.

But it's not her athleticism or her photogenic smile that we'll all remember her for. Over her long and successful career, Badmann has displayed a lifelong commitment to the sport of triathlon: In 2012, she won IRONMAN South Africa for the fourth time at the age of 45. This puts her in some special company, including eight-time winner Paula Newby Fraser (the only woman to win more times than Badmann) who was 42 when she won IRONMAN Korea in 2004, and Fernanda Keller was 44 when she won IRONMAN Brazil that same year.

With her 50th birthday just around the corner in December, Badmann reminds us all what it is to be ageless—full of the same zest and ambition that age groupers like Lew Hollander demonstrate. This race—nor this sport—doesn't belong to the young bucks. It belongs to anyone who can find themselves in the journey of swim, bike, and run.


*Editor's note: Because Badmann did not qualify under the KPR and was offered a "wild card" slot to the event to commemorate her retirement from professional racing, she is not eligible for the automatic qualification as her last win (2005) did not fall within the five year window. Her invitation to this race does not allow her to be eligible for awards, qualifying points, or pro prize money. Badmann will, however, compete in the professional wave.*


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