

Three triathlons in three days a matter of faith

October 22, 2009

The picture of athleticism we might ordinarily associate with a 51-year-old real estate executive from Phoenix would likely be a well-tanned graying man with an impressive golf handicap.

Gary Brasher may have the gray hair, but that's where the comparison to the stereotype ends in terms of a pursuit which most men half his age would find daunting.

From Nov. 20-22, Brasher will complete three triathlons in as many days bolstered by spectacular conditioning and an abundant Christian faith. Brasher has been a member and long-time leader for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) and has termed his test of ultra-endurance Triple Iron 422 for the 422.6 miles he will cover those three days of swimming, biking and running. The third and final day of the quest will take place in the Ford Ironman Arizona event in the Phoenix suburb of Tempe.

As owner of the Brasher Real Estate brokerage company, he will be taking a few days off for an endeavor that has been as much about his faith walk as physical endurance.

"I have been training for this about 11 months now," Brasher said in an interview with Everyday Christian about the unique FCA fundraiser. "It has really taken a big commitment...time with family, diet, schedule, training, work, et cetera.

"I guess my general approach is to try to do as much training early in the morning before the family is up. Then I usually eat at my desk so I can use the lunch hour to train. Finally, I train again in the late afternoon so when I get home in the evening, I'm just with my family. Getting the right number of calories from the right foods, stretching, resting, and training have been great learning experiences for me. You really become attuned to your body and the mental side of training and racing and I have really learned a lot about prioritizing."

Brasher got the idea from an article he read about a man who competed in three triathlons to benefit his local Rotary Club.

"As I read the article the words came to my mind... 'how much more you should be willing to do for me'," he said. "Once I read the article I just kept thinking about what it would take to train for such an endeavor. Frankly, I sort of pushed it from my mind and then one day as I got ready to train for another race I was preparing for I saw on the back of my FCA Endurance jersey it says, 'Powered by Christ.'

"At that point it dawned on me that the power of Christ was the only way for me to do this. My wife and I began to earnestly pray about it and then prayed with (FCA president) Les (Steckel) and (his wife) Chris. After we all decided through prayer that this was worth pursuing, I began talking to my coach about the training necessary."

Brasher has been a lifelong sports enthusiast well before becoming a triathlete. He was a member of the University of Colorado football team which won the Big Eight Conference and reached the 1977 Orange Bowl. He has been running in 5- and 10-kilometer races since the late '70s and competed in his first marathon in 2003. Through his work as a housing developer he met up with local triathlon coach Tom Manzi and became interested in the sport.

With a long running background, adapting to the two other disciplines has been a work in progress.

"I think running is my most natural event, and I have really had to focus on the bike and swim," Brasher said. "Now I am really enjoying the biking also. Swimming is still my most challenging (event)."

A deep faith is an equally strong motivator for Brasher.

He said he accepted Christ at an FCA event in high school hosted by members of the Dallas Cowboys. While at Colorado, Steckel – who was head coach of the Minnesota Vikings in 1984 – was one of his assistant coaches. The connection with FCA and Steckel deepened years later.

Brasher transferred to and graduated from Arizona State University and later worked for the FBI. He became acquainted with local FCA members through golf tournaments and eventually slid into the real estate business. FCA was in need of a state director and he agreed to temporarily fill the position. During that time he was having a difficult time getting coaches to commit a FCA football camp, when out of the blue he received a phone call from the Cowboys' Hall of Fame coach Tom Landry.

"One afternoon, I got a call from a man who said he would be happy to volunteer and that he had 'heard' I was having trouble getting some coaches to attend the camp," Brasher recalled. "He said he was a coach and would be happy to help me out. I got out my registration form and when I asked his name he said, 'Tom Landry with the Dallas Cowboys.'

"I honestly thought someone was playing a trick on me. Fortunately not! Once he signed up, it was like the floodgates opened and soon we had hundreds of kids and a good number of coaches all volunteering. This really showed me the power of someone well known in the athletic arena, using his influence as a coach and a Christian to influence others."

Brasher said the support he has received from his family and the congregation at The Church at Tubac, where he and his wife Patricia attend with their children, has been essential to his training.

"My family has been and will be a big part of this event," he said. "They have been supportive with encouragement and making sure I'm getting the rest and nutrition I need. They will also be at the event to support in both of those roles, but also, helping put the pieces back together during the rest times so I can be prepared to get back out there on the swim, bike or the run. Knowing they are there will be a big help as each day wears on. Time with them will give me something to really look forward to each day as we move through this event.

