

80-Year-Old Grandma Who Learned to Swim at 59 Just Became Oldest Ever Female Ironman Finisher

With every step toward the finish line, Natalie Grabow was proving it's never too late to get started. Earlier this month, the 80-year-old grandmother from Mountain Lakes, New Jersey, became the oldest woman to ever finish the punishing Ironman World Championship triathlon in Hawaii.

She swam 2.4 miles—even though she never learned to swim until she was almost 60—then she pedaled 112 miles on a bicycle and immediately ran a full 26.2-mile marathon to make history.

About 60 other competitors quit before they finished, all of them younger. Grabow did not.

“She’s truly gritty,” shared Grabow’s coach. “Natalie is the definition of grit and gratitude: Grateful to make it to the start line, grateful to get to do something she loves everyday, and grateful to inspire so many others.”

During the Ironman, just as she had many other times before, she kept moving forward, drawing closer and closer to her latest goal. It was just the latest obstacle in a life that has been searching them out, intent on surpassing them all. Natalie crossed the finish line in 16 hours, 45 minutes and 26 seconds, becoming the oldest female to ever finish the Ironman World Championship in Hawaii.

“The important thing is that people see from my story that they can maybe push themselves a little bit, they can do a little more than they thought they could do,” she told The Athletic. “They can keep going longer than they thought they could go.”

It’s all proof that it doesn’t matter where you start. Or when. It’s about enjoying the journey — and finding your way to the finish line.