



STRONGER Together

Paratriathlon is growing in popularity across the province. Meet the modern training groups leading the way!

By Erin O'Sullivan

The forces behind Fitness Dynamics are helping shape the way athletes with disabilities train, socialize and compete in paratriathlon. Fitness Dynamics is a highly-specialized group of endurance-based coaches who have competed or trained in any, or all, of the paratriathlon disciplines (swimming, biking and running) and are using that expertise to guide future paratriathlon athletes to success. This program is currently based in the Ottawa area with coaching options available in Toronto as well.

Michel Elibani, the Ottawa-based founder of Fitness Dynamics, believes in working with athletes overcome obstacles and lays out a plan to do just that by asking a few key questions: "How do we put them on the right path? Can they train within our group? What can we do to get them to the next spot?"

There are many aspects to paratriathlon training that can seem overwhelming for a beginner. One of the strongest benefits to the program is the leadership within the community being the voice and guide of the program. New para athletes are partnered with a volunteer who trains alongside them and teaches safe training practices, how to use the adaptive equipment and, most importantly, helps motivate and encourage newcomers to keep returning to the program.

Volunteers even assist with transportation to and from the training facility to help minimize the costs of training. No athlete is turned away for financial reasons which helps build a loyal team that together creates a sustainable training structure. Participants want to come back!

One key aspect to the success of the program is the strong commu-



nity network and para leadership within. Fitness Dynamics works with partner organizations and shares training tools to help build everyone up. Where there are training gaps or barriers to address, there is someone willing to find a solution.

Sasha Boulton is a paratriathlon athlete and triathlon coach who lives in Toronto. She works closely with para athletes throughout the program and continues to push herself

as an athlete and trainer on the best practices for enhancing the experience for these groups.

Boulton leads popular weekly Skype sessions where participants join together in the early hours of the day to train from different locations across Ontario and support each other on the journey. Numbers for these training sessions have tripled within the last year, with more para athletes becoming interested in the program and finding the community aspect very appealing.

"If you've come and you've never done triathlon, we welcome you. There's no attitude; everyone is coming to train," says Elibani.

The program is fully integrated, meaning everyone trains together with individual needs being addressed and adapted to suit each athlete.

Mentorship helps the program stay strong and grow; athletes meet, train with, and learn from others who share similar stories and experiences. There are always opportunities to hear from those who have faced similar challenges.

If interested in learning more about the Fitness Dynamics program, visit www.fitnessdynamics.ca for more information.