"My pastor, Jeremy Hatfield, and the entire congregation have been very supportive. In fact, this was the first group, after Les and the Arizona Team at FCA, which I shared our vision with. Jeremy immediately jumped on board putting information about the event in newsletters. Also, I have been invited to speak to the church on several occasions about how I'm doing, how training is going and prayer needs."

Brasher's attraction to triathlons has also shaped his faith perspective and the necessity for a sustained Christian outlook on life.

"I feel that life and faith are endurance events," Brasher said. "Neither is a sprint. I have found that in life and in faith, we are faced with a lot of challenges, a lot of ups and downs. FCA is the best ministry I know of to teach these concepts to young people and they use the platform of sport to accomplish this goal.

"As I considered this event, I thought, 'What better way for me to communicate to young people the 'endurance' necessary to keep moving forward in life, and in your faith and doing so with faith and character?', than through this event. In addition, to use this event to draw attention to faith and character in athletics while raising money for FCA to help send kids to camp, was just a great fit for me in my personal walk."

That walk – plus the run, bike and swim – will be steeled scripturally by the verse he wears on his ID badge during competition, Isaiah 6:8 – "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Who Should I send? Who will go for us?' I said, 'Here I am. Send me.'"

"I'm just a simple guy and I feel that whatever I have is His to use," Brasher said. "If He can use me, I feel the Lord can use anyone. Maybe this will inspire someone else to take it to the next level."

Links:

Triple Iron 422: <http://www.tripleiron422.com/>

Fellowship of Christian Athletes: <http://www.fca.org/>

The Church at Tubac: http://www.tubacchurch.org/tubac_church/Welcome.html



about the author:

Peter Elliott

I can't remember a time when I didn't go to a church, although I readily admit there were years I only went on Christmas and Easter. More significantly now, I'm that much more grateful to be ...

FitSugar

When You're a Pro, What Does Time Off Mean?

Oct 23 2009 - 7:00am

Runner Kara Goucher made her [marathon debut](#) [1] a year ago in the Big Apple, but she's skipping the [New York Marathon](#) [2] this year. At the [Nike Running Summit](#) [3], she explained she wasn't planning on racing again until Boston because she's doing some planning of a different nature — family planning.



When you're an elite runner, skipping an event doesn't go unnoticed, making it difficult to keep it a secret that you're trying to get pregnant. Kara explained to me in a short but sweet interview that she's "taking a few months off to see what happens in her personal life."

But what does "time off" mean after running 120 miles a week? For Kara it means only running 30 miles a week, a number I would love to have as my hard-core weekly mileage. Although she does admit to getting a little softer now that she's only running a quarter of what she's used to, Kara's relationship with food hasn't changed, since she has always been "a healthy eater." Body fat is an issue for runners, but her attitude is pretty simple: "It is just weight and it will come off." Which is great since this runner, a proclaimed "queen of the 30-minute meal," is spending her newly found free time cooking, mostly Italian, and making sauces from scratch.

To see how Kara answered when I asked her if she could be an elite athlete in another sport, what would it be, just .

She admitted that this was a tough question, but that she has always leaned toward tennis. Kara finds the combination of individual strength and one-on-one competition quite compelling. Then there's the fashion side of things: "They wear cool outfits."

Kara's long-term goal: racing in the London Olympics in 2012 and bringing home the gold. Go Kara!

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Links:

[1] <http://www.fitsugar.com/2460126>

[2] <http://www.fitsugar.com/5496033>

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style

Billupses: three kids, eight cars, two causes

Interview conducted
The Denver Post

Posted: 10/22/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT



Chauncey Billups and his wife Piper Billups on Monday, September 28, 2009 at Houston's in Cherry Creek (Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post)

BAR:

HOUSTON'S

Houston's is a high-end chain of sleek American restaurants, with a new one that just opened in Cherry Creek North at 303 Josephine St. It's one of the places where Chauncey and Piper Billups hang out. Houston's is the flagship brand of Hillstone Restaurant Group, the people who also run the popular Cherry Creek Grill a few blocks away. A combo plays in the small Houston's bar, which, combined with the open kitchen and sushi bar, adds a certain excitement to the space.

GRILLED:

CHAUNCEY & PIPER BILLUPS

Chauncey and Piper Billups, both 33, are Denver natives. They met at George Washington High School when they were 17 — and have been sweethearts ever since. Chauncey is a celebrated point guard for the Denver Nuggets; Piper is active in various charities in town. And they are both poised to begin their own nonprofits at a reception Oct. 30 at Neiman Marcus. Chauncey will launch the Chauncey Billups Foundation to fund local groups that help kids from low-income families. Piper will introduce the Spread Her Wings Foundation, an agency that aims to culturally enrich the lives of challenged girls in Colorado. \$150 at 310-649-5222. Go to givingback.org for tickets. They both order lemonades.

