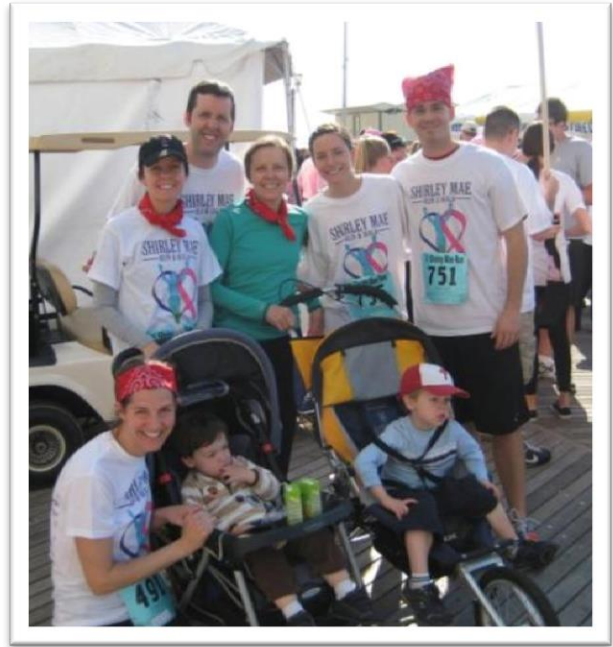
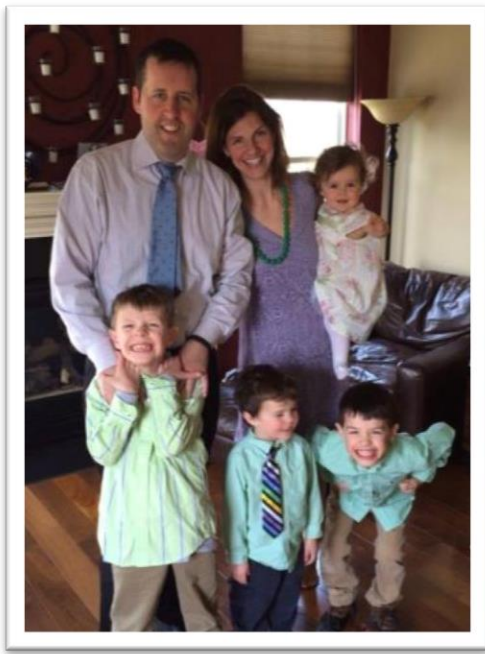


About a Gator #54: Jen Ruiz

March 2016



1. **SVYMG:** What is your endurance sports background?

Jen: My endurance sports background is very limited. After our 3rd (and so-thought last) child was about one year old, I started running and training for a half marathon. I joked that I was running AWAY, but like most jokes, there was a bit of truth to it. Running was an escape from the chaos, a few selfish moments where no one needed me. It was my salvation. About ¾ of the way through the plan, I found out I was pregnant. Doc gave the ok to continue, so I did the race, and then after the baby was born, I started training for another half marathon. With four kids, I needed something for myself more than ever. My running background is brief, but my multi-sport background is practically non-existent! My in-laws have been doing triathlons for years, and last summer they convinced me to do Avalon's Islandman Triathlon. I was really worried about the ocean swim since my swim experience consisted of jumping waves with my kids. I followed a plan mostly focused on swimming and was ready to go the morning of the race. As I was pulling on my borrowed wetsuit in the transition area, they announced that the swim was CANCELED. Not about to waste all that precious time training, I quickly signed up for Wildwood's Queen of the Crest Triathlon. That swim went off as planned, and my first tri was in the books.

2. **SVYMG:** What are your top 3 endurance sports goals?

Jen: My goals are...

1. Complete a marathon.
2. Relax in open water... I love the pool, but I backstroked most of the Queen of the Crest swim.
3. Complete a half Ironman distance event - YIKES!!! (See #2)

3. **SVYMG:** What has been your favorite race in which you've participated?

Jen: I really enjoyed Queen of the Crest. I was so nervous, and everyone was so supportive. The energy surrounding the whole event was amazing. And it didn't hurt that I got a tiara at the end :)

4. **SVYMG:** What is the race that you'd most like to do?

Jen: Since I've signed up for Ironman Atlantic City 70.3, my sights are set on just finishing that.

5. **SVYMG:** What song would you most like to hear at the starting line of a race? How about the finish line?

Jen: Gosh, I'm the worst with music. I listen to whatever the kids won't scream about. For a long time, I ran in complete silence because it was such a relaxing change. Now I just listen to iHeartRadio. My oldest is constantly watching clips of Darren Sproles set to Dizzee Rascal's "Heart of a Warrior", which I truly enjoy despite hearing it 17,000 times. I think "Girl on Fire" by Alicia Keys is pretty uplifting. And probably completely inappropriate Nathaniel Rateliff's "S.O.B." always gets me fired up when it comes on while I'm running. Maybe that's a good post-race song :)

6. **SVYMG:** What has been your best endurance sports experience to date?

Jen: I really had no idea what to expect for my first tri, but somehow, unbelievably, I ended up getting 2nd in my age group. It was completely shocking but also pretty awesome.

7. **SVYMG:** Do you have an endurance sports tip or two that you'd like to share?

Jen: I really don't have any words of wisdom; however a friend taught me a tip that recently came in handy... Stuff some newspaper into your wet sneakers and it dries them out like a magic trick!

8. **SVYMG:** If you have one, who is your favorite professional endurance sports athlete?

Jen: All of you guys!!! Honestly, I am so new to this sport, I really don't follow any professionals. I am inspired by those of you I see every day putting in the hard work and tackling amazing accomplishments.

9. **SVYMG:** What is one interesting thing about yourself that has nothing to do with endurance sports that you'd like to share?

Jen: I am an electrical engineer by degree, but for the last 12 years or so I've worked in the aerospace field at Lockheed Martin. I've been fortunate to be able to work part-time since having kids.

10. **SVYMG:** Any other background info you'd like to share?

Jen: I have an incredibly supportive husband, Zac. Sometimes he teases me that his second job is supporting my training. Again all jokes are founded in some truth... I think that when I cross the finish line, he should get a medal too :) We have four children: Christian (8), Max (6), Andrew (4), and Ella (2)... Our house is full of energy!

