

Post Crescent
Call it Raw Talent or Rob Talent
By Gloria West
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What is talent? What is “raw” talent? According to the dictionary it is a person who possesses some innate unusual ability. For a guy like Rob Yamry I would even call his “unusual ability” kind of “scary” as it has come out of nowhere. Maybe I’m just getting spooked being so close to Halloween. That is the only way I can describe Rob Yamry. Rob is a traditional, quiet kind of guy who recently took up a fun activity called the Ironman. It still seems impossible to me or as I said kind of scary because this kid has come from nowhere placing 19th overall at the 2008 Wisconsin Ironman with a time of 9:36.

Rob, who now resides in Freedom and works at Kimberly School District grew up in the remote town of Niagara, Wisconsin. How could a guy do so well in such a grueling sport that he just started doing a few years ago? I had to keep probing him, as I thought there was some kind of athletic rootedness to his superb recent performance. For sure he must have had some type of endurance background. I thought to probe deeper and asked him if he grew up on a farm? My last question was if his real dad Arnold Schwarzenegger? To my surprise, he gave a simple “no” to all of the above.

Here is his baffling confession, “Well I played a little football when I lived in Niagara, but I wasn’t really into it. I never ran or did anything like that. My mom did marathons at times and tried to get my brothers and me to run with her back then, but no way. As young kids we just couldn’t see ourselves running with our mom.” After high school he lifted weights for a few years. Then around 2005, Rob had this kernel of an idea maybe he should try to get fit. He casually decided to do the Green Bay Half Marathon. When he found himself liking the training group he was with so much, he decided a few days before to change his registration to the full marathon. Most of us know how hard it is to break a 4 hour marathon. For Rob? He finished his very first marathon at 3:09. His small kernel of an idea to get fit, quickly grew up to a whole hedge of corn. That stunning debut qualified him for Boston which he shattered the 3 hour mark and clocked in at 2:56. I chuckled when he told me this because he added, “I was kind of surprised myself.” This seems to be a clear cut lesson on having no expectations maybe a real key to performance.

Maybe running got a little too easy for Rob. In 2006, he decided to give himself a new challenge by doing a triathlon. Shortly after, he thought to try something just a little bit harder, namely, the 2007 Wisconsin Ironman. It perhaps won’t surprise you anymore that he could finish his first Ironman in 10 hours and 16 minutes.

In 2006 Rob wanted to give the Ironman a whirl again. More focused than his first year, Yamry sought out a coach that could help him set, what he considered, a realistic goal of breaking 10 hours at his second Ironman attempt. He hired Mike Pierson who specializes in triathlon coaching and specifically in Zone Training. Rob, who is the most humble guy I ever met, said Coach Pierson. Rob readily admits, “Mike helped me tremendously and without him I could have never posted the 9:36 finish time for the Ironman. Understanding zones is easy because blood lactate shows you, in black and white, where you should be running. So I never had the temptation to over train or under train. Mike knew where to keep my training volume.” In fact, he trained less this summer with using this zone method.” Pierson only had accolades for his student, “What amazes me about Rob is from the beginning he just wanted to improve himself and never paid attention to competition. He is focused, methodical and the nicest guy you will ever meet.”

There were no really defining moments at the Ironman this year for Rob; for him everything just clicked well. His amazing success has been very much supported by his wife Amy and other co-workers at the Kimberly School District. His fellow employee, Lee McDermott, cracked up when I asked him about Rob, "Well we all think he's kind of nuts, but of course, we don't do these kinds of things. Truthfully, we have been watching him and amazed. He eats every exact item an athlete is suppose to and he just loves what he does. He's a great, somewhat reserved guy, but also a whole lot of fun also."

Finishing 19th overall at an Ironman with only 2 years of training and no athletic background is "raw talent" or let's just call in "Rob Talent." His 9 hour 36 minute finish has qualified him for the 2009 Hawaiian Ironman which most of us can only dream of

I asked Rob how he felt after such an incredible finish at this year's Ironman. He replied, "Really pretty good. I ate a little and then went to cheer everyone else on. Wow, what a contrast to my last 2006 Ironman finish at 16 hours 38 minutes. It left me grasping for food and shelter, barely moving and with no one really left behind me to cheer on. After talking with Rob, I am still grasping at this amazing, talented, fresh gazelle. You gotta love this kid! That's all I can say.