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Houston's in Cherry Creek. (The Denver Post | CYRUS MCCRIMMON)

from Denver call me "Smooth."

BH: You're



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BH: No drinks?

Chauncey: I never drink.

Piper: I'll just have a glass of wine now and then.

BH: Did you get into lots of fights in the playground with a name like Chauncey?

Chauncey: I got into a lot of fights, but it wasn't because of my name. Being from the neighborhood with a name like Chauncey, people think I got picked on. But a lot of strange names come out of the neighborhood.

BH: What about your nicknames?

Chauncey: You mean "Smooth" and "Mr. Bigshot." I got "Smooth" when I was growing up. I got "Bigshot" playing in Detroit. People who know me

a big Broncos fan.

Chauncey: Diehard.

BH: Would you rather watch football or basketball on TV?

Chauncey: Oh, football.

BH: What is your greatest extravagance?

Piper: Purses and shoes.

Chauncey: I'm a cars guy. We have four or five cars.

Piper: We have eight.

Chauncey: I guess.

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BH: What's your favorite car?

Chauncey: I drive a Range Rover almost every day, but my favorite is my '69 SS Camaro.

BH: You have three daughters: Cydney, Ciara and Cenaiya. And no pets?

Piper: When we get a dog, it has to be a boy. He feels outnumbered.

BH: Do you miss not playing H.O.R.S.E. with a son?

Chauncey: I don't know, I've never had a son. But I



Decor at Houston's in Cherry Creek
303 Josephine Street. (The Denver
Post | CYRUS MCCRIMMON)

BH: What are your favorite restaurants?

Piper: We love Del Frisco's. The filet and the lemon cake. And Houston's. Jing.

BH: What do you eat when you're not training?

Chauncey: Burgers. Cheeseburgers. Fried chicken. French fries. All the bad stuff.

Piper: And he's a sweet eater. We have an aunt who makes caramel cakes.

Chauncey: Oh, man.

BH: What's on your iPods?

Piper: Our favorite right now is Jay-Z.

Chauncey: I am a big music guy. Hip-hop, R&B, old school, jazz.

BH: Do you watch TV?

Piper: When I'm not busy with the girls. My favorite is "King of Queens."

have lots of boy cousins, a lot of substitutes.

Piper: And he plays with the girls all the time.

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Chauncey Billups and his wife, Piper, talked with Bill Husted at Houston's in Cherry Creek North. (Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post)

Chauncey: Yeah, that's funny.

BH: What talent would you like to have?

Chauncey: If I was blessed by another profession, I wish I could sing.

Piper: I wish I could, too.

BH: When and where were you the happiest?

Piper: Right now.

Chauncey: Yes. This very minute, man. And I had a blast in high school. A blast.

BH: They say it's a blessed man who knows he's happy when he's happy.

Chauncey: I am definitely happy.

Piper: We're just happy to be home, have all our friends and family around. We just had a cookout. We played dominos and cards with all the kids playing and running around and playing soccer.

BH: How do people in Denver treat you?

Chauncey: Everybody is good to me, man. This town has seen me grow up and become who I have become.

BH: What about your life off the court? The interviews? The endorsements?

Chauncey: It's not hard, but you get tired of it. I like to talk about my foundation. I've said enough about myself.

BH: Well, sorry.

Chauncey: No, you're cool. This is cool.

BH: Your greatest fear?

Chauncey: One of them used to be cats. But I'm not as scared of them as I used to be. My biggest fear is the ocean, getting wet. I like looking at the ocean, but not going into it.

Piper: That's why we've never gone on a cruise. You hear all those stories about people getting

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lost, going overboard.

BH: Motto?

BH: What's your favorite vacation spot?

Chauncey: Oh, I have a lot of them.

Chauncey: Maui.

Piper: What about your tattoos?

BH: But you're surrounded by water!

Chauncey: On my right arm it reads "No pain."
On the left, "No fame."

Chauncey: Yeah, but not *in* the water.

BH: On what occasion do you lie?

*Interview conducted, condensed and edited by
Bill Husted: 303-954-1486 or
bhusted@denverpost.com*

Chauncey: I lie all the time. Like when I am supposed to be someplace, someone calls me and I always say I am just around the corner.

Piper: And he could be just leaving the house. But all his friends know.

BH: What's the quality you like most in Chauncey?

Piper: His sense of humor.

BH: Chauncey?

Chauncey: There are so many of them. She's the most loyal person I have ever met.

BH: What would you change in yourself?

Piper: I wish I was a little taller.

Chauncey: I wish I had a better memory. And am just emotionless sometimes. I would show my emotions more.

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