

Carole runs on true grit

MUM BATTLES BACK FROM BROKEN NECK TO MAKE MARATHON

PIC: LESLEY MARTIN

THIS time last year, Carole Fortune couldn't have imagined taking part in a marathon.

The 48-year-old from Edinburgh had been a serious triathlete but was now facing a long period of rehabilitation after being hit by a car during a training session on her bike.

The mum-of-two was forced to give up cycling, ending her impressive triathlon record at a stroke.

But determined not to let the most serious of injuries beat her, she focused instead on swimming and running as she worked hard to get back in shape.

And having just completed the gruelling Loch Ness Marathon, she admits she's come a long way in the last 12 months, after having to start from scratch despite her previous high fitness levels.

She said: "I'd only been doing triathlons for three years. I used to run marathons but I was looking to find a way of diversifying from just marathons.

It was around that time that triathlons were beginning to arrive on the scene.

"I tried it, found it was something I was quite good at and every race I took part in I was

getting placed in my age group, so I was getting better and better.

"I did lots of triathlons in Scotland, and last year I also took part in the Holten Triathlon. That's the biggest one I've taken part in and I represented Great Britain in my age group.

"I also took part in an ironman triathlon, just two weeks before the accident.

"That was a two-and-a-half-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and then a full 26.2-mile marathon at the end of it.

"I did that in Bolton and I finished second in my age group, so I was competing very seriously, probably too seriously.

"The amount of training that was involved in doing that meant that I didn't really have a life last year."

But all that came to an end in August when Carole, who works for Capability Scotland, suffered an accident she was lucky to survive.

She said: "I was out on my bike doing a training run and I got hit by a car at 50 miles an hour. I smashed the car's windscreen, got carted down the road a little bit before being thrown off at the side, fracturing my neck.

"That was my most serious injury, and I had to have a metal plate

inserted in my neck. Apparently, the two vertebrae that I fractured, C5 and C6, are the ones that supply the nerve endings to your arms and legs, so I'm very lucky I've still got feelings in my limbs.

"I do still have a little bit of numbness in my right hand but I was very lucky to survive a collision at that sort of speed.

"I spent two weeks in the Western General, where I underwent surgery on my neck, and then six weeks in Astley Ainslie Hospital because of the brain injuries I suffered as well.

"I spent nine weeks wearing a collar to stop me turning my neck left and right, and needed about six months off my work, by which time I'd had more than enough of staying at home."

With the support of kids Jade, 14, and six-year-old Ryan, Carole was soon working on trying to regain the fitness she had prided herself on.

She said: "After getting out of hospital, I was also determined to start walking as soon as I could, as I didn't want the injury to stop me, so within a few weeks of the collar coming off I'd be going out for a walk with bursts of jogging.

Soon she had set her sights on running the Loch Ness Marathon as her first big event.

"I can't go back to competing in triathlons as I've been advised not to get back on my bike again, so I turned instead to running and swimming.

"I started swimming lessons with a triathlete coach as I

thought it would be good way of improving my fitness while also being able to keep an eye on my neck.

"Swimming has been the easiest thing to get back into so far, while the running has been more difficult as I'm definitely not the runner I used to be.

"I don't yet have the fitness level back, which is difficult to come to terms with, but the Loch Ness Marathon was all about proving I'm still able to do it.

"At the moment, it's not so much a case of trying to be competitive as it is just being able to do what I can, then hopefully next year, I'll be able to do more."

And while most people wouldn't blame Carole for putting her feet up and taking it easy after everything she's been through, she insists that was never an option - although she does concede that there's no chance of her ever being tempted to try triathlons again.

She said: "The reaction I've had from people has been mixed. People who know me quite well know exactly what I'm like and never expected me to do anything different, while other people think that doing this so soon after the accident is absolutely mad.

"But with swimming and running I'm not putting myself in the same sort of danger. My consultant has told me that if I suffer any sort of further head injury then I might never walk again, so there's definitely no more biking."



STRIDING OUT: Carole has just run the Loch Ness Marathon

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HELP PREVENT INJURY AND SAGGING WITH A PROPERLY FITTED SPORTS BRA

A PROPERLY fitted sports bra is an essential piece of kit, especially for high impact sports such as running.

And now female joggers can get a specialist service in Run 4 It stores across Scotland.

Staff there have received specialist training to help

customers choose properly-fitted sports bras and safeguard against injury.

The training, delivered by a leading UK expert in support technology from sports bra manufacturer Shock Absorber, helped staff develop their understanding of the impact running can have on the bust and how proper support can reduce injury and increase comfort.

More than 70 per cent of women who exercise regularly do so without wearing a properly-fitted bra, putting themselves at risk of suffering short-term pain and long-term damage to their busts.

Unsupported breasts can bounce up to 9cm during exercise, and move around 3.7 miles over the distance of a marathon. Over time, the

movement of an improperly-supported bust can permanently damage the delicate Cooper's Ligament that helps breasts to keep their shape, leading to irreversible sagging.

Duncan Riddoch, managing director of Run 4 It, said: "One of our specialities is guidance on preventing discomfort or injury by buying the right

gear. People understand the importance of running in shoes which best suit their gait and running style, and it's equally important that females are aware of the difference a properly-fitted bra can make to their experience of exercise."

Emma Kampa of Shock Absorber, who delivered the training to Run 4 It staff, said: "Sports bras can reduce

breast movement by 78 per cent, which makes them the ideal choice for active women.

"Sports bras can also help to reduce the chafing and rubbing improperly-fitted bras can cause."

For information about products and services from Run 4 It or to find a store near you, www.run4it.com or call 01224 594431.